

Robert E. Howard's

CONAN



MÖDIPHÜS™
ENTERTAINMENT

**ANCIENT RUINS &
CURSED CITIES**

FFFG™

MAAS AUCTION HOUSE

... that these priceless relics have been conscripted to the back page of this catalogue, and misclassified, is an affront to both my work and fortune. While my academic nature recoils at the lack of effort put into closely examining these objects, my pocketbook would wail at the prices such artifacts would fetch if the Maas Auction House knew their true origins. I have cracked what savings a man of my means can muster and plan to bid on as many of these portals through time as I may. The Hyborian Age lives, curiously, in the dusty backrooms of collectors who do not know it for what it is.

The following miscellany of items are to be cried at the end of the auction proper. They are trinkets and gewgaws that, while of possible worth, Maas Auction cannot verify as belonging to any single culture. Our usual guarantees do not apply. Consider these simply objects of interest and not true history. Anomalies in the panoply of our ongoing human tapestry, loose threads at best.

LOT 141 – COIN, POSSIBLY LATE DYNASTY EGYPTIAN

Approximately the size and thickness of a nickel, this double-sided coin shows a domed palace or possibly tomb on one side and the head of a king or other ruler on the opposite side. The profile of the man is powerful and a “psychic” in Dover reported that one visible eye “looked into her soul.” The markings are so faded as to be unreadable.

Poppycock! I have seen this coin in a photo previously. The head is that of Thugra-Khotan and the language that of early Stygian. This is a coin from the days of his rule of, or just after, Kuthchemes. The psychic they dismiss so easily may well be a psychometrist.



LOT 18 – BLURRY PHOTO OF “THE FLYING DUTCHMAN”

This simple photo was taken by a WWI German sailor in 1915. The photo shows an exceedingly large galleon wreathed in mist. It would have no value whatsoever without the crew's concomitant testimony that the ship intervened on their behalf against a British destroyer. The British destroyer disappeared. A small group of marines sent to explore the mysterious vessel came back with strange reports. In later years, two committed suicide and one went mad.

LOT 49 – CURIOUS SKULL

Purported by some armchair academics to be proof of the aquatic ape theory, this skull is alleged to be the mix of a man and some sort of seaborne creature. While strange ridges around the occipital bones are present, we are confident this is no more than another Piltdown Man fakery. It was found off the coast of Massachusetts in 1919, adjacent to the cemetery of the Marsh family who have inhabited the island since Colonial times.

LOT 33 – WOODEN DOLL OF TEOTIHUACAN

Jointed doll. Probably a child's toy. Found in Teotihuacan, allegedly, by a prominent archaeologist in the last century. The doll displays neither the clothes nor features of the native people and was cited in Ignatius Donnelly's *The Antediluvian World* as proof of the lost continent of Atlantis. The archaeologist who allegedly found the object was in some financial distress for his expeditions, and this “find” brought new money pouring in.

LOT 88 – ROMAN BUST

An unusual Roman bust found while excavating catacombs in Paris, this item likely dates from the time France was known as Gaul. Our experts reason this because the head bears not the features typical of a Roman but more those of a barbarian. Why would such a fine sculpture be made of their enemies? He wears no Roman garb, but something which looks like a crown. Clearly, the Celts must have venerated him as a leader, but they did not have the means to make such a fine piece. A curiosity at best.

Fools! This isn't a galleon but a quadrirème, though of such size as I have never seen. In the days of piracy on the then-called Western Ocean, a Hulk of the Damned was repeatedly recounted by merchants and freebooters alike. What if this vessel has been the ongoing source of “ghost ships” for more than ten millennia? What if it still roams the seas? What if one could find it? My god...

Even the casual member of the Wanderers Club would recognize the name Marsh and the hybrid monstrosities that stalk of the human tree has produced. What is more, this skull was not “found in their cemetery,” but many, many layers below. The stratification and context of its placement suggest it is at least 8,000 years old if not more. How far back in time does the Marsh family go?

Wood? This is terracotta! What amateurs have infiltrated the so-called “proper ranks” of academia. This is not a Mexican artifact nor of any culture prior to it. It dates to Alkmeenon, I am sure, and was used not as a child's toy but as a fetish to worship the Servants of Bit-Yakin. If true, the famed jewels may yet exist as well. Imagine finding those! A bigger question. How did an artifact from a lost city in what I believe was present-day Africa get to Mexico? Perhaps Donnelly's hypothesis is not wrong. Perhaps in the Hyborian Age, or earlier, people traded across the vast ocean we now call the Atlantic.

Their lack of proper examination is my boon! This is none other than the face of Conan himself. Tarantia would likely have occupied what we now call France. They didn't venture into a Roman site but an Aquilonian one! A friend described the bust to me in some detail. I must make for Boston immediately, verify this is Conan, then track down the excavators. What if Tarantia herself still lies in pieces beneath the streets of Paris?

INTRODUCTION

ANCIENT RUINS & CURSED CITIES

“You are young,” said the palaces and the temples and the shrines, “but we are old. The world was wild with youth when we were reared. You and your tribe shall pass, but we are invincible, indestructible. We towered above a strange world, ere Atlantis and Lemuria rose from the sea; we still shall reign when the green waters sigh for many a restless fathom above the spires of Lemuria and the hills of Atlantis and when the isles of the Western Men are the mountains of a strange land.”

— “The Shadow Kingdom”

Within these moldering pages you will find many notable, infamous, and obscure places of the Hyborian world, ranging from those celebrated in legend, feared in bedtime tales, forgotten in human memory, and even places that humankind has never encountered and remains safely ignorant of. With this catalogue, the gamemaster may create adventures out of these places, use them as backdrops for exploits of their own crafting, and even create new locales to challenge and torment the player characters.

Chapter 1: Ancient Ruins

Here are descriptions of antique and ancient places that were once vaunted in their prime, now fallen into disrepair and ruin. Among the more notable are: Alkmeenon, home to the Jewels of Gwahlur, guarded as they are by the Servants of Bit-Yakin; the ice-shrouded City of the Old Ones; Kumari of old Lemuria; Xoc-Sastun of old Kosala; Kuthchemes in the desolate wasteland of Shem and its grim master, Thugra Khotan; Kamula, the demon-haunted pleasure city of ancient Valusia, in whose halls King Kull strode; the maddening city-tomb of dread R'lyeh; and other locales of antediluvian intrigue. Story seeds are presented for many of these locales to aid the gamemaster in their use.

Chapter 2: Cursed Cities

These unhallowed places differ from ancient ruins in that they are still inhabited, though few by humans. Each is distinguished by the dread it causes in those who know of it. Few would willingly choose to go into one of these places, and woe to any innocent souls that must venture there. Described here are places such as the ruined Zamorian City of the Ancients and its Hall of the Dead; the labyrinthine Aquilonian undercity; the serpent-men haunted Sanu; the alien-infested Nameless City; and dream-haunted Sarnath. They are provided with story seeds and adventure suggestions aplenty.

Chapter 3: Mysterious Places

These places are neither ruins nor cities, but fall somewhere between the two, an assembly of unique locations that are nonetheless as dangerous and intriguing as their peers. Among this roster are the ancient ruins of the Black Coast where Bêlit met her fate; the Zingaran city of ghouls; the Arctic enclave of the snow-apes; the rotting ship-hulk of the damned; the sultry ruins on Marsh Island; and the terrible, desolate Plateau of Leng. As with other such entries, story seeds are provided to assist the gamemaster introduce these as places of high adventure.

I have seen such history in my travels, enough to fill a dozen lifetimes. Yet these artifacts uncovered, every lost temple or mysterious monument, or clay jar with bas-reliefs of serpent gods upon them—all were accidents. Things left over in their place as the world moved past them. Even in the house of Kallian Publico, who collects the curios of the world, things are prized solely for their value in coin.

Never before this day had I seen a collection that existed for its own sake. In Shem, the daughter of a great king maintains a collection of historic scraps, pieces of pre-Cataclysmic worlds as well as the beginnings of our own. Each item, be it broken pottery or a bronze idol, is set behind a clay cylinder in which is written the provenance of the object and its suspected use.

The unique series of rooms in which she keeps these objects are, much to the disapproval of her father, open twice weekly to the public. She believes she keeps history alive and I, for my part, can sympathize. Yet mine are words and her preservations are actual objects.

I spent this night wondering if either matter. If, in one thousand years or ten thousand, any of this will remain or even interest what comes after us. I imagined the princess' little collection catching on, becoming a genuine point of public and academic interest. I fancied entire buildings of stone dedicated to housing history for its own sake. That night I slept better than I have in years.

In the morning, though, the ruins of a forgotten Shemitish temple poked from the sand, ignored by the tribe I travel with. They care about now and survival and water. Why would any man with such concerns give thought to objects which can be traded for neither water or food? Are my letters and journals a waste, a self-indulgence? How can I believe futures I cannot even imagine, and the people in them, should care about anything which transpired so long ago, so far removed from their own experience? The sun rises over the ruins today. In ten thousand mornings hence, they will be rounded bits of rubble and, further on, no more. I am a sentimentalist. The world is rough and sharp and not made for such softness as I require. When the sun sets tonight, I will see in it the not-far-off closing of my own day.

Astreas of Nemedra

Chapter 4: Making Ruins

Should the gamemaster wish to create a new place of iniquity and ruin, the system presented in this chapter is designed to facilitate just that. The ruins generator provided within guides the gamemaster through the process of creating dynamic and interesting ruins, as well as determining their nature, their age, possible inhabitants, and even suggesting story possibilities.

Chapter 5: Life in the Ruins

This chapter is directed exclusively at the gamemaster, providing ample advice on various aspects of exploring hazardous environments and their representation in game mechanics, advice on Doom spends while in these places, creative use of environments and their contents, and the diabolical use of traps.

Chapter 6: Lost Treasures

At the heart of many fabulous places are great treasures, items of incredible value — or even priceless — and no few with sorcerous potency. The items presented here are such rare and incredible artifacts, ranging from the Stygian *Book of the Dead*, the Dagger of Derketa, the Eye of the Serpent, the Staff of Epemitreus, and the delightful Songbirds of Khitai.

Also within this chapter is a treasure hoard generator, a means by which the gamemaster might determine the contents of a great and valuable reward for daring player characters. No mere piles of shaped metals and minerals, these hoards have Qualities of their own, and are presented for the gamemaster's use, to characterize such potent accumulations of wealth.

ANCIENT RUINS

For this place could be no ordinary city. It must have formed the primary nucleus and center of some archaic and unbelievable chapter of earth's history whose outward ramifications, recalled only dimly in the most obscure and distorted myths, had vanished utterly amidst the chaos of terrene convulsions long before any human race we know had shambled out of apedom.

— “At the Mountains of Madness”, H.P. Lovecraft

The following ruins are all defined by their quality of decline and their vast age, predating even the beginning of the Hyborian Age in some cases. Most also have suffered abandonment by their original inhabitants, though in some cases they are inhabited by stunted, diminished remnants of their builders, or they are claimed by creatures unaffiliated with the city's original populations (or they are former servants, turned against their former masters).

While cities are the great heights of civilization, at least the civilizations of mankind, other evidences of the rise of primordial savagery to refinement are ever-present in the history of the Earth. Lost citadels, redoubts of creatures that may one day become men, and cursed lands where the taint of the unnatural remains through the aeons — all these speak of previous cultures. Cultures which rose and fell, whose people knew joy and terror, hate and love, and who are no more now than dust. Just as the Hyborian Age is nigh-legend to 20th Century scholars, someday the great spires of our cities, the glass and steel canyons built so proudly, will leave slim evidence that we were here at all. All our lives will be but footnotes in books no future men can even read. That is the fate of all but the Great Old Ones. It haunts me.

— From the journals of Jack Kirowan, December 31, 1939

ALKMEENON

Located in a unique bowl-shaped valley at the southern border of Keshan, the city of Alkmeenon is a curiosity in that it is neither lost nor especially ruined — a still-intact city abandoned for mysterious reasons and yet standing whole and inviolate, respectfully left alone by the folk of the surrounding kingdom. Proud Alkmeenon was once the capital city of Keshan, the nobles a white-skinned race of unknown origin. Legends surround their downfall and flight from the city. Their descendants intermingled with the folk of Keshan, a lineage still bespeaking royalty amongst the Keshani.

The city stands in stark contrast to Keshia, the capital of Keshan, which is little more than a rough palace made of bamboo, stones, and mud bricks retained within a mud wall, surrounded by an overgrown village of thatch-roofed huts. Despite its finery, Alkmeenon is for the most part abandoned, save for the rare pilgrimage by the priests of Keshan to speak with their oracle, Princess Yelaya, the last ruler of Alkmeenon. She died over a thousand years ago and remains freakishly preserved, continuing to dispense wisdom, lore, and prophecy to the sincere and faithful. Woe to the one who consults her falsely or seeks enrichment such as the great treasure within the city, the Teeth of Gwahlur (see sidebar on page 10).

This valley had been their citadel. There the palace stood, and there only the royal family and their court dwelt. The real city stood outside the cliffs. Those waving masses of green jungle vegetation hid its ruins. But the domes that glistened in the leaves below him were the unbroken pinnacles of the royal palace of Alkmeenon which had defied the corroding ages.

— “The Servants of Bit-Yakin”

OVERVIEW

Sitting in the middle of a great natural amphitheater several miles in diameter and surrounded with steep cliffs, Alkmeenon enjoys the privilege of a solitude enforced by its location. Getting into the forested bowl requires knowledge of one of the secret passages into the city, requiring an Epic (D5) Lore test to know the secret. One of these entrances involves a broad pool with an underwater passage, leading

to a tunnel that emerges in a concealed thicket. Alternately, one can attempt a Dire (D4) Survival test to find the tunnel from outside the valley, or four successive Daunting (D3) Athletics tests to climb the cliff-face walls that encircle the valley. The distance is measured in Close, Medium, Long, and Extreme ranges, and damage for a failed test is as described in *Falling* on page 112 of the **Conan** corebook.

THE CAVE OF BIT-YAKIN

Located just below the rim on the outside face of the encompassing cliff is a tiny cavern, barely an alcove inside. Within it is a brown, mummified corpse bound in rotten leather, sitting upright. Tucked into its hands is a rolled, yellowed parchment. No clue to the mummy's identity is visible. The parchment, written in an ancient Pelishtim dialect, requiring a Daunting (D3) Linguist roll to decipher. If the character speaks Shemitish or Pelishtim, the Difficulty is reduced by one step. Success identifies the mummy as Bit-Yakin, a Shemitish priest who once came to the valley and lived within the ancient city, aided by some mysterious servants.



THE CITY OF ALKMEENON

Once into the crater-like valley, an Average (D1) Survival test suffices to find the city proper. There is little in the way of natural life in the valley, save for small animals, birds, and insects, and the entire valley seems to emanate an almost palpable silence and calm. The thick-blossomed white lotus forest is dense and lush, untouched by axes or farm implements for more than a millennium.

Alkmeenon itself is a magnificent city, with jeweled domes glistening in the sunlight, as-of-yet-unclaimed by the encroaching forest. The groves and fields that once surrounded the city are all overgrown, though their outlines are still visible, and trees and grass have broken through the wide boulevards and streets. Walls still stand intact, though some have toppled, and vines create a tangle surrounding the palace, though its walls have survived the centuries far better than the rest of the city.

The Palace of Alkmeenon

Standing largely intact, the palace is at the center of the city, and great columns upon its outside seem as if they could withstand countless more eons. The palace's double-valved bronze doors are partly open, revealing a vast hall inside — an octagonal chamber with a domed roof of dull white material that at night reveals itself to be crystal, allowing in moonlight and keeping the chamber lit wanly. Lapis lazuli steps lead to a great dais opposite the entry, and upon that dais is a massive throne ornately wrought of precious metals, once canopied by cloth-of-gold.

Doom Spends

- The floors beneath the palace are not as secure as they seem, and years of underground currents have washed away much of the soil beneath the tiled flagstones. The gamemaster may spend 2 Doom at an opportune moment to cause the floor to collapse beneath any player character. A Daunting (D3) Acrobatics test can avoid this, but failure plunges the hapless victim into the underwater streams, requiring a Challenging (D2) Athletics test to remain afloat and another test to catch one of the bronze ladders leading into the under-stream. These in turn lead to the vast network of tunnels beneath the palace. Failing either of these rolls means the player character risks drowning (see page 127 of the *Conan* corebook). A successful Average (D1) Athletics test will get the player character back into the palace proper. A failure (and subsequent fall) inflicts 1 Fatigue upon the unsuccessful player character.

- The city (and the entire valley) is riddled with secret passages. The gamemaster can spend 3 Doom to open one of these for any priest of Keshan or a servant of Bit-Yakin to escape into or conceal themselves. Finding one is a Daunting (D3) Observation test, unless the player character sees the non-player character entering the hidden door. Many of these are latched from the inside, and the gamemaster can spend 1 additional Doom to make the door one of these, virtually unbreachable from outside.

Departing from that room is a narrow corridor behind the throne, once concealed, leading into the castle proper. The bases and tops of its high walls run with gold friezes, and it terminates in a large square chamber with marble walls. Here is the resting place and oracle-chamber of the goddess Yelaya, still intact, the alabaster skin of her limbs and features as beautiful as they were in life, clad in curiously undamaged silks and bejeweled golden breast-plates and girdle. At the crest of her night-dark waves of hair is set a gleaming crimson jewel.

Opposite the oracle chamber is a small cunningly concealed compartment — requiring a Challenging (D2) Observation test to find — with a series of tiny holes. Its purpose is for the priests serving the oracle to observe those beseeching her and to reply, making it seem as if the sleeping goddess speaks. Elsewhere, concealed in another equally hidden compartment, are the goddess' garments, a closet of silken clothes stored in such a manner that they are proof against the ages, until exposed to the outside air. It is here that the priests clothe Yelaya's body anew, allowing her dignity that she might otherwise have lost.

Continuing into the palace are a variety of courtyards, chambers, passages, porticoes, halls, antechambers, and more. Doors are covered in hammered gold and jeweled like the crowns of kings of lesser lands. Walls are clad in arabesqued metal and polished marble or painted in frescoes in the style of the Pelishtim, seemingly completed after the abandonment of the city. These paintings depict sections of the palace, and show the priests of Keshan worshipping Yelaya, yet among their number is a Pelishtim — Bit-Yakin. Should the player characters have found the parchment in his cavern outside they recognize him. Serving him are strange and terrible figures, inhuman things performing monstrous deeds at his behest.

The Teeth of Gwahlur, however, are not kept in the palace. Instead, they are concealed within a cavern set into the wall of the bowl in which Alkmeenon rests, described in *The Great Cavern* (following).

The Great Cavern

Located throughout the valley are great stone outcroppings, covered with horrible carvings depicting half-human figures, humans, and even gods. These are clearly ancient beyond even the city's founding and may date to some epoch before the Hyborian Age itself. These were made by the creatures now known as the servants of Bit-Yakin (see below), the original inhabitants of the valley in which sits Alkmeenon.

At the base of the western cliff wall, at the end of a trail leading out of the city, is a great door made of bronze, several

tons in weight, carved with the face of a dragon. Surrounded with thick bolts, the secret means of opening this door is known only to the priests of Keshan. Attempting to open the door without this knowledge requires a successful Dire (D5) Thievery test and several hours of careful work.

Past the gate is a tunnel leading deep into the cliff-wall, connecting with others, the walls of which are lit with a weird, phosphorescent moss that is not uncommon to lands of the Black Kingdoms. Eventually the tunnels open into an immense cavern from which countless passages stem and converge, many opening above the roaring underwater

SERVANT OF BIT-YAKIN (TOUGHENED)

These near-immortal creatures have inhabited Alkmeenon for thousands of years. They are seemingly frozen upon the evolutionary ladder, neither devolving nor climbing upwards towards humanity. They are intelligent, far more so than apes, and are immensely long-lived, their lifespans measured in millennia rather than decades.

He ran out on the span, straight toward the oncoming monster. It was no ape, neither was it a man. It was some shambling horror spawned in the mysterious, nameless jungles of the south, where strange life teemed in the reeking rot without the dominance of man, and drums thundered in temples that had never known the tread of a human foot.

— “The Servants of Bit-Yakin”

The Pelishtim scholar Bit-Yakin made allies and servants of them by posing as the goddess Yelaya, speaking to them in ancient Pelishtim, hinting at the origin of the folk of Alkmeenon. This language is known only in pidgin form by the priests of Keshan, who have little control over the creatures. They have patience beyond human comprehension, and can still their grey-furred, leprous bodies to resemble statues, until roused to terrible motion and activity.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
8	5	7	8
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
12	14 (2)	10	




FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	3	Movement	2
Fortitude	3	Senses	2
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 16, Resolve 8
- **Soak:** Armor 3 (Tempered Hide), Courage 3


ATTACKS

- **Clawed Fist (M):** Reach 2, 8 , 1H, Grappling, Knockdown, Stun, Vicious
- **Thrown Rock (R):** Range L, 5 , Thrown, Stun
- **Bestial Countenance (T):** Range C, 2  mental, Area

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Inhuman Brawn 2**
- **Night Vision**
- **Still as Statues:** A servant of Bit-Yakin can stand motionless by making an Average (D1) Movement test to seem as if a living statue, giving it 2 Momentum on any successful Stealth test.



DOOM SPENDS

- **Rain of Stone:** Should the player characters visit while the servants of Bit-Yakin are active, they might find themselves subject to great stones dropped from the darkened heights of the palace's upper levels and vaulted chambers. The gamemaster can spend 1 Doom per 1  worth of a stone block or chunk of wall, dropped onto a player character. The target may attempt a Challenging (D2) Observation test to get some warning about the dropped stone, with success giving them the chance to make a Challenging (D2) Acrobatics test to avoid it. Failing the Observation test means the stone automatically hits the player character.

river that runs beneath the palace. More than half a dozen major tunnels run through the place, and several have within them great altars to toad-like, repulsive gods. The great cavern, a natural amphitheater itself, has many tiers carved into it, balconies overlooking the main floor, and at one end of this vast chamber is an immense idol of a god more blasphemous and grotesque than any worshipped by humankind.

At any given time, this area will be inhabited by dozens, if not more, of the servants of Bit-Yakin. They will fight viciously and attack any intruders and seem to exist only to worship their goddess Yelaya, made to speak through Bit-Yakin's subterfuge. The river that runs beneath these caverns and beneath the palace runs from Punt, connected to a lake into which they deposit their dead. Those bodies wash into Alkmeenon and are the primary diet of the servants of Bit-Yakin (below), though they also readily eat fresh meat.

WEALTH

Aside from the fabulous gems called the Teeth of Gwahlur, whose value would beggar even the greatest of kings in the dreaming west, the city of Alkmeenon itself is encrusted with gems and jewels, walls sheathed in gleaming gold, silver, and bronze, furniture made of ivory and bespeaking a quality of craftsmanship lost to the ages. One hour and a successful Simple (DO) Observation test will yield 2  Gold in scavenged loot, and each point of Momentum spent increases that haul by 1 .

THE TEETH OF GW AHLUR

Thought to have been wrenched from the very jaws of Gwahlur, a demonic king of darkness, the Teeth of Gwahlur are curiously-shaped jewels, each the length of a human finger, pointed and slightly curved, though polished and faceted by mortal hands. Whether from a demon's mouth or the whimsy of a wealthy ruler of old, the Teeth are nonetheless the source of much misery and bloodshed. These jewels are likely the most precious set of gems in the whole of the world, and their value incalculable. Each could buy a city, the whole of them a kingdom in its entirety.

Each tooth is made of a different jewel — ruby, emerald, diamond, bloodstone, opal, sapphire, and more, and they burn with a non-terrestrial fire. Kept loose in a smallish brass chest, they are so cunningly sculpted that they can indeed fit together, forming the upper and lower ridge of a great jaw-full of gleaming teeth. It is not known if they have any additional properties beyond their extraordinary value.

EXPERIENCE

The experience point reward for visiting and exploring Alkmeenon is 50, with an additional 50 points awarded if the player characters encounter (and survive) the servants of Bit-Yakin. Should the player characters recover the Teeth of Gwahlur, they will each gain 1 point of Renown in addition to the financial bounty.

ATLANTEAN PASSAGE TOMB

Picture this ruin as it was, made in the wake of the Great Cataclysm when small hills which had once been the land of Atlantis were yet to be fully swallowed by the sea. The continental portion of the barbarous Atlantean empire served as refuge for those who fled their sinking world in boats. On the fringes of what had been the civilized world, they began again.

Picture this monument to those days in alabaster splendor, white-sheathed walls surrounding a giant, man-made hill. A single entrance, which rises twice the size of a man, leads into the interior of the hill. Atop the hill is grass. Surrounding it are huge megaliths carved in spiral patterns. These patterns are likewise on the white rocks rising 50 feet upward, though one must stand close to them to read them.

However, this site held its splendor for four lifetimes. The Picts, in their wild abandon, populated the land more quickly than the Atlanteans, and in time the latter were thrust into stone-age barbarism followed by devolution into apes. Yet even the Picts, who built no such monuments, who had no need of art, left this place alone. Some foreboding, perhaps atavistic fear emanated from the stones, and they were left as they were found.

Millennia have passed since that time and nature has reclaimed much of the hill, so that it now appears nearly as a feature of landscape. The great standing stones which remain erect are weathered with age, others have fallen and crumbled altogether. What was it for? Why did the Atlanteans build this place? There are few remains within. The entrance gives way to a long passage with more of the selfsame spirals carved into its stone walls. This culminates in a circular room atop which is a roof of sorts. Light streams in weakly from above during the day.

But on the Winter Solstice, the roof allows the full light of the sun inside the chamber and it stretches down the corridor behind. Is this alignment part of a sun cult forgotten by modern man? Are there kings buried somewhere within?

There is what appears to be a sarcophagus hewn from a single piece of black marble. Atop it rests the effigy of a man with a great sword. However, the block is solid — there is no interior. No body lies inside. There is no lid to lift off and no old bones to reveal.

A Passage Tomb Into Dream

The truth of this site is beyond the imaginings of all but the most experienced sorcerers and scholars. Perhaps five people now living west of the Vilayet could read the strange spiral language which washes over the tomb. Yet, for a tomb, it is curiously empty. There is no body, and the remains and grave offerings found in the long passage were left by cultures that came after, superstitious folk who sought to appease the spirit of the dead within.

The effigy on the solid sarcophagus looks like a man, but he never was. He was a demon who took the form of a man and fell upon the ancient Atlanteans. But the Atlanteans had magic, remembered of old, by which they bound the demon and cast him into the dream world. There, silver cords, astral lifelines, wind round his body and trap him. Yet each cord withers in time, and thus the sacrifices must be maintained to keep him bound.

Since the site was built, right up until the savage degenerate men who live near there today, one thing remained constant — on the Winter Solstice of each year, a chosen sacrificial victim is led down the long passage and stands before the great coffin. The person is led by a guard then left as the sunlight comes through the roof.

What happens next, no living being has seen. The sacrifice is pulled into dream worlds where it becomes disembodied, turned into yet another chain for the demon within. But the demon has had ages to struggle and is nearly free. One missed sacrifice and this foul thing from the Outer Dark can escape. Of course, how can player characters know this?

Then the Cataclysm rocked the world. Atlantis and Lemuria sank, and the Pictish Islands were heaved up to form the mountain peaks of a new continent. Sections of the Thurian Continent vanished under the waves, or sinking, formed great inland lakes and seas. Volcanoes broke forth and terrific earthquakes shook down the shining cities of the empires. Whole nations were blotted out.

The barbarians fared a little better than the civilized races. The inhabitants of the Pictish Islands were destroyed, but a great colony of them, settled among the mountains of Valusia's southern frontier to serve as a buffer against foreign invasion, was untouched. The Continental kingdom of the Atlanteans likewise escaped the common ruin, and to it came thousands of their tribesmen in ships from the sinking land.

— "The Hyborian Age"

THE POSSIBLE TRUTH

Who can say with any accuracy what the refugees of Atlantis, as they turned back into apes, thought and worshipped? Who can say what the sun meant to them, or who their gods were? We have little record of the Pre-Cataclysmic Age. It is a distant memory, so fragile and muslin-like as if to be a dream.

Yes, a dream. That is the thing, though few could guess the purpose now. Yet, as Conan sometimes received visions in dream or waking dreams as visions, so can the player characters. This, then, is one possible history of this site, though its ultimate purpose lies with the gamemaster.

KEY FEATURES

The site is dominated by the large hill. Some of the dirt heaped on over ages and the tangled overgrowth has been hacked away by the degenerate tribe which lives nearby. Inside the hill are two other areas, and a circle of cyclopean stones, some fallen, surround the hill itself.

The Tomb

The tomb is comprised of two parts — the long passage and the circular chamber. In the first, a sort of three-branched triskelion imagery appears along the walls. Here, the charred remains of human bones litter the floor. There is evidence of human teeth marks on these bones.

Along with them are trinkets stolen from travelers in the area and offered to the god within. Gold rings, silver armbands, coins from ages past and far-off nations — all were placed here to help appease the tomb's "god" over the millennia.

The circular chamber is nearly 200 feet across (the hill itself being 300 feet in diameter and 50 feet in height). In the center lies the black marble sarcophagus. There are spirals and triskelions all over the sides. The top shows the effigy of a man seven feet in height.

Anyone inside the room when the Winter Solstice light pours through the hole in the roof is pulled into the dream world of the gamemaster's choice. Only the sacrifice is disembodied, their physical shell falling to the floor. Perhaps, that player character is the lucky one, for the rest may have to face the demon on the other side of our reality.

The Standing Stones

Roughly 15 feet in height each, these standing stones are covered with the same patterns found elsewhere on the site. Success with an Epic (D5) Lore test reveals they are





GETTING THE PLAYER CHARACTERS INVOLVED

While any adventurous group of player characters might simply pass by this strange hill and decide to investigate, there is far more narrative traction if they arrive upon the Winter Solstice. Perhaps one of their number is chosen by the degenerates as the next sacrifice — for they are directed to each sacrifice by dreams. Perhaps the player characters are hired to find the son of a Vanir chieftain abducted by those same savages.


In any case, the logical action is to help the hapless victim. Yet this is, unfortunately, the very worst choice. If the proper sacrifice is not taken into the dream worlds (see pages 17–24 of *The Book of Skelos*), the demon breaks its bonds and returns with a vengeance to the world of men.

some form of binding spell written over the entirety of the location. A successful Dire (D4) Lore test after that allows one to reason that these standing stones are either a secondary, or initial, cage. The hill itself is the main binding spot. One might conclude that whomever, or whatever, lies within is very dangerous indeed.

Momentum Spends

- Using 3 Momentum, player characters (at least two with a Brawn 10+) may topple one of the weaker stones atop their enemy, causing 6  damage from crushing. This provides them with a free Display attack, doing 3  to all within Medium range who see the crushing attack.

Doom Spends

- For 2 Doom, one of the degenerates can climb a megalith to aid in combat. They crawl up and launch themselves from the stone, doing an extra 3  damage on their next attack, or they can climb to the top and rain stones down upon their enemies. Firing missile weapons directly upward is onerous, and results in a two step increase in Difficulty. If the shooter backs off out of Close range and then fires, the penalty is only one step. Beyond Medium range, there is no penalty at all.

INHABITANTS OF THE RUINS

No one lives on the site. Birds and other fauna avoid the area. It is eerily quiet. However, a degenerate tribe of Atlanteans who never re-evolved lives in the hills nearby. They lair in caves, little warrens of barely Stone Age sophistication. The number of degenerate men is up to the gamemaster.

Their religion centers around the god that lives in the great hill. This is, of course, the demon, but these folk have no way of knowing this. Anyone taken captive for the special sacrifice is held in the caves before being brought to the passage tomb. The tribe are cannibals, as is evident from the human limbs and muscle tissue hanging and drying in various locations. Use the stats for Degenerate Men on page 315 of the *Conan* corebook for the tribesmen.

The Demon

If the solstice ritual is interrupted, the demon steps back through the veil between worlds. It is *not* in a good mood. Use the Soul Devourer in the *Horrors of the Hyborian Age* or an appropriate Horror from the *Conan* corebook.



TREASURE

Various trinkets of the tribe have value in the civilized world. A quick scavenging of the long passage and a successful Challenging (D2) Observation test allows player characters to gather 10 Gold worth of wealth. A proper excavation uncovers much more, but the tribe would have much to say about that. Who can say what wealth might lie in the dream world where the demon is bound? Perhaps a great deal lies scattered in that domain. Finding it and bringing it back is another matter entirely.

EXPERIENCE

Exploring the area and rescuing any sacrifice is worth 25 experience points. Slaying the demon, or even living to run away from it, is worth twice that.

THE CITY OF THE OLD ONES

Lost on the uttermost, unmapped southern reaches, past the southernmost of the Black Kingdoms and the fires of the most distant south, and further still to where a vast sea separates the continent from another great icy land mass, is a vast ruin beyond anything humankind can imagine. Encompassed on all sides by impassable mountains of ice, so daunting that they instill madness in those who behold them, is the ruin of a city that has rested untouched for hundreds of thousands of years, seemingly abandoned by the strange and alien creatures that built it.

OVERVIEW

According to the legends set forth in the tomes of Vathelos the Blind, and in the reputed *Phakotic Manuscripts*, hundreds of millions of years ago when the world was young and newly cooled, its atmosphere becoming breathable, it was visited by a race of alien beings, Old Ones. They flew through space on membranous wings, seeking a new home to colonize. In Earth, they found such a place, and these creatures brought with them their immense knowledge and industry, building several great cities upon the Earth, and filling them with wonders beyond reckoning.

Masters of science so complex only the rudiments are now understood, they built many things, and among their creations were the earliest forms of life on the planet, sculpting animate beings out of rude proto-matter. Their experiments populated the world with a multitude of life-forms, in all manner of shapes and types — mammals, reptiles, insects, sea life, and even humankind. All these beings they set free to wander and thrive or suffer, caring little about

their fates. They watched the rude, savage beasts that would become men crawl and then walk away from their redoubt.

THE LAST REDOUBT

Eventually, a war between these Old Ones and another race for supremacy over Earth cost them mightily, and they retreated from some of their cities, abandoning them for one final redoubt near the south pole. There they contented themselves to brood and continue their sciences, growing fey due to a corrupting presence nearby, some sort of primordial evil beyond even their comprehension, buried within the mountains that surrounded their city. Their civilization in decline, the Old Ones slowly began abandoning their city for a new home on the floor of the Western Sea. It was in this migration that they were attacked by the greatest of their servitors, a race of amorphous beings called shoggoths, and the shoggoths destroyed the last of the Old Ones they could find and ruled the empty city since time immemorial.

It is said that no human has set eyes upon this city, though there are whispers of it in the scrolls wrought by Skelos and within other treatises, but the city's secrets are such that many sorcerers and madmen have dared make attempts over the centuries to find it, in hopes of unimaginable power and the secrets of life and death.

*Eons before Atlantean days in the
time of the world's black dawn,*

*Strange were the kings and grim the
deeds that the pallid moon looked on.*

*When the great black cities split the stars
and strange prows broke the tide,*

*And smoke went up from ghastly shrines
where writhing victims died.*

— “The Symbol”

KEY FEATURES

The scale of the city of the Old Ones defies easy exploration. It fills a great Antarctic valley and is vast beyond a scale any human city can understand, being tens of miles wide and nearly fifty miles long. It is broken and ruined by the millennia of upheaval, with glaciers running roughshod over its buildings, mountains rising and shifting through its boulevards, the great glacial shift of ice and snow picking up sections of the city and depositing them elsewhere. Sections remain intact, but others are in utter ruin, with buried layer

upon layer of broken black stone, all carved thoroughly with pictographic bands of ornamentation that depict the Old Ones, their culture, and their history. Furthermore, while the highest of the city's intact towers stand tens of stories above the ground, the Old Ones delved deep into the earth, and the subterranean levels of the ruin extend much deeper, every bit as expansive and, terrifyingly, more intact, their alchemical and technological secrets pristine.

Madness In the Mountains

So great and impossible is the scale and significance of this city that any who visit it and understand its place in Earth's history — the role of the Old Ones in the making of all life on Earth, the vastness and impartiality of a universe where even the oldest gods are but upstarts and humankind a happenstance, abandoned by its creator — must succeed in a Daunting (D3) Discipline test or suffer 3 ☹ points of Despair. Even success causes 1 ☹ mental damage and inflicts the same amount of Despair. An effect on either of these rolls results in a bout of temporary madness, manifested in either creeping paranoia, berserk fury, flight, or catatonia (gamemaster's choice).

INHABITANTS OF THE RUINS

Exploring the ruins of the city of the Old Ones can take decades, a daunting prospect in the harshest clime on the planet. The terrifying reality is that the city is not entirely abandoned, and upstart shoggoths still roam its bleak, ruined streets and cavernous chambers, seeking still to purge the domain of their former masters. The Old Ones had many secrets and were more than capable of hibernation across millions of years. They are entombed in various caches around the countryside, in icy grottoes and forgotten ways, as well as in concealed facilities within the city itself.

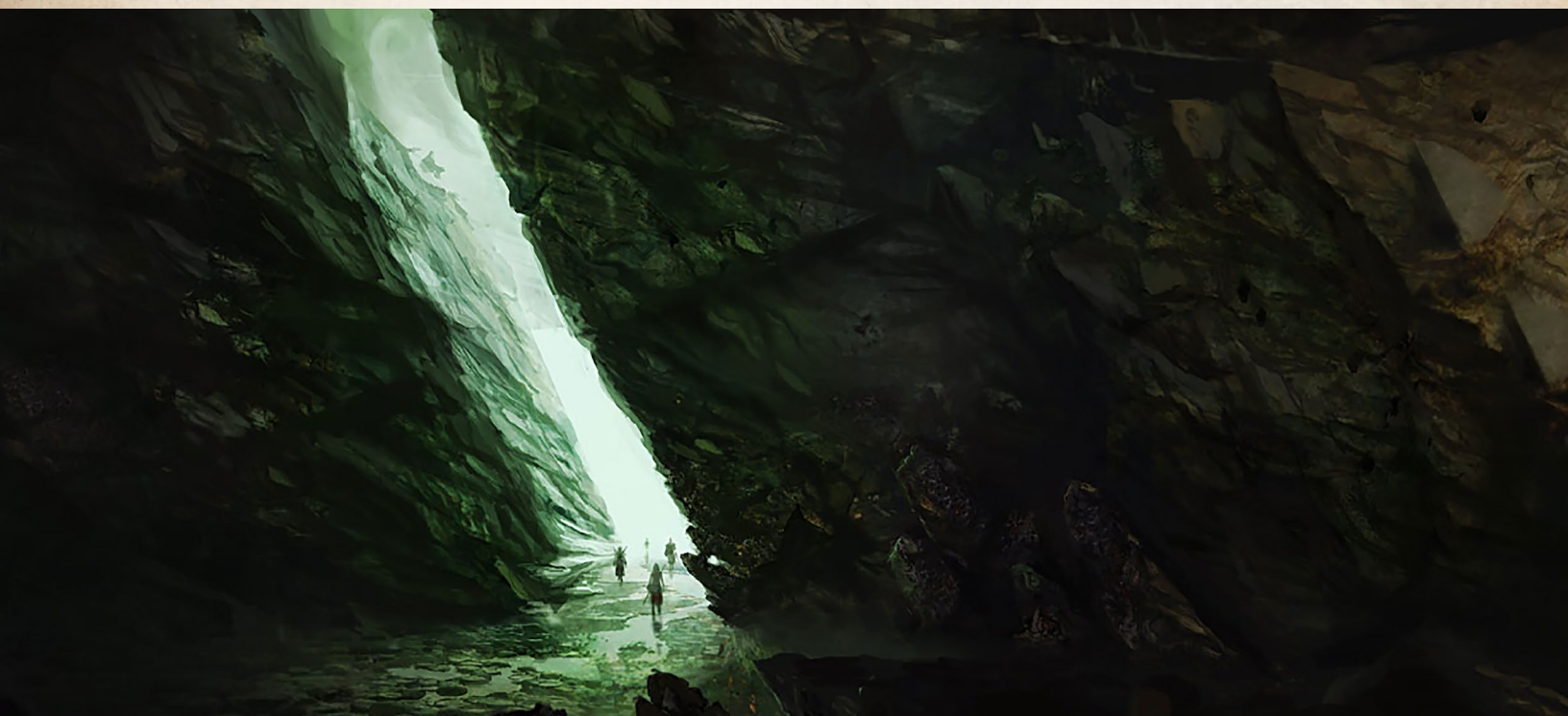
Slowly, the shoggoths find these vaults and breach them, destroying their sleeping creators, an ongoing attrition that has continued past several world cataclysms.

Shoggoths and Old Ones appear in *Horrors of the Hyborian Age*, and the city can also play host to many other primeval beings beyond human comprehension at the gamemaster's discretion.

VOYAGING TO THE CITY

Unlike many of the places detailed within these pages, the City of the Old Ones is unlikely to ever be explored by player characters, save for the most extraordinary of circumstances. It might be encountered in spirit form with the *Astral Wanderings* spell, discussed by summoned creatures of the Outer Dark, or even visited through use of the *Atavistic Voyage* spell. Herein might be found treasures at a scale beyond anything the player characters can imagine, or even comprehend. The secrets of their alien biologic practices could be used by sorcerers and put to other diabolic use, and the instruments and tools — and even weapons — of the Old Ones would put anything crafted in the Hyborian Age to shame.

Should the player characters wish to set foot in the City of the Old Ones, such an undertaking would be a voyage worthy of shaping an entire campaign around, from the planning and provisioning for such an expedition, the hazardous journey down the coast of the western continent, past the Black Kingdoms and into territory as-of-yet unexplored by the people of the Hyborian Age. Such an expedition will earn acclaim to any who attempt it openly, but able-bodied sailors and explorers willing to risk all might be nigh-unto-impossible to recruit. What kingdoms would finance such an expedition, and what sort of sorcerers would seek this out, and for what reasons?



KAMULA, THE BLACK CITY

In the bygone age before the Cataclysm wiped clean the borders of the map and remade the world in a new and rougher image, the kingdoms of humankind were among its proudest, ancient even then, and their citizens built many great wonders. Among them was Kamula, the City of Pleasure. Resting on a mountaintop in what was once the country of Valusia, Kamula was devoted to pleasure and relaxation, a refuge of kings, queens, and their courts. Originally built by King Eallal of Valusia, who died nearly a thousand years before Kull, no expense was spared, no luxury too costly, no excess too much, and no labor too onerous. Slaves by the thousands carried building materials up the mountainside, accompanied by caravans of the finest goods and furnishings to ensure the uttermost comfort and decadence.

Dreamy Kamula — even as he waited for the raging Pict to continue his tirade, Kull's thoughts drifted away and back along the lazy, dreamy days that had passed since his coming to this mountain city, this metropolis of pleasure, whose marble and lapis-lazuli palaces were built, tier upon gleaming tier, about the dome shaped hill that formed the city center.

— “The Black City”, Robert E. Howard

Though the character of subsequent kings and queens changed, and Kamula saw varying amounts of use, it was always maintained by a hereditary group of servants, left intact even during the most abstemious of reigns. It was only during Kull's reign that the city was shuttered, its halls no longer visited by the Valusian courts. His commandment was that none would enter Kamula again until the Thurian Age itself came to an end. The great deluge washed over Kamula like all other places, and all the mortal inhabitants were slain, its finery either swept away by the currents or deteriorating over millennia under the ocean's surface. However, something haunted dreamy Kamula, a monstrous and terrible thing at its very heart, earning it the infamous title of “the Black City”.

OVERVIEW

Kamula now stands buried within the great mountain range that divides Aquilonia from Nemedra, far from any path or river's course. If it has been discovered or visited

at any point during the Hyborian Age, no signs remain of any trespass. The movement of continents and mountains over the millennia was utterly indifferent to humankind, and Kamula is no longer remotely habitable. Skewed on a high slope, the city itself looks rather incongruous, a ruined jumble of buildings at an angle, its once broad plazas and avenues now chaotic ridges and hazards. Nearly a third of the city remains intact, however — despite the incline, which makes travel within somewhat difficult.

Of the city's one-time finery and sublime features, little remains. Its nymphaeums and seraglios are buried under hardened silt, halls are skewed and rubble-strewn, bedchambers exposed to the indifferent sky, gardens and courtyards where once the finest entertainments were offered are now desolate jumbles of broken marble and rock, and its baths are long-since dried and filled with dirt and broken masonry.

However, the horrible secret within the city that caused Kull to order its abandonment remains: a monstrous creature of the Elder World, a cthonian being called “Gyatha”, fully capable of surviving the eons as readily as it did the blade of a Valusian king. Should player characters explore Kamula's streets, they will find many rifts and cracks and, intriguingly, what are obviously secret passages, once concealed behind cunningly-disguised wall panels but now revealed to the world.

Most of these go nowhere, broken by geologic shifts or collapsed and filled with rubble, but anyone listening at one of the more intact tunnels may attempt a Challenging (D2) Observation test. Success means that the player character hears a thin, piping sound, unlike that of the wind whistling and moaning through the city's ruins.


There is something natural — yet horribly unnatural — about this piping noise. Attempting to track it to its source requires a Daunting (D3) Observation test and a Challenging (D2) Athletics test to maneuver through the ruined, rubble-choked passages. Failing either of these rolls means that the piping is lost, though another attempt may be made later, or from a different location. A complication on this roll means that the player characters encounter a thick, ropy tentacle as wide around as a strong man's wrist, and multiple complications mean the player characters encounter the horror itself.


FINDING KAMULA

The gamemaster may introduce Kamula as an obscure reference in some long-forgotten sorcerous tome, or some rumor reaching their ears borne on sorcerous winds. Seeking it out requires a successful Daunting (D3) Survival test: one attempt can be made each day of searching. However, it might be encountered by happenstance, with the player characters passing through the mountains between Aquilonia

and Nemed, perhaps avoiding the common routes. They might even spot it from afar while seeking refuge from a storm or from the notice of enemies.

TREASURE

Alas, the ages have not been kind to Kamula, and near all its finery has long been washed away, scattered across the mountain ranges, or deteriorated from the eons it rested beneath the waters of the Cataclysm. Player characters that are especially diligent about scavenging may attempt Average (D1) Observation tests, once per day. Success yields 3  Gold's worth in pieces of metals, gems pried free from walls, or pieces of ornamentation caught in corners or buried under long-dried muck. Each point

of Momentum spend adds 1  to this total. If the player characters have not yet earned the attention of Gyatha, any effect causes it to begin searching for them, sending its tendrils through the city's passages and rifts, for their warm bounty of blood.

EXPERIENCE

Should player characters discover and explore Kamula, the gamemaster may award 100 experience points apiece for this great act of adventure. Encountering and surviving Gyatha should be worth another 50 experience points, and slaying the monster itself (or at least sending it from this realm for the time being) should be worth another 50 points.

GYATHA, MASTER OF THE BLACK CITY




Running throughout the city was a network of secret passages, built by the city's makers, hewn by human hands yet expanding on the mountain's already-existing labyrinth of natural tunnels. The foolish makers of the city did not recognize the nature of these tunnels, thinking them a mere happenstance of geologic action, or perhaps ancient lava tubes.

Far from such a natural origin, the tunnels were — and still are — the lair of an ancient abomination named Gyatha, a creature from the underworld that crawled its way to the mortal realm millions of years ago. Its vast bulk concealed within the mountain still, Gyatha extends long, ropy tentacles throughout the tunnels, hundreds of feet from its body, draining victims of blood remotely or dragging them back to its many maws.


Battling Gyatha is a dangerous proposition, as the creature knows its lair as intimately as does a snail its shell, and it has dozens of tendrils to extend throughout the city to flank or confront player characters directly. Furthermore, the skewed nature of the rubble-strewn ground makes all combat hazardous: player characters must succeed in an Average (D1) Athletics or Acrobatics test as a Movement Action to be able to attack Gyatha successfully, whether a tentacle or its hidden bulk within the cavern beneath the city. Normally, Gyatha is not a direct combatant, preferring to use its tendrils to entrap and choke targets, silencing them while it drinks their blood, leaving their fear-stricken corpses behind.

For Gyatha, the gamemaster should use the statistics for the Unspeakable Abomination on page 345 of the CONAN corebook, adding the following qualities to its existing write-up.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Many-tendrilled:** Gyatha has dozens of thick, ropy tendrils, and can send them through the passages and crevasses beneath Kamula with terrifying speed and ease. Every round, the gamemaster should roll 2  to determine how many tendrils it can bring against the player characters, adding 2  on each subsequent round, to a maximum of 12. Each tendril has 5 Vigor and 1 point of armor. Inflicting a Wound will sever it, causing it to retract back into Gyatha's body defensively. Destroying a tendril has no effect on Gyatha's body or overall Vigor or Wounds.
- **Exsanguinate:** Each tendril ends in a cluster of sharp hardened spines, which pierce the exposed flesh of victims and drain their blood. For each successful effect rolled when damage is determined, the tendril does an additional 1  damage to Vigor and an equal amount of damage to Resolve. This is considered as a separate attack when determining any possible Wounds.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Tunnel Dweller:** The gamemaster can spend 3 Doom to have Gyatha collapse a tunnel onto the player characters, using its tendrils to strike at rubble on the tunnel's ceiling. This requires a Challenging (D2) Acrobatics or Athletics test to dodge (or Parry if a shield is used) and causes 3  Vigor damage if it is not avoided. A Complication seals the tunnel densely enough that it will require hours to clear.

K'N-YANIAN TEMPLE CHAMBER

K'n-Yan is not a single city; it is a vast, subterranean kingdom stretching on for uncounted leagues beneath the earth. It was built by creatures from the stars, with science and comprehension far beyond that of even the most ingenious and learned of men. Even the Yaggites, that brilliant and sorcerous elephant-headed race from beyond the stars, spoke of those who whittled out K'n-Yan with respect. There are two cities within this enormous network of tunnels — Tsath, a populous, civilized place, and Yoth, a degenerate and crimson-tinged cavern dwelling. This entry concentrates on those tunnels that emerge, in a few places, onto the Hybrian-age earth and which, if followed, will take a player character into the blue-inflected city of Tsath.

Whether that city is really buried within the earth is difficult to tell; surely, there is not enough room within the world to contain the full extent of K'n-Yan? Perhaps the tunnels, found in remote places throughout the Thurian continent and beyond, lead to other worlds, somehow proximate with this. As to the K'n-Yanians themselves, they are a strange people, man-like and yet possessed of peculiar powers of spirit projection. They also bring with them mounts — forged from a hideous melding of human flesh and the tissue of animals the like of which the surface world has long since consigned to nightmarish myth. Those who venture below do so at their own peril.

OVERVIEW

The underland of K'n-Yan is implausibly vast and constructed within the bowels of the earth. A single, large road wends gradually downwards. The roof of the place is an array of gleaming, bluish stones — though whether these peculiar gemstones are of terrestrial origin, it is difficult to say. The blue stones emit a dim but penetrating light, bathing the full expanse of the road in sapphire radiance. If it were not a place quite so suffused with wholly alien menace, the gentle glow would render K'n-Yan beautiful.

Birds and other creatures populate these underground caverns. Whole flocks of creatures soar across the continually glinting surface of the apparently infinite ceiling, and the road is marked with the strange prints of misshapen beasts, shuffling and striding onwards.

The most curious feature is the enormous golden door which occupies a circular chamber — the only means of opening this door is from within and at the behest of those strange creatures who lurk inside. But gold is freely available and cheap here — even the floors of the chamber are tiled in it. The circular chamber is, by its configuration and

appearance, a temple; hideous carvings adorn the walls and outline scenes of strange rites. Peculiar trees surround the area, and, in its center, rests an idol, made of a stone which does not appear on earth. The idol is of a creature with an octopus-head, gazing out into the darkness, waiting...

Opening his pack, he prepared his camp on the golden tiles of the temple's floor, with the great door still securely latched against all comers; drifting eventually into a sounder sleep than he could have known in the blue-litten spaces outside. He did not even mind the hellish, octopus-headed bulk of great Tulu, fashioned of unknown metal and leering with fishy, sea-green eyes, which squatted in the blackness above him on its monstrously hieroglyphed pedestal.

— “The Mound”, H.P. Lovecraft

KEY FEATURES

The inhuman strangeness of K'n-Yan's vast caverns and impossible size is reflected in the features described below.

The Stone Idol of Tulu

There are many gods venerated and worshipped in the underworld of K'n-Yan, but perhaps chief amongst them is the octopus-headed dreamer called, by the inhabitants of that place, Tulu. They also worship Father Set, though under a different name. This statue is crafted from a stone whose origin is most certainly not of this planet: indeed, it might have been brought here even before the inhabitants of K'n-Yan made their way across the stars. It possesses magnetic properties. It even attracts other objects made of the same material — not repelling them, as one might expect earthly materials to do. The idol is large and exquisitely crafted, but anyone within its radius cannot escape the creeping sensation of wrongness it exudes... distinct and unmistakable.

Momentum spends

- Using Momentum with the Tulu idol can result in player characters grabbing it and interposing it between themselves and those seeking to attack them — cowing them with an object of reverence.
- The idol can also be used as a weapon, or as a means of ripping the weapons out of the hands of foes — although this will cost 2 or more Momentum.


Doom spends

- Using a weapon too close to the idol is likely to result in it being wrested from the player's grip, at the cost of 3 Doom, or an arrow no longer flying true but curving out of its original path, at the cost of 2 Doom. The gamemaster is encouraged to expand this Doom spend in other ways, such as making spells involving extra-planar contact easier (for example, each Doom spent might have the effects of a Fortune point).

The Golden Door

The entrance gate to the city of Tsath and the true seat of power in the under-kingdom, the Golden Door is well fortified. In future millennia, it will be neglected as the K'n-Yanians cease to preoccupy themselves with the outer world but, in this age of the earth, there are openable arrow slits, and the vast latch that locks it can be lifted high enough to allow for spear-like weapons to be used to keep enemies at bay and allow reinforcements out before quickly resealing the door. The fact that it is made of solid gold, however, also renders it an extremely attractive target to any player characters dreaming of retirement. Or simply dreaming of a few decades of debauchery in Shadizar the Wicked. Either way, it is a dangerous but extremely lucrative proposition.

Momentum Spends

- A player character might spend Momentum to drive an enemy into the door, causing 3  damage. They might also dodge out of the way of a particularly furious sword or spear thrust and spend 2 Momentum to have the weapon which nearly killed them stick in the soft gold of the portal.

Doom Spends

- The gamemaster can spend 2 Doom to have enemies fire on the player characters from behind the door, virtually immune from reprisal, making any attempts at attacking them Daunting (D3) or higher. A player character too near to the door might also be attacked by spear thrusts or by the emergence of a new foe — again at the expenditure of 2 Doom.

The Golden Tiles

So plentiful is gold in the lower reaches of the earth that even the floors are made from it. Tiles of gold pave the ground and many are stamped with curious writings and

symbols, languages which man's vocal cords are ill-equipped to pronounce. The temple is also booby-trapped. When the K'n-Yanians retreated beneath the earth, they did so believing that they would be pursued, and that war followed. These way-stations on the route to Tsath are protected... and those protections might spell doom for the unwary and unprepared.

Momentum spends

- The use of Momentum might allow a player character to trick an enemy into setting off a booby-trap. A Momentum spend might also enable a player character to half-recall the meaning of some of the strange hieroglyphics adorning the tiles — this can lead to them dodging the arrows or pendulum-swung axes which might be about to strike them or, instead, bestow useful information for the next stage of their expedition below.

Doom spends

- A gamemaster can spend 3 Doom to have a player character trigger one of the ancient booby-traps which the temple is sown with to discourage intruders. The gamemaster should choose one of the traps discussed in this book (see page 100) which seems most suitable for the moment. contact easier (for example, each Doom spent might have the effects of a Fortune point).

INHABITANTS OF THE RUINS

The K'n-Yanians are a strange race, even amongst those that can be encountered in the Hyborian Age. They can project themselves in spectral form and they communicate only telepathically — considering speech to be a crude and inexact means of communication, for use only in religious ritual. To represent these creatures, it is suggested that the gamemaster use the template for the Degenerate Chief (see page 316 of the *Conan* corebook) with one exception — K'n-Yanians should only have the *Ancient Wisdom* Special Ability from those listed for the Degenerate Chief. In place of these, each K'n-Yanian can project themselves as a Ghost (Toughened), at the cost of 1 Doom point per K'n-Yanian, if the K'n-Yanian has not performed any action that turn — see page 327 of the *Conan* corebook for more on ghosts. This projection can take place when a K'n-Yanian is engaged in combat, with the physical form dropping to the floor and the phantom form appearing anywhere the gamemaster chooses; to perform this feat, however, the gamemaster must spend 3 points of Doom per K'n-Yanian.

For the hybrid, human-animal mounts which the K'n-Yanians keep and ride, gamemasters should use the Camel statistics (page 325 of the *Conan* corebook). Instead of the listed Special Abilities, however, the mounts instead all cause Fear 1. They seem so familiar... so tragically, strangely familiar.

TREASURE

The underland of K'n-Yan is a treasure in and of itself. Gold is used in almost all constructions and architecture in one form or another. It is absurdly common. The issue for player characters is going to be how to transport it out without weighing themselves down so much that they find themselves caught! K'n-Yan should be difficult to loot... it should be difficult to survive... but doing so should be worthy of reward. And there is a lot of reward to be had. Anything the player characters bring out should be worth between 1-5 Gold and can be spent as such.

EXPERIENCE

Explorations through the ancient and forbidden caverns of K'n-Yan will earn player characters the following experience points:

- 25 for utilizing the idol of Tulu in an ingenious fashion in combat.
- 15 for freeing a half-human mount from its hideous service with a clean kill.
- 50 for defeating a K'n-Yanian after it has spectrally projected itself.

KUTHCHEMES

Lost in the trackless wastes of the southeastern corner of Shem is the wreckage of a once flourishing city. Sand shifts and eddies about the blasted ruins, never fully cloaking or conquering the tumbled buildings. For thousands of years, it has kept its secrets... and its treasures.

OVERVIEW

Three millennia ago, the river flowed fresh and clear here; watering green banks and wide fields. Along its winding course a great city of a dark empire flourished. Rows of decadent villas stretched for blocks in all directions. Slender star-seeking towers and deep pillared temples, frescoed with holy terrors, were angled along the crossroads. In the center of it all was an ivory dome, like an immense egg sliced perfectly in twain, perched atop a gigantic terraced

eminence. Even the glare of the fiercest midday sun failed to diminish its iridescent white gleam. The Stygians hailed this northern outpost as Kuthchemes. Thugra Khotan ruled here; a powerful magician who held congress with the inhuman brood of a shadowy elder tribe.

Time would prove the conquerors had come too far north. The familiar wash of the Styx and halls of Luxur lay hundreds of leagues to the south. The master chroniclers state that it was the rush of the "gray-eyed, tawny-haired barbarians in wolf skins and scale mail" that brought ruin to Kuthchemes. Whatever men and devils Thugra Khotan summoned against the horde would not be enough. Their numbers and iron swords forced a final battle in the very streets of the city.

Sensing doom, the magician went into the heart of the stronghold in the ivory dome, his faithful acolytes trailing. Once in his sanctuary, he ingested a potion brewed with the guidance of his demonic minions. Its poison slowed his frame and stilled his breath, cocooning him in unnatural slumber. His acolytes carried his body beyond the great door. They invoked obscene incantations, joining magic to the engineer's craft of tumbled locks, fitted gears, and pressure plates; sealing their lord away to the ages. They fought to the end, dying as they had lived, in service to Thugra Khotan. Before one died at the end of a blade, he mocked the invaders, taunting them with knowledge of the magician's survival in the sealed sepulcher, sleeping among the vast heaps of gems and coins.

On every hand rose the grim relics of another, forgotten age; huge broken pillars, thrusting up their jagged pinnacles into the sky; long wavering lines of crumbling walls; fallen cyclopean blocks of stone; shattered images, whose horrific features the corroding winds and dust storms had half-erased.

— "Black Colossus"

The barbarians rent the city to pieces but found the ivory dome impenetrable. They turned from it, returning home with glory and plunder. Kuthchemes faded in memory and reality, as the centuries toiled by. After a thousand years the landscape soured, throwing up leagues of harsh desert between it and mortal discovery.

Obscure texts and tales have but faint mention of Kuthchemes. Traders and artisans of the arcane have gained more knowledge of this place from hellish bargains with outer beings, to whom three millennia is but a passing moment. The greatest source of lore on this forgotten relic of imperial Stygia is the cult of Thugra Khotan. This is a splinter faction of those who worship the vile glories of



ancient Acheron: they revere the slumbering Magician-King almost as a god. Their holy rites recount tales of the might of Thugra Khotan as hallowed sacraments. Another potential source of information comes from clever Zamorian thieves. They are ever-eager for news of ancient treasures and keep a network of informants close to any who may know where such a hoard is lost.

Player characters are likely to hear some of the rumors and history of Kuthchemes. For the right price (or favor), they may learn of a wizard who still sleeps amid untold splendor in this part of the world. With research, they may uncover the tales of the great dome of ivory and of its serpent guardian. Locals who live on the border may share the legend that the blood of Set courses in the guardian's veins, causing it to swell to gargantuan proportions, and that to fell such a creature requires a special malady — its own venom.

ZONES

Kuthchemes is broken into two distinct zones: the desert approach and the outbuildings, described below.

Desert Approach

The player characters endure days of especially harsh travel upon the approach to the city. The zones immediately around Kuthchemes are windswept, forlorn, devoid of any type of life. Not even the vultures circle the ruins, nor

do snakes or scorpions crawl in the cracked riverbed. The greatest challenge here is thirst and the elements. The hot wind frequently spins off into violent storms that can easily engulf the unwary.

Momentum Spends

- While in the desert approach zone, the player characters can use 1 Momentum to leap across a section of the old riverbed as a free Movement Action.

Doom Spends


- While in the desert approach zone, the gamemaster can spend 1 Doom to conjure up a punishing sandstorm which would cut mobility and vision in half. More Doom can increase the severity of this elemental assault or continue the damage every round spent outside.

The Outbuildings

Here lie the tumbled remnants of the lost empire. Perhaps two dozen of the buildings still survive in some capacity. Another dozen have been reduced to only cracked pillars or splintered arches. The rest have fallen completely, choking former streets and lanes with broken masonry, fractured stone, and shattered idols. The buildings and their remains reflect an older style of architecture, dating back long before

the Hyborian Age, perhaps even predating the Thurian Age. These ancient examples of idols, cornices, joints, and brickwork are things that would be in museums back in the civilized world.

Momentum Spends

- While in the outbuilding zone player characters can spend 1 Momentum to trigger the collapse of a building upon a foe (kicking out the last remaining support, for example). This causes 6  damage to those trapped inside.
- By spending 1 Momentum in the outbuilding zone, the player character can use a pile of rubble to launch themselves in a flying attack at their foe.

Doom Spends

- Conversely, by spending 1 Doom, the gamemaster can cause the implosion of the building the player characters are exploring in the outbuilding zone.
- The gamemaster can spend 1 Doom to trip up the player characters with a piece of hidden debris, spoiling an action or attack, while in the outbuilding zone.

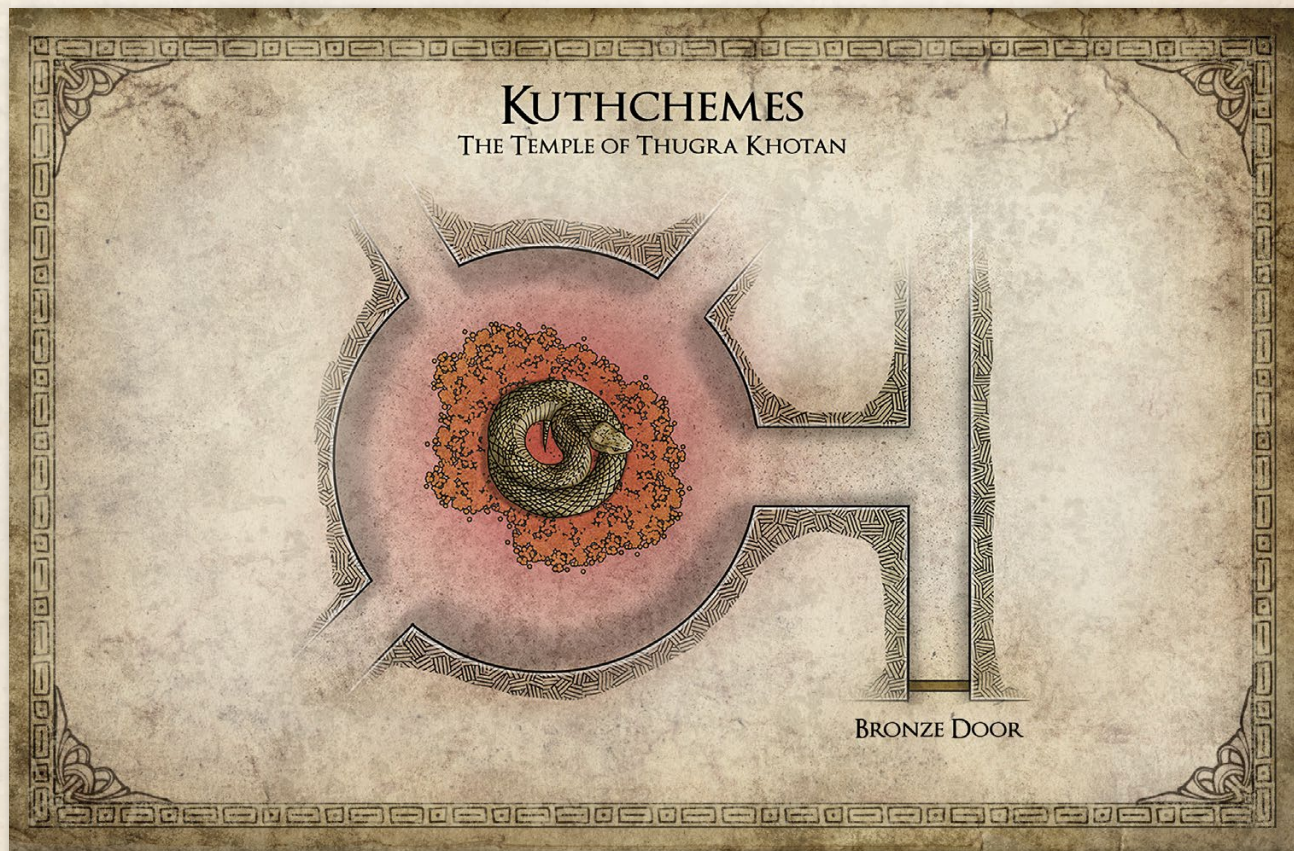
- A player character might be struck in the face with a windborne blast of highly acidic sand, equivalent to one of the blinding powders described on page 164 of the *Conan* corebook. The game-master should spend Doom equal to the powder's Difficulty, per player character affected.

LOCATIONS

The Temple of Thugra Khotan

In the center of the ruins, located on what was once the riverbank is the great temple. Any who view it are struck by its size and its beauty, but also because it stands undiminished by the ages. Perched atop a gigantic terraced eminence is an ivory dome, still shining as if freshly polished by the hands of Stygian slaves. The pinnacle of the dome is capped with bright gold, which defiantly throws back the rays of the sun. Alien hieroglyphics, painted in gold, sprawl for yards around the curve of the dome. The language is one no human can decipher, although a successful Average (D1) Linguistics test gives the player character a sense that it reflects an intelligence inimical to mankind.

There is but one way to enter the temple: up a flight of broad steps and through a great bronze door. Unless player





characters have learned how to open the door from some outside source, unlocking the door is impossible. It requires precise knowledge of pressure points on the door, and an incantation which disables the locking spell. Even with this knowledge, the gamemaster should require a series of difficult Thievery tests and an equally difficult Discipline test to successfully unlock the door.

Upon success of these tests, the door retreats inward, sliding noiselessly down a narrow corridor to rest in place at its end. The floor and ceiling of this tunnel-like aperture are made from the same brilliant ivory as the dome. An opening, a story-high burrow, has been carved out of one side of the hall. From this the horrific guardian of Thugra Khotan will issue, and mindlessly attacks unto death any intruders (see below). Should the player characters win past the guardian, they must open the door a second time. They will not need to perform the same ritual as before; it will simply slide aside as any mundane door.

Waves of crimson light, like breakers of liquid blood, immediately lap over the player characters. This unnatural radiance pours forth from a gigantic red jewel transfixed high up in the vaulted arch of the dome. It pulses and throbs, beating almost like a living heart. Inside the room are countless piles of diamonds, gems, jewel-encrusted blades, and silks. Gold dust shimmers on the very floor. This display of wealth stuns even the most jaded treasure-hunter.

In the shimmering sea, a crystal dais rests directly under the great jewel. Reposing on it is the tall, lean body of a robed figure — Thugra Khotan (see *Approaching Thugra Khotan*, below).

Momentum Spends

- A player character might spend 1 Momentum to puzzle out a section of the alien hieroglyphics, but at the cost of 2  Resolve from the disquieting revelations.
- While in the temple zone, the player characters can use 1 Momentum to slide off the stairs into the fray, gaining a Knockdown on their first attack.
- While in the temple zone, the player character can expend 1 Momentum to slam a foe against the surface of the bronze door, inflicting another  of damage.

Snake Warren

If the player characters defeat or out-manuever the guardian they can descend into the tunnel, into the cavernous abode of the monstrous serpent. Scattered about are the undigested remains of its past kills: bits of metal, bones, and a few odd coins. There are several tunnels branching to the surface, some extending out for hundreds of yards.

GUARDIAN OF THUGRA KHOTAN (NEMESIS)

Whether it was the favor of Set that assigned this monstrosity its task to shield Thugra Khotan, or if his cult conjured it, is unknown. The beast itself sleeps languidly in its warren, able to subsist on the occasional unwary traveler. Use the write-up for the Giant Venomous Snake in the CONAN corebook on page 330, with the following modifications.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Blinding Speed:** The creature may spend a Minor Action to go first in a combat round, without a Doom spend.
- **Dread Creature 3**
- **Fast Recovery (Vigor 5):** The snake regenerates 5 points of Vigor at the start of each turn, unless it is injured by a weapon poisoned with its own venom. It cannot regenerate these injuries but will still recover from others.
- **Inhuman Agility 1, Brawn 1, and Coordination 1**
- **Inured to Poison:** Excepting its own poison, to which it is highly susceptible. It takes double damage from a so-poisoned weapon.

INHABITANTS OF THE RUINS

Kuthchemes boasts few inhabitants. The outer zone is strangely devoid of any type of life. Once in the Outbuildings Zone, the player characters encounter little unless they begin disturbing the ruins. Nests of venomous snakes show malevolence to any who begin inspecting the buildings too closely. Perils such as scorpions can pose a nuisance for any who tarry too long, or blunder in without looking.

At the gamemaster's discretion, there could be another group of desert warrior nomads taking shelter in the ruins, or perhaps they spotted the player characters and now lie in ambush. Thieves have long hunted for a way to this supposed hoard and it is possible that they could encounter a mistrustful, but knowledgeable, ally on this very mission. Cultists of Thugra Khotan may be aware of the trespass upon the holy site and seek revenge while the player characters are occupied with exploration or another foe. There were countless sacrifices to Set in the city, and a restless ghost may still haunt some corner where their life was violently taken.

Approaching Thugra Khotan

Thugra Khotan sleeps on his crystal dais, unchanged since the day Kuthchemes fell. He needs but a mortal anchor

to pull his unconscious mind back into the world. There are several conditions that may trigger his awakening. If a living being approaches within twenty feet or attacks in some fashion (arrow, rock) the horror in the crystal leaps to his defense while the magician surfaces from his magical slumber. This demon vaguely resembles a deformed camel; but splits its guise into two. The other aspect is a monstrous ape. What one sees and experiences the other does as well.

The gamemaster should use the demon of the Outer Dark (Nemesis, Horror) for the camel-beast and the winged ape (Nemesis, Horror) from pages 347 and 343, respectively, of the **Conan** corebook. If one is defeated, the other is immediately banished.

- Thugra Khotan will awaken in two turns. He will be able to understand Stygian and after a few turns, his great intellect will allow him to decipher basic meaning of most tongues.
- At the gamemaster's discretion, the magician may try to enlist the players in his scheme to restore the ancient Stygian empire or he may just simply wish to buy them off until he can concoct a suitable revenge. Any alliance with Thugra Khotan will be fraught with constant danger of betrayal.

THUGRA KHOTAN (NEMESIS)

When the Hyborians were still pulling themselves up from rude savagery, Thugra Khotan was a powerful sorcerer. In his time, he ruled the ancient city of Kuthchemes, which was older still. He sought to conquer the world and made some progress as his armies moved north. They were met by the upstart, degenerate races of the north and stopped. Thugra Khotan and his army were forced to retreat into their city.

His power was legendary, and it is said that he ruled Kuthchemes for the lifetimes of four mortal men before those selfsame barbarians swept south and assaulted the city. His sorcery, however potent it was, did not keep the savages from storming the gates and crawling over the walls like vermin.

As his city fell, Thugra Khotan entombed himself under the great dome at the city's center. There, he put himself into a slumber which was neither life nor death, to wait the long ages ahead until he could awaken again. He locked himself inside with an ingenious mechanism on the door. The city fell to ruin and was eventually forgotten. Apart from the fading ink of dusty scrolls, so too was Thugra Khotan.

In life, he was power-hungry and lascivious. Where other wizards sought the supple flesh of young, comely women only for their value to the demons of the Outer Dark, Thugra Khotan used them to satiate his libidinous nature. There was no depravity to which Thugra Khotan was immune, and some fifty of Kuthchemes' beautiful daughters were

imprisoned in his tomb — buried alive with him, a dark and savage means of prolonging the sorcerer's life for eons.

Having slept for some three thousand years, the black soul of Thugra Khotan now stirs. An inchoate thing, he appears in peripheral glances, a shadowy inky spot in corners and on ceilings. In such a form, he is known as "Natohk the Veiled One" — none have ever seen his face. This life force finds respite in the city of Akbitana but reaches out to find willing minds — especially those of worthy females.

Even for all of this, Natohk, and the body of Thugra Khotan in Kuthchemes, is not alive. He still slumbers, on the edge of the Outer Dark perhaps, waiting for someone to at last unlock his tomb and wake him once again. On that day, he will gather an army anew and tread the world under the demonic hooves of the nightmare mount he will summon (see below).

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
11 (1)	14 (1)	10 (1)	12 (1)
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
8	9	8	



FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	Movement	Senses	Social
2	1	3	1
Fortitude	Knowledge		
2	5		

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 11, Resolve 15
- **Soak:** Armor (Unnatural) 2, Courage 5

ATTACKS

- **Zhaibar Knife (M):** Reach 1, 5 , 1H, Unforgiving 2
- **Sorcerous Might (T):** Range M, 5  mental, Area, Intense

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Spells:** Thugra Khotan has access to any spells from the sorcery chapter of the **Conan** corebook.
- **More Powerful Than You Can Possibly Imagine:** Thugra Khotan is a sorcerer of impossible potency and resilience. Any spell cast against him is one step more Difficult than normal.
- **Inured to Fear**
- **Inhuman Awareness 1, Intelligence 1, Personality 1, Willpower 1**

DOOM SPENDS

- **More than Human:** At the cost of 6 Doom, Thugra Khotan can ignore all damage inflicted upon him for that turn.

NIGHTMARE MOUNT (TOUGHENED, HORROR)

These creatures are not steeds in the mortal sense, though they take the form of such when drawn down from the Outer Dark. They may appear as horses, yaks, donkeys, and camels. Thugra Khotan gained such a nightmare mount by pact. His appeared in the form of a camel.

These beasts never look quite mortal, and one need only glimpse them to see the eldritch fire burning faintly around them. Their hooves leave glowing tracks for minutes after their passing. As unnatural mounts, nightmares do not slow for any terrain. These creatures have been seen running over corpses heaped like hillocks as though along a smooth, paved road.

While a pact creates a contract between sorcerer and demonic mount, that arrangement is not inviolate. These are demons, not animals to be cowed by the will of men. The mount serves the wizard in a limited capacity only. Parameters must be drawn that, if broken, cause the pact to cease.

The reason for this is very specific, though few know it. These demons are not stupid, mindless minions who caper like broken marionettes in the Outer Dark — each of them is a real and powerful demon. They are bound by other, more puissant, lords as punishment for failed service. Conscriptio into the form of an animal is a humiliating, though effective, punitive response for displeasing beings man was not meant to know.

Any of these demons' actual appearance is abhorrent to the human mind. One cannot see their true form and escape with nerves intact. On occasion, the creatures evidence some aspect of their true form on this earthly plane — wings spread, smoky tendrils leaking from nostrils, eyes tripling in size and becoming faceted like those of an insect. Even a slim betrayal of the mortal coil can drive a man to lunacy.

While these demons serve as punishment, none are expected to forfeit their lives in the mortal world. Should the danger become too great, they vanish into the interstices between worlds, never to return to their supposed master. How long each demon so punished must suffer this indignity is up to their lord. The worse their transgression, the longer and more odious their servitude.

While the demon holds this form, it cannot speak or otherwise communicate with anyone. It is as if the hideous, malignant mind watches helplessly behind the dumb animal it now inhabits. Such is the torture of those so disciplined.

These creatures may also pull chariots and wagons. When so doing, they convey to the vehicle the same ability to ignore the vagaries of terrain.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
10	8	5	9
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
11	12	11	



FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	3	Movement	4
Fortitude	3	Senses	2
Knowledge	—	Social	—

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 12, Resolve 9
- **Soak:** Armor 3 (Unnatural Flesh), Courage 5


ATTACKS

- **Hooved Maul (M):** Reach 1, 5 , Stun
- **Unnatural Aspect (T):** Range C, 5  mental, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Familiar**
- **Flight**
- **Mount**
- **Sorcerer:** The nightmare mount may know a variety of spells, but always knows Form of a Beast and Haunt the Mind.
- **Surefooted:** Nightmare mounts are immune to Hazardous and Dangerous terrain.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Trample:** For 1 Doom each, the nightmare mount may trample man and beast underfoot for 3 . This applies to anyone in the creature's path (assuming they have enough Doom). For mass combat, this applies to an entire unit for every 2 Doom spent. The mount must have a running start of at least 30 yards for this to work.

TREASURE

The desert approach and outbuilding zones may contain small pieces of coins, jewelry, or other valuables, half submerged in the sand. Due to their antiquity, such pieces would likely fetch double or even triple the usual market value. The guardian's warren would have a smaller cache of various trinkets or valuables from the ages. The main temple is literally full of treasure, but looting it is impossible while the Horror and Thugra Khotan live.

At the gamemaster's discretion the player characters can make off with 5 Gold worth of treasure without having to slay the monstrosity that is Thugra Khotan. Should they

fell that nemesis, however, they would have gold and jewels with which to buy a throne.

EXPERIENCE

Simply finding the lost city should earn the player characters 50 experience points each. Getting into the temple and defeating the guardian is worth 100 experience points. Coming away with any of Thugra Khotan's loot is worth another 25 experience points. Killing or defeating Thugra Khotan and his Horror is worth whatever the gamemaster decides.

STORY SEEDS

Eyes of the Dead

The cult of Thugra Khotan requires coins bearing his likeness to be placed over the eyes of their dead. Otherwise, they are unable to pay their passage over the Styx and into the darkness beyond. They need mercenaries to venture into the ruins and retrieve these relics so that they may send off a recently deceased high priest or hero.

Curse of the Headless

Generations ago, an ancestor was brought as a slave into Kuthchemes. In a grisly rite, he was decapitated in Set's name. Since then his shade has hounded his family, always pointing to the lost city. Only by burying him, skull and skeleton together, in a proper consecrated grave will the family know peace.

Storm of Sand

While en route to another location, an unnatural storm erupts over the player characters, driving them into the ruins. What called them there? Was it the same force that summoned the storm? Has Thugra Khotan begun to stir after his millennia of sleep?

OSTANTIA, LOST CITY OF ACHERON

Ostantia, once a byword for power and influence, was a legendary city that extended the rule of ancient Acheron to the very Styx. Though its location was clearly shown on ancient maps, none could find it, and rumors that it had been turned to sand by the power of Set became generally accepted as fact.

"Aye. And when the day of reckoning came, the sword was not spared. So Acheron ceased to be, and purple-towered Python became a memory of forgotten days. But the younger kingdoms rose on the imperial ruins and waxed great. And now we have brought you back to aid us to rule these kingdoms, which, if less strange and wonderful than Acheron of old, are yet rich and powerful, well worth fighting for. Look!"

— Orastes, The Hour of the Dragon

In truth, the city lay buried for centuries under tons of silt and sand until a freak storm laid bare the mummified streets of this once great city. To wander Ostantia now is to cross a shattered ruin of massive craters and broken roads. Where once resplendent palaces loomed, there are now only lonely skeletal ruins.

OVERVIEW

The true tale of Ostantia is one of betrayal and sorcery, but to understand its demise is to understand the empire that gave it birth. Acheron was an empire obsessed with sorcery. To fuel this obsession the world was pillaged for offerings and places of power. Where such places were discovered, entire tribes were put to the sword in dark sacrifice. When Acheron fell cities like Ostantia lingered on, keeping the memory of that empire a glowing ember till one by one they were snuffed out.

Ostantia was crushed a century after the fall of Acheron. Khayu-Seka, the Stygian king, lusted after the city's wealth, and while his priests warned him of dire portents his general Si-Tayit was sent to sack the city and slay its praetor Septimus. The priests' warnings were horribly true, and upon Septimus's death a monstrous creature was freed. The shadow of Septimus began feasting upon citizen and pillager alike, shattering buildings and trapping the invaders with sand storms.

It was only through the valiant actions of the priestess Amenirdis that the shadow was quelled. Through great sacrifices and fell alchemy she sealed the shadow within the palace and buried the city within the sands.

THE CITY'S REMAINING EDIFICES

These locations should be used by the gamemaster to play up the creepiness of a newly-uncovered city. Doom should be spent to emphasize the eerie quiet, and characters that talk should be wary of summoning guards deaf to any pleas for understanding.

ATAVISTIC VOYAGE AND SECRETS FROM THE PAST

A sorcerer using the *Atavistic Voyage* spell has great scope to both derail an investigation and unearth mysteries long buried. If the player characters also have within their number a sorcerer with this spell, the *Wayward Journey* alternate effect may also be considered to situate the player characters in the roles of Amenirdis and her disciples. If the gamemaster decides to do this, the journeying characters emerge in a dust storm just after

the two massive explosions have covered the sky in dust. They need to find out what is going on. This could be as simple as having a single encounter with the shadow of Septimus or could be run as an adventure with the player characters hunted through the carnage of Ostantia's fall.

Scholarly characters without the *Atavistic Voyage* spell may also have some understanding of the Fall. A Challenging (D2) Lore test provides the following.

KNOWLEDGE GAINS

Momentum	Knowledge
0	Stygia destroyed the city to ensure control of the Styx river. The city was rediscovered a few years ago and the easy riches have been sacked.
1	The city was an important port with a fabulous and still-buried palace.
2	The city was Acheronian with Shemite and Stygian populations.
3	The city fell due to civil infighting with Shemites and Stygians seeking independence from Acheron.



The Two Craters


Two massive craters have ripped apart the city. Any player character with an Alchemy Expertise of 2+ will suffer 3 mental damage when they realize these were caused by massive explosions! Each is a quarter of a mile in diameter and 200 feet deep. A layer of loose sand covers the crater. Anyone traversing the crater must make an Average (D1) Athletics test, with failure leading to a one-story fall before they can stop their slide. Those subject to the Knockdown Quality are affected in a similar manner, and player characters fighting in the crater can add the Knockdown Quality to their attacks for 2 Momentum with each attack.

Several buildings have shattered and fallen in from the lip of the crater, leading to strange accumulations of walls and statues. While player characters can easily find a place to hide here, there's little to nothing in the way of food or water, and a Challenging (D2) Survival test is needed to remain more than a few hours.

Unearthed Theater

Possibly the largest remaining Acheronian theatre, capable of entertaining hundreds of citizens, this edifice is filled with corpses mummified by the sand. Some litter the stage while others remain hiding from some unknown threat. The stage has perfect acoustics, increasing the Difficulty of Stealth tests by one step, allowing player characters using the Threaten Action to spend 1 Doom and gain the Vicious Quality. The stage has numerous broken trap-doors, allowing player characters to spend 3 Doom to trigger them as a one-story pit trap.


Unearthed Gardens

Some unknown power has caused the gardens to bloom once more. Of the entire city, this is the only color to be found. To an alchemist, the garden is a treasure trove which can be harvested, yielding 5 offerings or ingredients. It's entirely possible that some of these plants have a narcotic pollen (requiring an Average [D1] Resistance test or suffering 1 Fatigue) or poisonous sap (requiring a Challenging [D2] Resistance or suffer 1 Fatigue and 4  damage).

Furthermore, perhaps a malign intelligence waits amongst the leaves (see **Conan** corebook, page 340).

Ruined Streets

The streets of the city are haphazard at best with dangerous and difficult terrain being commonplace. Such metal that remains has been sanded to a high polish, dazzling those unfortunate to have to look past them. Combat is a dirty affair of pits and sundered walls. Cover is commonplace and hiding places easy to come across. Player characters won't get a stand-up fight in the streets, and chases should be brutal affairs with Doom spent on niggling injuries and traps hidden by fellow thieves. Momentum spends should see player characters leaping over broken walls to catch pursuers with a surprising blow and walls toppled with relative ease.

Player characters that take damage can, for 2 Doom, be knocked into a fragile wall which will grant the attack the Stun quality. Alternately, the gamemaster can spend 2 Doom to have loose bricks fall onto player characters causing 3  damage with the Knockdown and Stun Qualities.

Partially Buried Obelisk

This obelisk shows signs that Set and Isis were both worshiped within the confines of the city. While an initially intriguing and beautiful piece of carving, it becomes obvious that it will take several weeks of work to excavate an obelisk which may or may not be intact. The obelisk becomes more interesting when examined by a sorcerer. Its peak is a thin place or a naturally occurring magical circle of power (see **Conan** corebook, page 144). Freak occurrences occur here with lost time, *déjà vu*, and visitors babbling in unknown languages.

The Palace of Ostantia

While the upper floors of the palace have been shattered, the ground floor is still a visible husk rising from the sand. Player characters under attack here have ample cover (See *Ruined Streets*, above) though it is here that Septimus lies buried, and any player character too engrossed in combat or treasure hunting will likely disturb his shadow.

INHABITANTS OF THE RUINS

Though these are ruins of the dead, they are not entirely without life. Even the most remote chance of treasure brings men and women of avarice, regardless of the risk. Those unnatural beings which yet lurk here are even more puissant and dangerous.

Guards and Treasure Hunters

Where there is wealth there are thieves. A gang of deserters from a Shemite garrison have taken to hiding in the ruins and looting from the dead. They do not take kindly to intruders "stealing" their treasure, and ambush anyone they come across. In turn, these deserters are hunted by their former comrades who will happily rob the deserters. All guards and deserters can use the guard from the **Conan** corebook (page 317) although they are armed with slings and short swords.

The Shadow of Septimus

The shadow is a Shadow on the Wall (see page 187 of the **Conan** corebook) that has grown in power to become a Nemesis. Its power has grown so great that it can now only be contained. So long as the corpse of Septimus is incapable of casting a shadow, the creature will be trapped and unable to use its powers. The shadow is a sorcerer with the spells *Dismember*, *Venom on the Wind*, and *Summon a Horror*, with which it will summon additional shadows on the wall.

The shadow can be used several ways — varying from simple monster to a shadowy hunter that toys with the player characters and haunts their steps.

Amenirdis

A loyal priestess of the Stygian pantheon, Amenirdis took on the task of defeating the horrors of the world. If a player character uses *Atavistic Voyage* they will be seated within her body but, for simplicity, can use their own skills and attributes. Non-player characters who encounter her are generally deferential, but more concerned with escaping the city than obeying commands.

Stygian Warriors and Shemite Citizens

Other player characters should inhabit a Stygian warrior to control for the duration of any dalliance into the exotic past. These Stygian warriors should use the Bodyguard stats (page 313 of the **Conan** corebook) although they will be armed with spears, shields, swords, and daggers and wear bronze helmets and breastplates with a Soak 3.

Players interested in a greater challenge could be granted guard minions (page 317 of the **Conan** corebook) to symbolize weaker members of the Stygian invasion force, or simple citizens striving in the face of occult horror.

TREASURE

With peril comes reward, should one first survive the peril. Below are suggestions for the value of what a given group may haul from these storied ruins.

Robbing the dead

- Those who stop to loot the corpses in the street will find occasional pieces of jewelry worth 1 Gold. Opportunistic thievery (*Conan* corebook, page 136) can be used each scene to find additional treasures.

The Treasures of Septimus

- Septimus wears gold jewelry equal to 6 Gold per player character and, if defeated during the sacking of Ostantia, he has coffered silver equal to double this amount.

EXPERIENCE

Defeating the shadow in a more permanent fashion is worth 200 experience points, and forming an alliance, defeating or proactively avoiding combat with the shadow or any human faction is worth an additional 100 experience points.

DREAD R'LYEH

Consumed by the ocean, swallowed by the waves, swept from the surface of the earth by the unconstrained raging of the elements... and yet still, the fetid city of R'lyeh exerts its influence upon the lands above, probing and insinuating and corrupting all that walks upon the earth. Sometimes, when the plates of the globe collide with one another, and the waters recede for a time, the city of Cthulhu emerges. The impossible angles of the city, its geometries of madness, call to those whose minds are open and unguarded against the assaults of the city's master and beckon to those whose lust for adventure and for treasure is greater than their sense of self-preservation.

OVERVIEW

Who, or what, built the maddening city of R'lyeh, it is impossible to know. There are some scholars, those who have delved most deeply into the sinister truths which underpin the cosmos, who maintain that R'lyeh does not exist in this plane of reality at all. That this Earth, a place where things as real as the Aquilonian cities and the Stygian temples stand, could sustain a place like R'lyeh is inconceivable. It defies the physical laws of reality. It exists, instead, in some place *alongside* the Hyborian era, coterminous but separate.

The great environmental cataclysms which have sometimes seemed to dredge R'lyeh back to the surface are not as they might appear; instead, these frenetic moments of tempest and tremors are the discharge of great magical energies which, temporarily, draw the dread sunken realm of R'lyeh into alignment with the world upon which men stalk. This, like those instances when stars and other celestial bodies fall into conjunction with one another, is only temporary. Yet, the residue of R'lyeh's momentary intrusion into the world is pertinacious, and it slowly erodes that which we might call reality around it... one day, perhaps, it shall do so permanently and the world itself will be constituted of cyclopean stone blocks, arranged by an intelligence far beyond the limits of anything mortal.

FEATURES OF R'LYEH

It is difficult to truly define one area of R'lyeh as being separate or distinct from the others, so bizarrely do its topographies bleed into one another. There is, however, a tale of a cartographer who made the mistake of attempting to map R'lyeh; when his companions found him, a scant three hours later, he had plucked his own eyes from his head. The place is wholly impossible to represent in terms understandable to the minds of men, and yet there are areas which recur in all stories and fevered recollections of the place, bellowed by dreaming men and women desperate to be awoken.

He has on rare occasions whispered disjointed and irresponsible things about "the black pit", "the carven rim", "the proto-shoggoths", "the windowless solids with five dimensions", "the nameless cylinder", "the elder pharos", "Yog-Sothoth", "the primal white jelly", "the colour out of space", "the wings", "the eyes in darkness", "the moon-ladder", "the original, the eternal, the undying", and other bizarre conceptions; but when he is fully himself he repudiates all this and attributes it to his curious and macabre reading of earlier years.


— "At the Mountains of Madness", H. P. Lovecraft

The Impossible Staircase


A towering, spiraling mass of stone, stretching upwards and curving inexorably in on itself. Its magnitude, and the perspective-warping nature of the non-Euclidean angles which constitute it, mean that what the staircase ascends towards is beyond guessing — if it even possesses an ending and does not simply go eternally upward, into the stars and

those even stranger worlds lurking behind them. Each stair is substantially taller than a man but designed for creatures smaller than the master of R'lyeh is purported to be. What these eldritch servitors might have been is uncertain — perhaps the star spawn which, it is inscribed in the black books of Eibon and other maddening texts, Cthulhu brought with him? Something crueler and uglier still? But their mark has been left in the dripping stone of the city they once inhabited.

Momentum Spends

- Using Momentum can allow a player character to fling an enemy from the top of one of the vast stairs onto the cold, hard stone beneath. This inflicts 5  damage to the unfortunate victim. Additionally, using Momentum can enable player characters to scale these huge, dripping planes of stone, gaining distance when fleeing or drawing closer if in pursuit.

Doom Spends

- The gamemaster can spend Doom to have a foe of the player characters knock one prone and force them to look upwards, into the unending, unraveling madness roiling above. What the player characters witness in that illimitable space is entirely up to the gamemaster and the player to determine — could it be some glimpse of a dreadful future yet to pass? A ravaging horde of teeth and necrotic flesh poised to consume the earth? An ocean of blood and bone into which all living things will be consigned at the point of death? Whatever the case, it should be treated as a Threaten Attack which causes 6  mental damage.

The Great Door

The vast seal of R'lyeh, carved with the symbol of Cthulhu; the door behind which the Great Priest is concealed and contained and protected in his aeon-spanning sleep. The substance from which it is carved is impossible to guess and how it was done is likewise impossible to discern. The portal is surrounded by jambs and hinges, so many and of such complex design that it seems as though it could not possibly be opened. Instead, it is as if each set should resist the attempt to drag it open and reveal the darkness within, and yet it is known to open, at certain times, with the smoothness and ease with which an oiled sword is drawn from its sheath. The angle at which the door lies cannot be determined — does it lie flat, a vast trapdoor in the stone, or does it remain upright, stark against the gulfs behind it? While such a question has been known to drive men to distraction, what the door hides is more maddening still.

Momentum Spends

- The ingenious player character can utilize the shifting angles and perspectives of the Great Door to delude, confuse, and wrongfoot their opponents. Spending 2 Momentum can enable the player characters to attack a foe for a second time; this time, leaping from above when moments before it had appeared the enemy towered over them.

Doom Spends

- Amid combat, the gamemaster can spend 3 Doom to have a single tentacle emerge from the door, flailing about it — use the giant constrictor snake (see *Conan* corebook, page 329) for the tentacle, while not using any of the psychological attacks — to dismiss those who would seek to wake Cthulhu before the proper time.

INHABITANTS OF THE RUINS

Little lives in the ruins of R'lyeh, and that which does is fundamentally unlike any life which occupies the pure, solid earth of the Thurian continent. It is twisted, warped, pestilential and gazing upon it is enough to drive even the most redoubtable men and women to the edge of sanity. When populating R'lyeh, utilize the *Otherworldly Foes* section of the *Conan* corebook (page 345), but emphasize the physical strangeness of the creatures, constantly change the descriptions, and never let players become used to their manifestation.

TREASURE

There is little in the way of treasure to be found in R'lyeh; glinting idols depicting the unseen master of the city can be purloined but beyond this, there is nothing.

EXPERIENCE

Visiting and escaping the sunken ruins of R'lyeh can be rewarded by the gamemaster with the following experience points.

- 100 experience points for escaping alive, and still sane, from Cthulhu's residence.
- 100 experience points for battling the tentacle of Cthulhu, successfully — it may only be one small part of the mountainous god's form, but it is a part.
- 50 experience points for bringing back some part of the impossible city to the Thurian continent.

STENOPOS, THE POISON CITY

One of many towns founded by the Acheronians during their age of supremacy, Stenopos sits on the banks of the Pamukale River that winds through the ridge of mountains that separates eastern Argos and western Koth. Lost in these wilds, this site was famed for its extensive baths and hot springs, but is now abandoned utterly, shunned by even wildlife. Even the vegetation seems to shun it, and the surrounding ground is relatively sparse of grass and trees, though elsewhere within sight the area is relatively normal.

From a distance, it looks inexplicably intact, and even inhabited, as evident in the haze of yellowish smoke that hangs over it. The town itself is organized along a single, central boulevard leading to the riverbank, all buildings facing it and small side-streets running parallel to the river itself. Squat bath-houses and small buildings stand relatively intact, with wide pools standing open to the sky.

Curiously, the streets are empty of all vegetation. No grass protrudes between flagstones, no vines or trees have reclaimed the area, and no trace of paint or enamel shines from the building's surfaces. The once-white marble of the town is now a dull, dingy color not unlike that of yellowed bone.

The Burning Haze

As one approaches Stenopos, its true state becomes more evident — the city itself is utterly abandoned and a strange and unpleasant smell hangs above it, creating a light yellowish fog. Made up of white stone and marble, the city's walls and structures are seemingly intact, but all wood has disappeared, causing some collapses.

Close examination of the walls themselves reveal that the formerly polished surfaces have been eroded away almost uniformly, with pockmarks and pits where weaker stone seemed to dissolve, as if the entire city was soaked in some acid. A successful Average (D1) Alchemy test reveals that this is not far from the truth, and that the smell in the air is a sulfuric mix of gases normally associated with hot springs, but these should be relatively harmless. Minor exposure to the gas is harmless but staying for an extended period in the ruins might be irritating to the lungs, eyes, and skin. This gas is the apparent cause of the city's decay, but to a seemingly impossible degree.

The Baths of Stenopos

The baths that the city was famed for are plentiful, and the markings on the entrances to each indicate a variety of services and their prices, though the exact language is in the

Acheronian tongue and requires a successful Challenging (D2) Linguistics test to decipher. Each contains small pools with spigots to control the flow of the hot water, empty pools that were used for cooling and rinsing, tables for massage and oil applications, stone basins for mixing various substances to be applied to visitors, and the like. Some of the spigots still work, and a few still drip intermittently, their stone spouts boasting mineral encrustations hanging downward and solidifying below. Everything about the place seems utterly innocuous, though

The Horror Beneath

The gamemaster can leave Stenopos an intriguing — if minor — mystery or introduce a reason for the city's destruction in the form of a gaseous entity from the same underworld that birthed Thog of Xuthal, an unspeakable abomination (page 345 of the *Conan* corebook) of a gaseous and extra-terrene nature. It lacks the Inhuman Brawn and Gargantuan Maw attack but has the Incorporeal 5 Quality. The creature solidifies out of the acidic haze and its Tentacle attacks have the Persistent 1 Quality rather than Knockdown, causing an acidic burning to those it strikes. It will linger and skulk around the fringes of vision, emerging from beneath the city to strike at fresh prey.

TOMB OF SEKHETMAATKA

The tomb of Sekhetmaatka is a rock-cut tomb near the bend where the Styx turns south. It does not lie in Stygia proper, but in the desert to the northeast of that bend in the river, a location once held by Stygia, but now unpatrolled and unprotected by any nation.

OVERVIEW

The tomb of Sekhetmaatka was the burial chamber of a powerful necromancer, a priestess of great wealth and power from Stygia when it was a more powerful nation, in the years when it built Zamboula. Sekhetmaatka's full title is Priestess of Set, Keeper of All Set's Mysteries, Keeper of the Third Mystery of Derketo, Arit Priestess in the House of the Black Circle, Priestess of Horology in the Craftsmen of Derketo's Temple, and Unnu Priestess in the House of the Black Circle. She was married three times in her life, to men who were able to help her achieve her goals of wealth and power. The tomb has been looted, either recently or in the past, but the site is difficult to find and reach in the desert. The Shemites fear the location and may try to keep people from finding it.

ZONES

There are no sources of natural light in this tomb, and no sources of magical light. If the tomb is occupied, there may be lit torches in various rooms. The gamemaster must make that determination.

Entry Stairway

The passage narrows at the base the of the stairs and a stone slab, which had been lowered by ropes when the priests left the tomb, once barred the way, but it is now shattered, and the dust and rubble from that shattering covers the steps of this hall and the floor of the next chamber.

Entry Hall

The entry hall is at the base of the entry stairway, filled with sand that has blown in since the outer door was burst open by would-be thieves. Inscribed along the wall are protective hieroglyphs, as well as the Sekhetmaatka's names and titles. The entry chamber is a chamber of historical record. It has two large pillars holding up the weight of the room. This chamber concludes with a steeply sloping passage but not steep enough that it cannot be negotiated without stairs.

Hall of the Deceased

The Hall of the Deceased is a sloping passage. On each side of this hall are images of the Sekhetmaatka and smaller images of her three spouses, along with at least four rows of hieroglyphs giving Sekhetmaatka's various religious names and all her titles. The rest of the images show her life story. All the images are in sunken relief. The passage narrows at the base the of the hall a smashed set of stone doors (once closed with a bronze seal) terminates the hall.

Doom Spends

- The gamemaster can cause a cave-in or collapse for 3 Doom. A cave-in or collapse consists of two distinct areas: the bury zone (in the direct path of the falling debris) and the dust zone (the area the debris spreads out to encompass). Characters in the bury zone always take damage from the collapse and can be effectively grappled by the debris (in other words, pinned down); characters in the dust zone may be able to get out of the way. Anyone in the collapsed room is in the bury zone. Anyone in an adjacent area is in the dust zone.
- **Bury Zone Crush (M):** 11 ☠, Grappling, Unforgiving 2.
- **Dust Zone Strike (R):** Range L (adjacent room), 4 ☠

RITUAL DEATH MAGIC

This tomb, like many other Stygian tombs, has many spells inscribed upon its wall, intended for the deceased to use to guide their passage into the otherworld and afterlife. The gamemaster should decide whether these spells have any validity and confer any real benefit, or whether they are merely superstition and meaningless ritual. All these spells are written in a deliberately obscure fashion in an archaic dialect of Stygian, increasing the Difficulty of any attempts to read them by two steps.

Should the gamemaster determine that these spells indeed have magical properties, they should also consider that the Stygians laid many traps for tomb-robbers, and these spells might mask their true nature within seemingly beneficial intentions, cursing those who wilfully use such magic without permission of the gods.

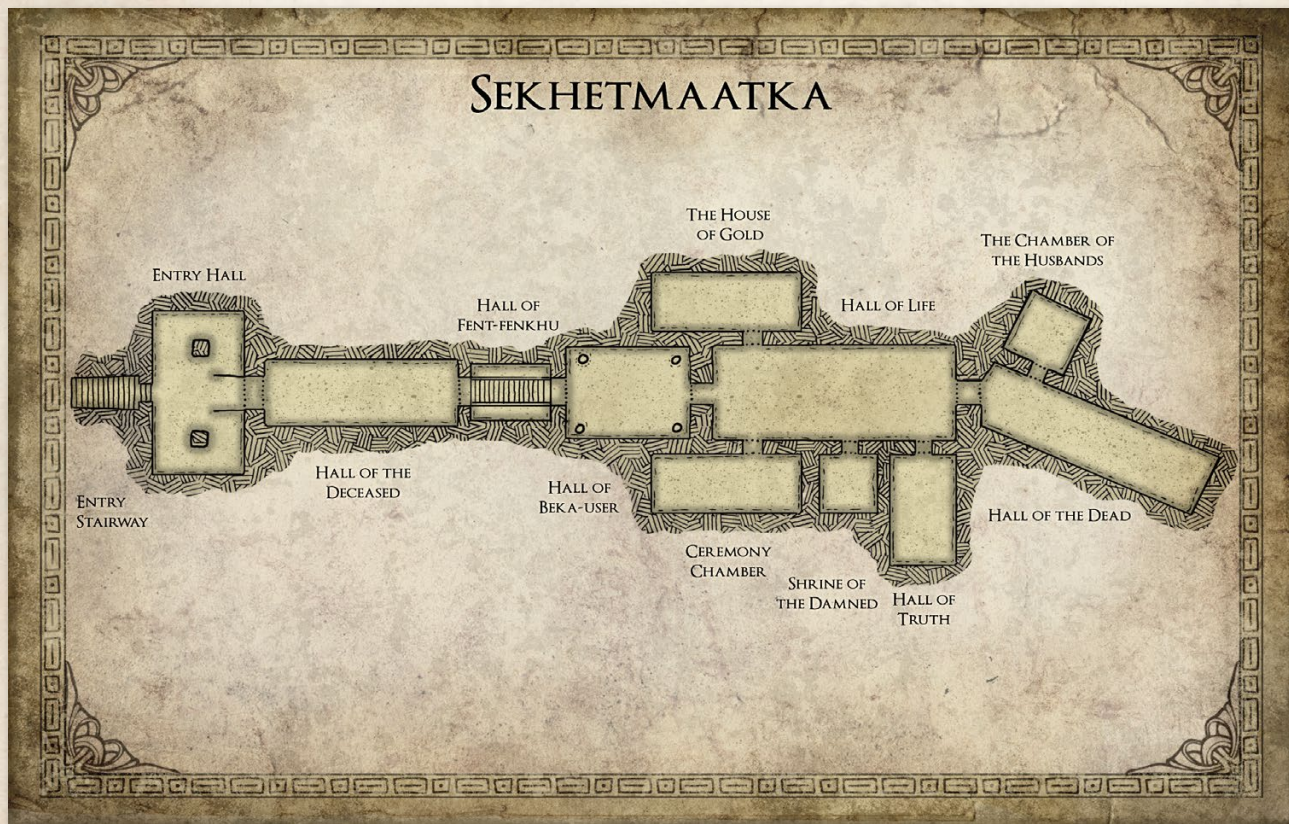


Hall of Fent-fenkhu

This is a steep stairway continuing the descent. The head of Set adorns the far wall, watching the sloping hall and those who ascend or descend. A spell for the deceased is written out on the left-hand wall as one descends, giving the deceased the power to turn into serpent so she can glide unharmed to the remotest parts of the world. The ledge on that side of the hall (floor level to the entry door) was for the placement of mummified snakes. These mummies have not been looted for their amulets.

Along the right-hand wall another spell is written as one descends, spelling out the formulae for turning the deceased into a crocodile so that she can strike terror into the hearts of all who sees her and so that she can seize her prey when and where she wishes. The ledge on that side of the hall (floor level to the entry door) was for the placement of small mummified crocodiles, one of which was looted, but the other five are intact. At the base of this wall is a desiccated corpse — the looter of the crocodile mummy above had fallen off the niche and broke his neck. Three lapis lazuli amulets are clutched in his hand.

The passage narrows at the base the of the stairs and a set of stone doors (closed with a bronze seal) bars the way. This doorway has been unsealed but remains intact. Opening the doors requires a Challenging (D2) Athletics test and is extremely noisy.



Doom Spends

- The gamemaster can spend Doom to activate one animal mummy per point of Doom spent. Use the attributes for a normal animal but add the Brain-dead and Unliving Qualities.
- A sorcerous foe can spend 1 Doom to transform into a serpent or crocodile.

Hall of Beka-User

This is another sloping passageway, but with at least four statues of ungainly bestial gods in the corners. A powerful spell, usable by the undead, is inscribed on the north wall, which teaches the deceased how to take the form of a golden hawk so it can fly to the sun and visit all of the sky at will. Another spell is inscribed on the east wall, giving the deceased the secret name of Set so that she can be reborn in the afterlife in a place called the Mesqet, as well as giving the deceased the power to enter and leave his tomb at will. Yet another spell is inscribed on the south wall, which tells the deceased how to grab the east and north winds by their hair, the west wind by its beautiful body, and the south wind by its eye, and force them to take the deceased where they wish to go.

Momentum Spends

- Player characters can use 1 Momentum to topple a statue onto a foe.
- Player characters can use 1 Momentum to use one of the statues as cover to escape an attack.

Doom Spends

- Spell-casting, intelligent and unliving foes may perform one or more of the following Doom spends, each costing 1 Doom:
- Cause powerful winds to blow toward the surface, knocking the player characters prone.
- Transform into a golden hawk to escape.
- Teleport out of the tomb to the entrance.

Hall of Waiting

The Hall of Waiting is not really a hall, but is essentially just a deep, dark pit. The walls are inscribed with images of the gods of the afterworld. This pit is 60 feet deep and ten feet across, and a loathsome demonic Horror lives at the bottom, with the gamemaster determining its exact nature. A wooden bridge may have been lain over the chasm if the tomb is occupied by living beings.

Momentum Spends

Player characters can spend Momentum in one of the following ways:

- Three Momentum to spring against the wall to jump back across.
- One Momentum catch onto the far wall if a jump test fails.
- Two Momentum to knock the bridge (if present) into the pit while enemies are on it.

Doom Spends

- The gamemaster can spend 1 Doom to have the Horror rise out of the pit and attack the player characters.

Hall of Life

This level hall is inscribed with paintings of every-day life, especially showing servants doing labor while the Sekhetmaatka, in giant form, watches. The floor was once littered with hundreds of ushabtiu figurines doing labor or just standing, but these have all been knocked or swept up against the walls in large disorganized piles. Six columns hold up the ceiling and depict gods, workmen and Sekhetmaatka. Prayers entreating the ushabtiu to do work for the deceased are inscribed on the walls. Five doorways lead further into additional chambers.

Hall of the Dead

This is the burial chamber of Sekhetmaatka. Within the burial chamber is a large, red granite sarcophagus containing her mummy. The walls are painted with the funerary texts and images of the gods. The chamber also has several statues of lumbering monster-gods, including a sinister figure of Set.

Doom Spends

- The gamemaster can animate the statues for 2 Doom.



The House of Gold

This is where most of the treasure is stored. There are four columns in the room and treasure is piled all over the floors. Great texts of hieroglyphs decorate the walls. See *Treasure* on page 34 for more details.

Doom Spends

- The gamemaster can cause a cave-in or collapse for 3 Doom. A cave-in or collapse consists of two distinct areas: the bury zone (in the direct path

of the falling debris) and the dust zone (the area the debris spreads out to encompass). Characters in the bury zone always take damage from the collapse and can be effectively grappled by the debris (in other words, pinned down); characters in the dust zone may be able to get out of the way. Anyone in the collapsed room is in the bury zone. Anyone in an adjacent area is in the dust zone.

- **Bury Zone Crush (M):** Reach 3, 11 , Grappling, Unforgiving 2
- **Dust Zone Strike (R):** Range L (adjacent room), 4 

Ceremony Chamber

This chamber depicts the opening-of-the-mouth ceremony in elaborate detail, allowing the deceased to occupy his mummy or any of the statues in the tomb, among other powers and abilities granted. Should the name of the deceased be defaced entirely from this room, the deceased's ka will be seriously crippled and impoverished, if not killed.

Doom Spends

- A mummy placed in this chamber can be animated by expending 1 Doom.


Shrine of the Damned

This chamber has the Stygian Book of the Dead carved on its walls. This chamber also holds a whole procession of statues depicting various bestial and shambling gods with small altars for living sacrifices. The floor is blood-stained and black candles can be found inset within small niches in the walls, candles that, when lit, release a black light that make the hieroglyphs and pictures glow with an inhuman intensity. Just entering this room generates a Fear 4 effect.

Momentum Spends

- Player characters can spend 1 Momentum to topple a statue onto a foe.
- Player characters can spend 1 Momentum to use one of the statues as cover to escape an attack.

Doom Spends

- The gamemaster can spend 1 Doom to have the room make a Threaten attack against anyone in the room.
- **Inhuman Intensity of Evil (T):** Range M, 8 , mental, Unforgiving 2

TOMB OF SEKHETMAAKA STORY SEEDS

The Hungry God

A cult has set up operations in the tomb of Sekhetmaatka, worshipping some dark god or goddess, and sacrificing people to the horror in the Hall of Waiting. The player characters may be hunting the cult because they have stolen a person or thing, or they have killed someone the player characters would rather they not have killed.

The cult is led by a man named Nesbu-hetep. He is an intense man, appearing as impassive as an iceberg, with an inapproachable air, but he seethes with passionate emotions — usually a brooding, jealous vengefulness. Once his emotions are engaged, Nesbu-hetep's energy and drive are legendary in their unswerving dedication toward a goal. He seeks a deeper purpose in life, and always tries to find meaningful patterns in events, thoughts, and actions. He delves easily into the powers of the mind that others are afraid of, often pondering issues of birth, sex, death, and regeneration. He is subject to obsessive drives that are resistant to reason, and easily dominates or controls lesser wills. He has set up a cult devoted to gluttony and feeds the horror at the bottom of the pit people who have wronged him or his cult members in the past. He also loves to ponder and meditate in front of the mummies.

There will be an appropriate number of cultists with him for the group of player characters coming for him, and they are spread throughout the tomb.

Sekhetmaatka Arises

An enterprising Shemite is grave-robbing from Stygian tombs to give the local apothecaries enough mummies to make potions and ointments from. However, the Stygians are hunting this man so he is now seeking old Stygian tombs outside of the current borders of Stygia. He is the one who has desecrated this tomb, and now the spirit of Sekhetmaatka has taken over his body so she can live again, wielding her necromancy to potent effect. Unfortunately, she cannot be killed, as this body is already dead, and if the body is destroyed, she can take over another.

To destroy her, the player characters discover they need to go to the tomb and smash the amulets and funerary items around her mummy. Sekhetmaatka can animate her mummy or the mummies of her husbands at will. She may have employed additional, mortal guards to protect her tomb.

The Horror in the Tomb

The player characters may be chased by authorities or other hostile party into the ruin, which seems to offer the only chance for escape. Perhaps the authorities fear the ruin, or the player characters just see an opportunity to ambush or lose the pursuers. Unfortunately, the horror in the Hall of Waiting awaits...

The Hall of Truth

This chamber is empty of funeral furnishings and is decorated with elaborate hieroglyphs.

The Chamber of the Husbands

This is a burial chamber for the three husbands of Sekhetmaatka. It has a statue of Sekhetmaatka and the three husbands. It also has a statue of a shambling and bestial demon-god. Three sarcophagi and the mummies within lie in this chamber.

Momentum Spends

- Player Characters can spend 1 Momentum to topple a statue onto a foe.
- Player Characters can spend 1 Momentum to use one of the statues as cover to escape an attack.

INHABITANTS OF THE RUINS

There is a horror of some kind living at the bottom of the Hall of Waiting. The gamemaster can choose the horror desired. It will attack anyone falling into the pit. Otherwise, the inhabitants are determined by the gamemaster or by an appropriate story seed (see below).

TREASURE

The treasure held in this tomb is mostly various objects owned by Sekhetmaatka during her life and various funerary items, including furnishings for the deceased's ka to recline in. Most of it would only be of value to collectors. However, there are often a few rare pieces to be held here. There are three silver bound mahogany chests, sealed with heavy golden locks, a green statuette of a serpent, and bronze khopeshes. The strangest item within is a strange black cylinder with a heavy, carved lid. Four feet tall and three feet in diameter at the point of widest circumference, about half-way up its height.

XOC-SASTUN

In the earliest years of the Hyborian Age, Kosala was populated by a race of strong brown people, but this was not always so. Before the arrival of this race, a race that sprang from the Lemurians dwelled in this land, a race that was olive-skinned and slender, a race with a penchant for both necromancy and peace. These Old Kosalans built temples and palaces, often out of strange green stones, and used jade in much of their art.

“Only a few hundred folk dwelt there, decaying remnants of a once great race. Tolkemec said they came from the east, long ago, from Old Kosala, when the ancestors of those who now dwell in Kosala came up from the south and drove forth the original inhabitants of the land.”

— Olmec, “Red Nails”

OVERVIEW

Xoc-Sastun was a major trading city of Old Kosala, sitting astride one of the major river arteries of the jungle kingdom as well as the juncture of three major caravan routes. The city was a powerful hub, particularly in the trade of jade. It was also well known for its jade craftsmen and artisans. The Old Kosalans built Xoc-Sastun on the remains of an even older ruin, a forgotten civilization which died out during the Great Cataclysm or before. The society eventually gave way to massive decadence, and vile necromantic cults took the seats of power. When the modern Kosalans began their invasion, the inhabitants of Xoc-Sastun opted to undertake a powerful ritual, and the whole city is said to have committed mass suicide upon the promise that one day they would rise again in vengeance.

The ruin itself is oval, with chaotic streets laid out without a clear pattern, although eventually the roads converge toward a temple in the center, a temple where the demon-god of Xoc-Sastun once dwelled. If the city had walls, they have long since been used for other purposes, for none now remain. Overgrown by jungle, explorers may well find themselves several blocks within the ruin before realizing it. Most of the ruins are of the strange green stone found in other mysterious “X”-named cities.

Cemeteries are prevalent, with entire sections of the ruin devoted to tombs, stupas, catacombs, monuments, charnel houses, and graves. By far the most numerous of

these markers are the ancient *stupas* — mound-like graves containing the relics of powerful necromancers and mystics. Many of the overgrown blocks are gargantuan, and a few of the tombs are small palace-like edifices the size of Nemedian manor-houses. Toward the center of the ruin, as one approaches the central temple, the architecture includes groined vaults connecting the various buildings and buttresses. The jungled floor of the city is littered with the skeletons of explorers who did not return to tell of what they found here.

Most Kosalans avoid the ruins despite the wealth of jade still held in the city’s ancient coffers, but the boulders surrounding the jungled river flowing past the ruin are still a major source of jade. Most treks to the ruin begin in Sravasti Kan, a Kosalan city about six miles to the south. The winding trails to Xoc-Sastun from Sravasti Kan are nearly 12 miles long. The site is still visited by mystics and cultists, who come to meditate at the funeral sites within. Rumors of three stupas which were used to trap three demons persist to this day, although no one has definitively found them.

ZONES

Xoc-Sastun can be broken down into three major zones: the outer ruin; the inner ruin; and the central tower complex.

Outer Ruin

The outer reaches of Xoc-Sastun are heavily overgrown. The surrounding jungle has made considerable inroads into the ruin, and travelers may well walk deep into this zone before realizing they have crossed the ruin’s threshold. Most of the remnants here are smashed or broken. As one moves toward the inner ruin, more and more structures can be seen. This region is dotted with cemeteries, with small green stupas being the most common. Gargantuan green blocks, low green stone walls, and bits of jade can be found throughout. The green color of the jade and stones helps to camouflage the ruin. There is an eldritch feel here, and the trees, vines, and bushes all seem to grow and twist into sinister forms. The boles of many of the trees twist and form demonic visages. One giant tree growing out of a particularly large (but now destroyed) stupa has no less than 17 of these horrific visages. This tree is called “Matsu Naga” by the Kosalans.

There are several more-or-less intact structures here as well, including many colossal mausoleums and a few palatial mansions of ancient lords. The entire city was once under a green stone roof, but this has long since collapsed, and chunks of it lie at random, as well as many small pebble-sized flakes. The more portable and/or valuable pieces have since been looted.

MATSU NAGA (NEMESIS)

Matsu Naga is the name of a giant tree in the outer ruin, a tree with the visages of 17 horrifying beings grown into its trunk. Some mystics claim they can hear the voices of nature spirits and others the voices of demons speaking into their minds. The 17 faces are said to have their own wills and may either help those around them or harm them. The tree seems to respond to life energy around it, but whether it is good or bad is another matter. It has an evil reputation among common men.

ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
10	10	13	14 (2)
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
—	14 (2)	12	



FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	3	Movement	N/A
Fortitude	4	Senses	3
Knowledge	3	Social	—

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 20, Resolve 18
- **Soak:** Armor (Hardened Bark) 4, Courage 6


ATTACKS

- **Branch Lash (M):** Reach 3, 6 , Grappling
- **Sorcerous Might (T):** Range M, 5 , mental, Area, Intense

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Inhuman Brawn 2**

DOOM SPENDS

- **Blood Drain (M):** If Matsu Naga has a living victim grappled, it may suck the blood from the victim by spending 1 Doom. Range C, 7 , Unforgiving 2.
- **Empower Evil:** The gamemaster can spend 1 Doom to give villains up to 3 Momentum or 3 Doom for their own powers if they are in the vicinity (line of sight) of the tree.

Momentum Spends

- The player characters can spend 2 Momentum, and the tree will lower its branches so they can climb into it for safety — or to reach a roof.
- The player characters may use 1 Momentum to swing from a branch to reach a roof, the top of a statue, or to land on a foe.
- The player characters may use 1 Momentum near the tree (line of sight to the faces) to harness the magical energy of the tree to maximize their spells, as though they had spent up to 3 Momentum.
- By meditating in front of Matsu Naga, and spending 2 Momentum, player characters can gain some insight into the past — a vision, a past-life memory, or a random thought that turns out to be a major clue.

Xu Kusa, the Inner Ruin

There is no strict line of demarcation between the outer ruin and Xu Kusa, the inner ruin. The number of trees diminishes, and the jungle overgrowth is much less pronounced here, but the remnants are much more intact. Here, the ground in places is graveled with green stones from the collapsed original roof. Much of the area is still festooned with vines and bushes, but even these diminish the closer one gets to the central tower. The stupas and monuments are less demolished, and left-over offerings by mystics and sorcerers paying homage to the ancient necromancers buried within can easily be found. Many of the extant roofs are groined vaults with grotesquely glowing stones, radiating a sickly green light.

Treta Yuga, the Central Tower Complex

The central tower complex, called “Treta Yuga”, consists of a series of round chambers surrounding a windowless tower of green stone. A strange, soporific plant grows around the outer chambers, its vines climbing high around them. People who stay overlong in Treta Yuga are said to mutate into horrible things, and legends hold that a demonic god, also named Treta Yuga, once lived in this tower, worshiped by the ancient Kosalans. It may still lurk within. The complex is structurally intact, and non-reptilian animals will not approach it willingly.

Soporific Flora

Toward the central tower grows a quantity of soporific flora.

Momentum Spends

- Player characters can spend 1 Momentum to climb the vines to the top of structures easily.
- Player characters can spend 2 Momentum to rip up a plant by the roots and use it like a whip that casts *Gaze of Set* on foes, potentially putting them to sleep.

Doom Spends

- The gamemaster may spend 1 Doom to make the player characters fall asleep. This Doom expenditure casts *Gaze of Set*.
- The gamemaster may spend 2 Doom to make the player characters fall asleep and enter a nightmare realm — they don't realize their physical bodies are asleep. This Doom expenditure casts *Gaze of Set* and *Haunt the Mind*.

Mé Nyo's Lair

Mé Nyo (see page 37), a necromancer, has made a home of sorts in the ruin near three large stupas. Her lair is a complex of four buildings linked by underground tunnels. Through magic, and by appeasing the demon-god, Mé Nyo has gained some mastery of this environment. However, the mutability of reality in this area can also be used by player characters to their advantage if they realize Mé Nyo doesn't really control the area — the area of this lair simply responds to those with strong will.

Momentum Spends

- Mé Nyo keeps a lot of relics, artifacts, and trinkets haphazardly strewn about her lair, on tables, shelves, hanging on twine, or piled on the floors. For 1 Momentum, a player character can find something useful for their situation — a pin, a rag, a bone, a weapon, an obstacle, an ingredient, a clue...
- Jade is strangely malleable in this place. By spending 2 Momentum, a player character can take some jade and manipulate it into a jade item of a desired form, of the same mass. Once so molded, the jade becomes fixed. The gamemaster may require a Craft test based on the desired quality and detail of the attempted item.
- By spending 3 Momentum, a player character can block a Doom spend made by the gamemaster on behalf of Mé Nyo.

Doom Spends

- Mé Nyo can spend 1 Doom to alter the landscape. She can open chasms or pits under the feet of her enemies and thus separate them into smaller, easier to handle groups. She can create caltrop-like spikes on the ground, create ladders on the walls, and make other cosmetic changes to the environment by warping reality to her will.
- Mé Nyo can spend 2 Doom to make her environs into weapons, causing walls to collapse onto enemies, fling stones at enemies, or erupt in such a way that animals (usually cobras) hurl themselves at her enemies.

INHABITANTS OF THE RUINS

Though these ruins are unnatural and twisted, they are also home to many natural animals and creatures.

Animals

The most commonly found inhabitants of the ruins are snakes. The glowing gems in the central area cause many of them to grow larger than normal. In the water, such as along the river or in various pools throughout the ruin, lurk marsh crocodiles. Again, many are larger than normal. Cobras are the most common of the snakes found slithering through the slimy grounds of the ruin. The second most common are green arboreal pit vipers. The pit vipers are particularly nasty because their coloration matches the color of the stones.

There is also a clan of orangutans who live in the rainforest surrounding the ruin. Several are mutated, with additional limbs growing out of strange places, extra eyes, increased intelligence, tails, and other weird elements. These orangutans are aggressive and violent unless placated with gifts.

Hairy, two-horned rhinoceros can also be found in the area. They spend most of their time in mud wallows near the river and tend to be solitary unless mating or with their young.

Less common, but occasionally seen, are tigers. They do not approach the inner zones of the ruin, but occasionally roam the outer ruin looking for an easy meal among inattentive mystics meditating beside the stupas.

Mé Nyo

Mystics meditating beside the relics of the Old Kosalan necromancers are not a common sight, but they may be encountered. Tomb robbers are also a potential threat. However, there is a necromancer making her home in Xu Kusa, the inner ruin. Her name is Mé Nyo, and she seeks the location of the three stupas said to contain demons instead of relics.

STORY SEEDS

Shadowed City of Suicides

The player characters find a stone tablet. Upon reading it, one is immediately able to see the ghosts of the ancient inhabitants who committed suicide — and worse, the ghosts can now see the reader. The ghosts ignore anyone who has not read the text and try to kill the one(s) they can see. As a further complication, the reader sees the city as it once was, not what it is now — making running away from the ghosts difficult because the reader can no longer see rubble in the way. The ghosts never leave the city threshold. Once one person has read the text, it has no effect on anyone else until the reader is dead or has fled from the city.

Aberrance

One of the player characters is given the power to alter reality within the confines of the ruin. Anything they suggest suddenly becomes real but, every time it happens, one of the other player characters suffers. Each use of this power gives the gamemaster 3 Doom to spend, and horrible things happen. Stones could fall on someone. A floor gives way to an underground vault. A crocodile attacks from a mucky old fountain filled with brackish water from recent rains. A friend's spine erupts with

stegosaur-like plates. A warrior's arm withers. Someone coughs up a swarm of live insects.

The horrors are limited only by the gamemaster's fiendish imagination.

The Captives of Mé Nyo

Mé Nyo (or another necromancer) discovered a spell to locate the three demon-filled stupas. To cast the spell, she must sacrifice 17 captives. The player characters may be there for an unrelated reason and simply discover the captives, or they could have been sent by someone's relative to rescue one or more of the captives, but either way, the captives are found. They have been sedated with lotus drugs. Unbeknownst to the player characters, Mé Nyo needs a rescue attempt — the sacrifices cannot be made passively. As the player characters try to get the captives out of the city, Mé Nyo stalks and kills each captive one by one, using sorcery, traps, and undead minions (extend the Doom spends from Mé Nyo's lair to cover the route the player characters take). Each captive killed gives her 5 Doom.

As a variant, Mé Nyo could be one captive short, and decide one of the player characters would make an excellent sacrifice.

Mé Nyo appears to be a modern Kosalan of roughly middle age. She is of moderate height, her hair glossy black and her skin almost golden. However, she claims descent from a family intermarried with the Old Kosalans, so she has the blood of that ancient people coursing through her veins, evident in her features. Having spent too much time in the central tower, she has a partially formed face on her abdomen. The face can't move, and the eyes are closed. Her recurring nightmare is one where the face comes to animate life, opening its eyes and growing a true mouth that can speak. She fears this as her inexorable end. Her long robes are arranged to conceal the face's existence, muffled in many layers of clothing.

Adventurous and pioneering, Mé Nyo likes to take on the role of leader. She has strong likes and dislikes and is not shy about expressing them. Straightforward and honest, being uncomfortable with lies, fraud, and deception, Mé Nyo reacts harshly to being deceived. A many-sided woman, she is quick in thought and action. Intelligent, adaptable, and communicative, Mé Nyo is endlessly curious, with a gift for persuasion. She is chatty, even with strangers, driven to communicate almost constantly — a situation at odds with her decision to live a solitary life within the ruins.

Be warned, if she feels she is being deceived she does not hesitate to kill — and then use magic to get the truth out of the corpse. Mesmerism and necromancy are her stock in trade, and she can command cobras to do her bidding — or so it seems. She fears the orangutans and believes they are working against her.

Treta Yuga

A demon god, similar of hideous countenance and build, is said to live within the central tower. Tall, muscular, and hunched over, covered with iridescent scales of blue and purple, its most notable features are its long white teeth and lambent gold eyes. This creature occasionally stalks the city in search of food — or a mate. Named Treta Yuga, the demon-god bends reality to suit it, creating a nightmarish world where the laws of reality become mere suggestions. Unless placated, it can keep people from leaving its city, create surreal events anywhere in the ruin, and even move people in and out of a dreamscape.

This demon-god is uncaring toward humanity except as food or sexual playthings, and usually simply lurks, brooding in the darkness, waiting. One of Treta Yuga's favorite wons is to change the bodies of those who please or displease him, permanently transforming his victims into unrecognizable, degenerate forms.

TREASURE

Jade is plentiful here, both in raw form and as worked treasures. Many of the tombs, stupas, and graves contain jade ornaments on the bodies and relics. In addition to the jade, some tombs may have other gemstones. Most of the tombs have already been looted of the most valuable goods, but many of the more intact tombs nearer the center may have valuable treasures within. Most common are jade figures of gods, snakes, apes, birds, and crocodiles. Some of the tombs may include ancient book covers (the pages long since disintegrated in the tropical humidity), bones of prehistoric necromancers, and jewelry. Assume a single player character can take 10 Gold worth of valuables out of the ruin without serious encumbrance.

XUTHLTAN

Far in the blue mountains between Corinthia and Ophir is a strange, half-buried structure is of an architectural style and make unfamiliar to any other culture of the Hyborian Age, perhaps predating even the Thurian Age itself. Octagonal in shape and terminating in a central spire that juts, spike-like into the sky above like an angry black spear brandished at an unfeeling universe, the structure exudes a somber atmosphere that causes those to behold it to quiet their breath, as if unconsciously afraid of showing disrespect.

I saw its bloated, repulsive and unstable outline against the moonlight and set in what would have been the face of a natural creature, its huge, blinking eyes which reflected all the lust, abysmal greed, obscene cruelty and monstrous evil that has stalked the sons of men since their ancestors moved blind and hairless in the treetops. In those grisly eyes were mirrored all the unholy things and vile secrets that sleep in the cities under the sea, and that skulk from the light of day in the blackness of primordial caverns.

— “The Black Stone”

Made of dully gleaming black stone, the citadel's walls and vaulted ceilings show places where time and depredation has worn away the formerly polished finish, almost as if attempting to strip away the strange, angular hieroglyphs chiseled in a spiral into the walls and central spire. Upon close examination, the stone itself seems to have a

THE VISION OF THE BLACK STONE

Should a player character spend the night within sight of the black temple with its awful spire, they will find that they are beset with an overwhelming desire to sleep. Staying awake is incredibly difficult, requiring a Daunting (D3) Discipline test to resist. Success means that the player character stays awake.

Failing this test sends the player character into a deep sleep, into which they will be plunged into a nightmarish vision of diabolical sacrifices performed in this place in times long since forgotten. In this vision, the castle will be visited by a throng of people in ancient and unrecognizable attire, who begin to enact a horrible ritual inside the central chamber, directly beneath the central spire. Before the altar is a brazier from which emerges a sickly yellow flame that produces a snakelike column of smoke that twists unnaturally and passes through the dome to the outside sky.

First all these votaries indulge in an orgy of debased, writhing dance and flagellation to the tune of a strange piping that seems to arrive on the wind, all overseen by a high priest wearing goat-skins and seeming almost as if half-human. The ritual proceeds into human sacrifice in the form of some villager and then a human infant, whose brains are dashed out upon the central altar.

After this atrocity, the weather changes for the worse, and at the peak of the spire outside, a horrific being emerges, some horror from the Outermost Dark, an entity of ghastly and terrible appearance. Its appearance is the culmination of the ritual, and afterwards, the worshippers, priest, and monster all disappear with the coming of the dawn.

The gamemaster may rule that the player characters are simply witnesses to the event, phantasmal presences unable to affect its outcome, or they attempt to intervene with the ritual. If so, the gamemaster can use descriptions of cultists and the cult leader presented on pages 313–314 of the CONAN corebook, and either an unspeakable abomination or devil of the Outer Dark (pages 345 and 347 of the CONAN corebook). They speak no language the player characters know, and will react in fury to any disruption of their sacred performance.

If the gamemaster wishes to make the encounter inevitable, the Discipline test can be forgone. In this case, the gamemaster must pay 1 Doom per player character and has them all drift off into unconsciousness, to witness — and potentially participate in — these nightmarish events of a forgotten age.

vaguely translucent quality, almost as if absorbing light shining upon it. Examination of the ruin's octagonal central chamber reveals a black stone altar, half-buried in rubble, and in that rubble are obvious scraps of bone, broken and scattered long ago.

Those who know of the castle call it "Xuthltan", a name that predates the dawn of the Hyborian Age itself, though none can say where exactly how they became aware of that name. A successful Daunting (D3) Lore test reveals that rumors of the place have long since circulated amongst the superstitious in Ophir and Corinthia, with an admonition to avoid spending the night in or near the structure. Rumors speak of travelers lost for days to emerge from the mountains with their sanity broken, babbling of grim and terrible rituals and loathsome monsters from beyond this world. None have spoken of hidden treasure or potential riches to be found, so few seek the place out.



YITHIAN LIBRARY

The Great Race of Yith (see *Horrors of the Hyborian Age*), known as such due to their mastery of the intricate process of travelling in time, dedicated themselves to the collection and collation of all knowledge in the universe. It was through this process that they escaped their own destruction and transferred their consciousnesses into the bizarre, rugose, cone-bodies which they inhabited for the millennia in which they colonized earth. Driven from our planet by the looming threat of another species, against whom even the ingenuity and weaponry of the Yithians was virtually powerless, the remnants of their presence linger.

In vast, crypt-like libraries, long since subsumed in soil and sand, and in the strange volumes of arcane history installed in cases wrought of peculiar substances, immunized to age and decay, the Great Race clings on to our world. Those who stumble into those long-abandoned warrens, where knowledge of the future can be sourced amidst the inconceivably detailed histories of the deep past, can emerge shaken by the revelation but wiser than even the greatest and most determined of scholars.

OVERVIEW

Labyrinthine in construction, spiraling downward in vast concentric circles, the Yithian library is a masterpiece of architecture corresponding to a wholly alien aesthetic. Every wall, whether hewn from the earth by technological means, or else constructed from vast hunks of stone and mortar composed according to an unknown recipe, is incised with strange hieroglyphics and patterns. These curvilinear symbols can seem maddeningly familiar to some, as though written in a language they once understood but have now forgotten. Cases filled with peculiar tomes line entire corridors, though many have been dislodged or toppled over in the uncounted centuries since these curving tunnels were given over to dust and emptiness.

The curious volumes the cases contain are written in more languages than the human mind can easily conceive of. Each page is rendered from a tough cellulose material, the characters within marked on the pages in brush-strokes. While the languages are alien, it seems clear that they were written by skilled and intelligent hands... or hand-like appendages.

The libraries of Yith plunge thousands of leagues into the earth, deep beneath the crust and into the thick, boiling magma of the core — only the advanced engineering of the Yithians maintains the integrity of the libraries under the crushing pressure of the shadowed earth and the roiling liquid flames, yet within the musty chambers, one would never guess what lay beyond the walls. In many of the

libraries, however, behind doors openable only by those who were shown the strange techniques of pressure and twisting unique to Yithian physiognomy, there is something else.

Darker abysses, covered by vast, onyx slabs, or by metal-barred trap doors, conceal fouler memories of the ancient world. Precisely what is concealed is now consigned to legend and the primal recollections of those the Yithians possessed or will possess. Some tales speak of strange, polypous creatures which fly on enormous leathery pinions. Others say that the Yithians kept many dread beasts confined in the black pits beneath their repositories of learning. Pray to whichever gods you hold dear for those who one day find out...


FEATURES OF THE YITHIAN LIBRARY

There is much to be found and puzzled over in the aeon-haunted abysses of the Yithian library. The following are some of the most noteworthy.

The Fallen Cases

Perhaps a hundred or more of the enormous, wall-lining cases have collapsed in upon themselves. What disturbed them is unclear... was it simply the combined effects of time and gravity? Was it the upheavals of the earth, the violent contractions of a new age's birth? Or was it the violence which drove the inhabitants from the library in the first place — evidence of the slaughter and madness which left this place, at the last, empty and filled with dust and filth. The cases themselves form a maze of tunnels and peaks; their size means that, even when they have collapsed, the spaces left between them allow for a man to walk with ease beneath. Climbing them, too, is relatively easy. But things are unstable still, despite the ages that these cases have pressed against one another. A misplaced footstep is enough to cause the geography of this peculiar monument to rearrange itself dramatically, and, for those not dexterous enough to change with it, devastatingly.

Momentum Spend


- Player characters can spend Momentum to allow them to swarm quickly up the side of one fallen case or slide down another. Alternatively, the enemy engaged in combat with a player character might be maneuvered backwards and into a gap between two or more collapsed cases — this costs 3 Momentum but causes 4  damage from the fall.

YITHIAN CONSCIOUSNESS

The gamemaster can pick an appropriate player character exploring the Yithian library and declare that they have a sense they have been there before, recalling a distant, long-forgotten and dormant memory. If the player character chooses to remember this memory in detail, they must spend 1 Fortune point. If they choose not to do so, the memory is merely a faint recollection, perhaps just a feverish and half-forgotten dream or something that happened to the player character in a previous incarnation. If they choose to spend the Fortune point, they will have insights into the place that are otherwise unavailable.

Doors which might have been inaccessible can now be opened; uncertainty over a fork in a tunnel is quickly resolved. The player character can also pick out a volume of lore from one of the cases which he or she, somehow, knows will be written in legible, readable terms. The explanation for this uncanny gift is, of course, that at some point in the past (or in the future), the player character has been possessed by a Yithian mind and had their consciousness transposed into one of the huge, cone-shaped bodies of the Great Race.

There are some preconditions which the player character must meet to allow for this.

- The player character must have an Intelligence of at least 10.
- The player character must immediately pay the gamemaster 3 Doom points.
- The player character must accept one 'Dark Memory' which the gamemaster comes up with — in conversation with the player character. This takes the form of a sudden, terrible memory of something which the player character witnessed in their period of temporal displacement — whether a book written in their own handwriting, a sigil carved on the wall which appears to spell their name, or an image of their face carved in petrified wood — this Dark Memory, when invoked, causes 3  Despair and results in the player character making the next test at one higher step of Difficulty.

Doom Spend

- The sudden implosion of a case which plunges an unsuspecting player character onto the stone floor below; the slithering collapse of three cases which had been perfectly positioned on top of one another until the added weight of a Vanir warrior's foot causes it to overbalance... all of these can be triggered with the expenditure of 2 Doom. The game-master can have a great deal of fun with this feature.

The Uncovered Abyss

Whatever the Yithians sought to immure in the darkness, beneath the weight of the vast, onyx slab reinforced with unknown metals and all manner of sigils and protective runes, is impossible to know. While there are many hints in the writings to be found in the library, few concrete examples are ever given. And whatever was contained there once is now long since gone. The trapdoor is flung open and all that is revealed beneath it is an apparently empty pit of dizzying depth. Wind swarms out of the gulf, buffeting and disorienting any brave enough to peer over the edge into the illimitable depths beyond.

Does something, some remnant, still wait in the darkness, lingering, desperate and feral and maddened by millennia of enforced imprisonment and millennia more it has inflicted upon itself? Who can say... and would any dare to find out? The trapdoor itself is a marvel of engineering and the area surrounding the pit is carved with even more runes and sigils, warding against the escape of whatever was once penned in here.

Momentum Spend

- At the cost of 3 Momentum, a player character can seek to push or otherwise trip an enemy into the abyss, killing them instantly. At the cost of 3 Momentum, the trapdoor might be pushed closed, causing a percussive blast as the enormous object slams back into place, inflicting the Staggered condition on all player characters and foes within the Close range of the abyssal pit. This, of course, negates the ability of the characters to push enemies into the abyss!

Doom Spend

- The gamemaster can spend 3 Doom to have one of the hideous, hungry beasts which the Yithians sought to confine emerge after millennia of incarceration, slaving and maddened and seeking *something*, even if it is only an approximate form of sustenance.

INHABITANTS OF THE RUINS

Conceivably, anything might be wandering the Yithian Library. One or two Yithians (as noted above, for full statistics see *Horrors of the Hyborian Age*) might have been left here — their consciousness unable to migrate bodies or else having been unwilling to leave behind some project without completing it. Other treasure hunters might have stumbled upon this place and be able to offer alliance or hostile competition, depending on the circumstances. An underground network of passages might also make a fine home for ghouls (see *Conan* corebook, page 338) or other squalid, hideous beings.

Finally, what lies in the great abyss can be rendered as the gamemaster sees fit, though using the statistics for a Creature of the Far Reaches of the Skies (see *Conan* corebook, page 347) might suit perfectly.

TREASURE

The Yithians left little behind them when they fled — there is no gold here and only a few trinkets, worth a combined total of 2 Gold. The wealth to be had from this expedition into the darkness lies in the thousands of volumes of ancient (and future) history. While most of these volumes of lore will be unreadable, penned in languages entirely incomprehensible to the mortal mind, there are some in the common tongue. Indeed, there are tales of Cimmerian chieftains being made the psychic captives of the Yithians! Finding one of these books is worth 25 Gold to a sorcerer or wealthy scholar, should a buyer be found (an extremely difficult task).

Alternatively, the player characters may bargain with the gamemaster, earning the right to ask one or two questions each about the true nature of the adventure (or campaign) they are bound upon. This, of course, is at the gamemaster's discretion.

EXPERIENCE

The alien, sinister confines of the Yithian library can be profitable to player characters in more than one sense. Below are the experience gains which a player character might receive.

- 100 experience points for securing a readable book of Hyborian Age history.
- 100 experience points for pushing an enemy into the great abyss.
- 100 experience points for invoking the Yithian Consciousness, as described in the sidebar above.

CURSED CITIES

In the western part of the Continent, changing conditions created strange forms of plant and animal life. Thick jungles covered the plains, great rivers cut their roads to the sea, wild mountains were heaved up, and lakes covered the ruins of old cities in fertile valleys.

— “The Hyborian Age”

Nothing on this earth speaks of civilization more than the cities left behind. These are the height of man’s achievement and, even in ruins, remind the rude barbarian of the great cycles of history. For every civilization began in naked barbarism and to such savagery every city eventually returns. These ruined markets, houses, palaces, and great roads are puzzle pieces left behind for later ages to assemble.

While the pictures formed are similar, the details are always unique. In every city, dead or living, lies a collective spirit of those that dwelt there. For those souls exploring the ruins left in this age, pray to whatever god will listen that these spirits are still and at peace with the resolution of their lives. Remember, the dead surround us, and their stories demand audience with the living.

AQUILONIAN UNDERCITY

Hyborians were not the first to settle the Thurian continent. Tribes rose to empires and crashed to dust centuries before the forefathers of the modern age ever set foot upon the earth. Agents of time and cataclysm swallowed the memory of such people. Vestiges of their existence survive in fantastic

song and story, and in a few places artifacts lie undisturbed. Hidden beneath a thriving Aquilonian city lies an entire section of such an elder place.

When the ancient Aquilonians settled in the region, they found pieces of a prior civilization left behind, likely that of ancient Acheron. They moved into the ruins and eventually replaced them with their own structures and came to forget they had ever been there at all. Due to a geologic fluke, a small section of this progenitor city still survives, just below the roots of the new. This is a secret known only to very few; and fewer still would brave its streets for fear of ancient ghosts and chained demons.

ZONES

The Warehouse

This block-long building is located on the edge of the noble district, but its ugly utility is hidden by a high-planked fence. On both sides are loading bays, shuttered with thick oak panels; behind each is a tight grill of iron bars. Inside is the main storehouse for a merchant house that caters to foppish royal intriguers and ladies whose identity is defined by the expense of their apparel. Every item unnecessary to civilization can be found here, and in great quantity. One of this merchant’s specialties is gilded mirrors.

Below the warehouse is the entrance to the underground city. It was discovered by accident when attempting to sink a well. The head of the merchant house quickly realized what he had and began cautiously raiding the treasures below. The workers who found the entrance were paid off and sent out of the city. Only the members of his family know the secret, and the way down. If *The Assassin's Gambit* seed is used (see page 46), this number includes a lone assassin who bought the secret from a spying servant at great price. The well was capped off. A false wall made to look like a piece of the well opens into a crawlspace, which leads to an iron ladder that descends 30 feet to the western edge of the city below. Explorers need a light source, as it is pitch black below.

Momentum Spends

- Player characters can use 1 Momentum to spot a rusted rung before it gives them trouble.
- Player characters can use 1 Momentum to spot a foe below or hear foes coming from above.

Doom Spends

- The gamemaster can spend 1 Doom to have a rusted rung break, requiring the player characters to make a Challenging (D2) Athletics test or fall. As the space is single-file, this would be especially bad if it was the person on top.

- The gamemaster can spend 1 Doom to have foes ambush player characters while they are making their descent; another Doom spend to allow the foes to successfully evade detection.



Fragment of The Elder City

Six buildings and a fallow garden along two streets lie preserved here, contained in the space of about a quarter league. Stone gargoyles, nymphs, and dragons adorn rooflines. Cavernous walls cradle the city in an area that looks like the half-folded hands of a rock giant. There are two ways out of the city, the iron-runged ladder to the warehouse above and the damaged aqueduct to the southeast.

The Streets

Packed earth and oyster shells were used to make the streets. This composition is muddy in some places, but overall remains intact. It is generally the width of a large wagon. Player characters' boots might sink up to their heels as they walk, leaving a wake of watery footprints.



Momentum Spends

- Player characters can use 1 Momentum to spot an attacker.
- Player characters can use 1 Momentum to knock a foe against a building, which brings a gargoyle or other statue down on that foe, causing an additional 3 with Stun effect.
- Player characters can hide in a shadowed recess of a building until a foe is right next to them.

Doom Spends

- The gamemaster can spend 1 Doom to have a player character get suddenly bogged in the mud; losing a boot and a turn of movement.
- The gamemaster can spend 1 Doom to have a chill wind suddenly blow, extinguishing any torches or uncovered lamps. In the time it takes to get them relit, foes can press in for an attack.
- The gamemaster can spend 1 Doom to have a foe get above player characters and knock a statue onto their heads (as the Momentum spend above).

The Scroll House

This is a tiered tower, pillared eaves projecting from each level. It is one central room, with library shelves of scrolls extending unbroken from the ground floor to a second-floor ceiling. For those willing to devote hours of research, the scrolls are in an ancient unknown tongue but several hold illustrations of plants, herbs, and animals that may help advance their medical lore.

Momentum Spends

- Player characters can use 1 Momentum to intuit the meaning of a manuscript — some are historical records, others inventories of storehouses, and more are census figures.

Doom Spends

- The gamemaster can spend 1 Doom to have a particularly promising manuscript crumble due to their careless handling; or perhaps they hold a torch a little too close to the paper, sparking a fire.

The Empty Gardens

Rare flowering beauties and stately trees once flourished here. What remains is a rutted landscape of chalk-white loam with the consistency of powder. Lanes of rotting trees lean drunkenly against each other. A few of the older trees

have toppled completely, their exposed roots thrown up like hands in despair. Shards of broken pots and urns litter the connecting cobbled walkways.

Merchant Center

This L-shaped building is the main site of the merchant's raiding. He sells the wares along the shelves to his customers as his new finds from the "exotic East". There are barrels of exquisitely carved ruby glass beads (worthless, but fashionable), crates of rare silk, and onion-shaped bottles of spices and seasonings. Even after all this time, some of these spices are still potent and quite rare. Some are familiar, some are useless.

Slave Quarters

This brick structure once housed the slaves who worked in the Merchant Center. The tiny room is packed with the ruins of toppled bunkbeds. A soot-filled stone fireplace covers the width of the north wall. A wood and metal jail door squeaks on old hinges.



Armory

Circular like a hut, it contains a stand of short spears, a crate of plumed helmets, and three medium shields stacked against the wall.

Arcane Chambers

This building has the look of a school or place of learning. The first set of rooms were laboratories complete with dissection tables, star-charts, and jars of preserved specimens. Several intact books and scrolls speak to the mission of this place — the advancement of knowledge by any means possible. The back rooms held cells for the unfortunates carved up for spell components or medical experimentation. If the merchant is present, he refuses to go in, citing a sense of evil about the place. If the assassin is with the party, he is compelled to come here before leaving the city.

Momentum Spends

- Player characters can use 2 Momentum to spot a talisman, book, or beaker holding the malign presence of an abomination (the gamemaster should choose its exact nature). This being begins to psychically attack the finder in attempt to break free or will bargain with them if it is hopelessly outmatched.

Doom Spends

- The gamemaster can spend 2 Doom to have a player, companion, or adversary accidentally free the Abomination, which comes roaring into existence.

Horreum

This barn-like building holds pots of seed and grains, and several large casks of water all of which is intact.

Aqueduct

This area holds half of a piece of an ancient stone aqueduct, nestled against the cavern wall. The brownish stone has been ornately carved to make it look like a set of ridged pillars. The calamity that dropped this section of the city sheared a larger section of the aqueduct into two large pieces. No trace of the missing section is present, however. The great course of water moved away, leaving the ground swampy but firm enough to walk through. Under the sixth bottom arch is a piece of the old street hemmed in by the cavern walls. It slopes up for ten feet, then opens into a wider, level street that goes for another several hundred feet. It opens in a swampy fen, out of sight beyond the city walls.

INHABITANTS

If using *The Assassin's Gambit* (see page 46) there are several options. One would have a group of enemies (soldiers, thugs, or other assassins) trailing the player characters here, discovering the city, and seeking to combat them over the find. A variant of this involves the foes already in place. Having knowledge of the city, and surmising the failed assassin's gamble, gave them time enough to lie in wait. For a supernatural foe, an abomination could be held imprisoned in the Arcane Chamber — it could be freed by the careless actions of the player characters, or an adversary. This being needs to feed after so long away from the material world!

TREASURE AND WEALTH

The above individual descriptions contain any treasure information for this location.

EXPERIENCE

Those that successfully explore the city receive 50 experience points. Defeating of mortal foes is worth another 25 points. Completing *The Assassin's Gambit* is worth 50 experience points. Defeating the Abomination (or stopping its rampage) garners 300 experience points.

STORY SEEDS

The Assassin's Gambit

Over the course of a day while visiting a city, the player characters notice they are being shadowed. Perhaps they see the glint of a spyglass from afar or spy the same man stalking behind them. The next time he appears, they find he is slow to get away and easily captured. He is badly wounded and desperate to lure the characters to a place they can speak in private. This man is an assassin hired to eliminate the head of powerful merchant guild by a rival. Due to his inexperience, the assassin botched the job and was wounded in the process.

Now, he has been marked for death by his would-be victim, the house that hired him, and his guild (who consider his failure an ill mark on them). He has evaded capture thus far but because of his enemies' resources and his injury, it is only a matter of time. His assailants have eyes everywhere, and he knows they have blocked the way out of the city. There is only one path left that they do not guard — the undercity! The assassin needs strangers who have strength and wit to escort him through the perilous ruins and to the safety outside. He promises he will give them each treasure valued at 50 Gold for their assistance.

Night Watch

The player characters are forcibly rounded up by the city watch. They, along with others caught in the dragnet, are now part of the militia. Informants have captured plans that show an uprising of hostiles is planned tonight, and they need every able hand to guard the town's property. Mingled with a watchmen squad, they must protect the warehouse of a powerful merchant ally. Unfortunately, this cache of luxury trade goods is one of the main targets for the disaffected commoners. The mob storms the building; the player characters notice the merchant slipping away in the crawlspace, and this leads to a tunnel to the undercity and possibly to safety. Conversely, the warehouse could be set ablaze by the mob, and the floor buckles under the defenders dropping them into the undercity.



THE CITY OF THE ANCIENTS

On the eastern edge of Zamora lies a city built by a people known only as “the ancients”. While these ancients were said to be sophisticated and wealthy, no man or woman has visited their ruins and returned to verify such tales.

Spanning many acres, the vast bulk of the city is but broken ruins, the moldering leftovers of forgotten pasts. Yet the great wall surrounding this city remains intact and its ancient gates locked. It seems that the inhabitants no more left their city in the end than simply died with it. The place is cursed, or so Zamorians believe.

He had made his way to the great palace which was hewn out of a single monstrous hill of stone in the center of the city.

— Untitled Synopsis

Past the walls, the sprawling debris of ancient architecture looks like a museum stomped on by an angry giant. Columns lie broken, homes are crushed flat as autumn leaves. A virtual wasteland surrounds a plateau in the center of the city upon which stands an intact palace.

Carved from a singular piece of granite, the palace is a wonder no king today could imagine. The people who made it were possessed of methods lost to modern crafters. It rises like the omphalos at the center of a flattened disk, the radiating waves of which waste all around it. Indeed, as one creeps closer to the palace, among the ruins and clawing vines that reclaim this territory for nature, skulls and bones — unmistakably human — appear. Their positions suggest they were surprised by their fate which came upon them of a sudden.

In fact, these are people of ancient times, among the last of their kind to survive the Great Cataclysm. However, the smaller cataclysm which followed, and formed the Vilayet in its wake, at last doomed the city. These ruins could even be remnants of the ancient culture of the Zhemri in the early Thurian Age, one of the few peoples to survive the Cataclysm. That we cannot know until some brave or foolish soul penetrates the city’s mysteries.

The palace draws the eye like a lodestone does metal. It alone survived the ages and the ravages that ended this city and its people. Its granite is white, and gleams in the sunlight from almost any point within the walls. Even the highest towers, now toppled, never stood as tall as this palace upon its great mound of rock.

Transitioning from the ruined city to the palace’s plateau is like moving between war and peace, devastation and perfection. Not a single stair hewn from the granite is cracked. The great balustrades on either side of the stair are smooth and shaped like giant snakes. Even dust, somehow, fails to gather upon this strange structure.

Once inside, the brave or foolhardy glean some clues as to why. The palace does not stir. No draft finds its way through open windows or doors. As with the outside, everything is dust free. Some magic preserved the palace and, after a fashion, those within.

Time moves slowly inside the tomb-like palace. So slow, in fact, that the human eye can barely perceive it. Dust cannot collect, breezes move what debris filters in, but all in such a slow progression that everything appears still to the naked eye.

While the king and queen are long dead, their stalwart guardians remain, undead knights of an age forgotten in the wake of the Cataclysm. These guardians, committed forever to their final mission as sentinels, move normally within the confines of the spell. Anyone from the present age, too, moves as normal.

The strange sorcery that caused this disruption in the flow of time was designed to save the palace from the devastation of the city. However, in so preserving this rocky hill, it also trapped those inside. The king and queen sent others outside after the riotous quakes had ended, but such time had passed as they could not guess and the poor servants who stepped into the light found all their age caught up with them and turned them to dust. In time, even the king and queen left, maddened by the prison of the palace. Their bones lie outside along the steps among the detritus of their raiment and the dusty jewels and coins they brought with them.

Inside the palace much was removed by staff who fled over the passing of years and centuries. Some of it can be found outside, in the immediate area outside the palace. As soon as any living organism native to the area leaves the perimeter of the old spell, it turns into dust.

The central treasure chamber, however, remains intact, save for what the king and queen took with them. It is guarded by the twelve sentinels who alone remain inside. The wealth there is great but the danger greater.

The guardians swore not to leave the palace unless the site was threatened. They are aged, dead perhaps — one can see bone and ligament under scale mail armor dusted with rust. Yet they are well preserved, for they aged so slowly and have escaped a final repose.

Treat each guardian as a Legendary fallen as described in *Horrors of the Hyborian Age* or a Toughened skeleton from the *Conan* corebook (page 342), if desired. However, unlike the creatures found there, these guardians cannot pass beyond the perimeter of the spell which preserves



them. They, like those before them, crumble to dust outside. When all the guardians are gone, the palace itself finally succumbs to time, crashing in upon itself in an earthquake which shakes the entirety of the city. Whatever treasure player characters can carry out the first time is all that they may take from this timeless hoard.

ZONES

The city is broken into two zones — the ruins outside the palace and the palace itself. Inside the palace, the only danger is the guardians. Outside, however, the terrain is perilous. Both player characters and the gamemaster may leverage this peril to enhance gameplay.

KEY FEATURES

Large Statue

The face is long gone, the legs cracked, but it's perfect to topple on an enemy or a player character. The statue was that of the first king of the city and is in the approximate center of the ruin.



Fountain

Stagnant water lurks beneath a skin of mold. Snakes swim inside but so do coins. Peeling away some of the mold shows the glint of metal below. It is up to the gamemaster how many water snakes attack anyone plunging an arm into the water.

Broken Ruin

This variable location is found whenever the player characters encounter the horror lurking in the ruins. They must scale to the roof and then topple the huge, broken pieces on the second floor as explained below. These huge rocks can easily crush most things.

Momentum Spends

- The entire city is in ruin, and those buildings which remain in part, those columns still standing at awkward angles, even great statues whose faces long ago crumbled — all present player characters with opportunities to inflict damage on their enemy. For 3 Momentum, any player character can utilize a piece of tall terrain to make a Challenging (D2) Brawn test. If passed, they topple the remains of the object atop their foe, causing 2  for each Momentum spent. Thus, if a player character spends only 3 Momentum, they inflict 6  damage. If they spend even more, they may crush a monstrosity like an ant beneath the foot of Mitra himself!

Doom Spends

- Just as the player characters can utilize the terrain, the terrain itself may become deadly should the gamemaster spend Doom. Each point of Doom spent in this fashion creates a one step increase in

Difficulty for the resulting Acrobatics or Agility tests to escape injury. The test starts at Simple (D0), so it takes 2 Doom to get to even an Average (D1) test. As above, every Doom spent results in 2 damage to any player character failing the test.

- Just as the terrain can aid the player characters, it can also kill them. The reason and specifics are up to the gamemaster, but a quake could occur, a player character may fall through the rotted cobblestones, exploration of a building can result in its collapse... there are many dangers among unstable ruins. The player characters should feel the influence of the curse all around them when Doom is spent against them, activating latent and malign qualities.

INHABITANTS OF THE RUINS

As noted, the palace guardians are the chief threat between the player characters and the treasure room, but a horror also stalks the broken cobblestone streets. Evidence of this creature may foreshadow what the player characters later encounter. For example, the remains of other explorers, bones broken like twigs, faces rotting in horrific, and recent, rictuses might be stumbled upon. Further, a slime-like ectoplasm drips from places the creature has passed, though these don't remain long enough to properly track the beast.

The creature itself is a shoggoth. This immense, Lovecraftian horror is found in *Horrors of the Hyborian Age*, though an appropriate Horror from the **Conan** core-book can be substituted if desired. It was once bound in the city by the same spell which preserved the palace and cannot therefore leave the city limits. The wall around the city serves as a circular ward beyond which the shoggoth cannot pass, so long as the palace remains intact.

THE HALL OF THE DEAD

"The Hall of the Dead" is a pastiche story derived from an untitled Howard synopsis. In it, Conan confronts an undescribed monster which he crushes using a great fragment of the ruined city. The guardians are also outlined, though not described in any detail. The content herein is conjecture based on that outline and, while approved by our scholars, is only canonical for our line. The gamemaster may feel free to use or discard this portrayal as they see fit.

WEALTH

Outside the palace, characters can haul out 5 Gold each worth of valuables, but each Gold adds 1 Doom to the Doom pool. This represents digging through rubble, exploring partially intact buildings, and the like. The gamemaster must spend this Doom during the exploration of the city, and cannot save this Doom to spend in the palace. However, the gamemaster may decide to spend this Doom should the horror that stalks the city attack.

Player characters can take 10 Gold each from the palace. However, anything taken from the palace turns to dust within 24 hours. Such are the vagaries of treasure hunting and time.

EXPERIENCE

Full exploration of the city, and concomitant encounters, are worth 100 experience points per player character. This is a dangerous place.

Far to the east, the Lemurians, leveled almost to a bestial plane themselves by the brutishness of their slavery, have risen and destroyed their masters. They are savages stalking among the ruins of a strange civilization.

— "The Hyborian Age"

KUMARI, THE CURSED LEMURIAN RUIN

Of those peoples who survived the Cataclysm, perhaps none were as unfortunate as the Lemurians. Once, it is said, they had a storied history, perhaps even a great civilization, but the barbarians who came ashore from their sunken land were enslaved by a people called the Naacal. Their post-Cataclysmic history was one of degradation and brutal enslavement.

Over 1,000 years after the Cataclysm, the Lemurians threw off the yoke of their masters and began to live in the remains of the Naacal civilization. Many, if not most, were rude savages by then, barely men. Those who would eventually civilize went westward... or so popular history recalls.

In truth, some few Lemurians stayed in the ruins of their Naacal masters and built their own cities. Time and interloping warlords of various sorts brought this brief

kingdom to its own ruin, but cursed vestiges remain. Deep in the jungles of Vendhya, a living Lemurian city remains. It has had but a handful of visitors in the many millennia since its founding, and none who left again.

For more information on the Naacal, see *Conan the Wanderer*.

OVERVIEW

Called Kumari by those who now dwell there, the city exists outside of the history of Vendhya. These Lemurians dwelt here as the rest of their kind were wiped out or migrated north to become Hyrkianians. Yet here, in the deepest, steaming forests where few men ever tread, a thriving though cursed city lives.

The curse begins with the Naacal, a sophisticated, powerful, and thoroughly evil people. When the wave of Lemurian rebellion reached Kumari, the Naacal thought themselves prepared, but the centuries of slavery had hardened the Lemurians like iron, and their will for vengeance sharpened them like a knife. They drove that knife into the center of the city where the ruling family lived.

But the Naacal had the last word, a curse pulled down from the Outer Dark by strange magics. If they were to fall, the Naacal made sure none of their usurpers, or their descendants, would ever leave the city. This would be the final home for both master and slave.

It took centuries for the Lemurian savages to even begin to understand the civilization they toppled, but they had little choice. Any who ventured beyond the bounds of Kumari withered immediately, desiccating and turning to dust. Not a one of them lived, and soon they found that the city limits were the circle that circumscribed their lives. So it was for all the generations of them that followed.

The city, however, had no food, no arable land... the survivors were soon without food. Like their masters before them, a group of them enslaved the others and used them as food. Thus, did this strange strain of Lemurian blood evolve. They are a city of vampire-like beings living on human stock bred as animals in pens. The irony of the enslaved becoming the slaver was lost long ago. Today, this is simply how the world is.

Kumari is therefore a completely stratified society. In this aspect it mimics, or perhaps in some way informs, the Vendyhan caste system. There are those who exist as food and those who eat them. Over time, certain small sections of the city were turned into gardens, but surely not enough to feed the populace. Even the human food stock feeds on its own. In fact, eating the dead has become a ritual religion for both slave and master.

The city's walls and structures are made of blue stone found far to the East. How it was brought to the jungle is not remembered by the Lemurians. The Naacal made their

slaves quarry the stones and drag them for hundreds of miles to build this outpost. Who can say how many died along the way?

Broad pathways and roads wend about the city. Once, horses drew carriages down these stony routes, but the horses were all used as food long ago. Today, the human slaves draw rickshaws and litters for their masters.

Leather is the dominant material for clothes, made from that most obvious (and ghastly) of sources. Wood is scarce and found only where part of the jungle carves through the old wall. Neither slave nor master can get at the trees which lie beyond.

The result is a makeshift city built atop the stones of an older one. It is an amalgam of designs, of stones recurved and repurposed, of wood and leather houses, of grand palaces whittled down to modest estates. Imagine a scaffolding of wood and leather huts accreted around the central armature of old stone, and you'll get some idea of how strange a city this appears to the eye.

It is dying. Any outsider can see that. The curious, parasitic relationship which maintained the city for so long is now untenable. Decay is in the air, seen in the broken statues of the Naacal who, at least, held the bearing of proud men.

KEY FEATURES

The city is vast, and the population strange. The blue stone from which it is constructed is not easily weathered and has lasted the ages well. Still, the city's roads are in ill repair, and only certain buildings are maintained. Entire neighborhoods made of stone, as well as priceless monuments, were pulled down by the Lemurians and repurposed for newer structures. Yet even those structures eroded in the millennia which have since past.

The Palace

Once, this palace was a massive complex, but much of that was torn down in the revolt. Still more of what was left was reused or rebuilt on the premises. The palace stairs now lead to an internal honeycomb of hexagonal rooms, some appointed with the remaining finery of the Naacal, others all but empty. Old murals fade along the walls, telling the story of the Naacal which even the keenest eye now has trouble reading. Oddly, the masters of Kumari keep such murals and memories of their former masters. They've adopted the mantle of those they once hated. Slaves became slavers, such is the cyclic nature of life.

The Breeding Pens

Blue stone walls surround the breeding pens where ritual, orgiastic coupling takes place under the blessings of Lemurian priests. Drums thunder, beat by the slaves who watch in primal glee as the mating takes place. They are

each of them indoctrinated into the cruel, cannibal religion of Kumari. They are each born to feed their masters.

The pens are always guarded by masters, and the few gates are made of massive blocks of stone. The food stock is raised here until they are eaten or purposed as slaves throughout the city. They live in the worst ruins left in Kumari.

The City's God

Off center, in what was once a public square, a statue of the city's god rises ominously above the domed roofs around it. This idol is forty feet high, carved in the image of a humanoid vampire bat. These bats are among the only creatures that come near the city. Eating them is forbidden.

How this became the city's god is not known in detail. But it is reasonable to assume that as the populace became cannibals the practice was ritualized. The native vampire bats in the jungle provided a model to explain the repulsive practice and ascribe it to the will of nature and some horrific sky god.

INHABITANTS

While everyone in the city is Lemurian, they evolved into two distinct strains. One is human, though weak, and the other is a form of vampire — feeding on the flesh and blood of the others.

Time and again, history models itself on past cycles. As the Lemurians were once slaves, they now enslave their own. So, too, might the slaves one day rise and rebel, though to what end who can say, for they know not how to leave the city bounds. The curse remains. Perhaps this cyclical history shall repeat eternally until only two Lemurians, degenerated beyond human recognition, remain. One shall eat the other and then starve, for there will be no one left to consume.

TREASURE

A player character may carry 10 gold worth of valuables away with them, should they survive. However, if a clever group returns later, with wagons and porters, they find the city is no longer there. Did it vanish? Are they lost? Who can say?

EXPERIENCE

Anyone who explores the city, encounters its denizens, and eventually escapes gains 50 experience points, perhaps more based on the turn of events.



THE NAMELESS CITY

It was ancient when the Thurian continent was still inchoate. The Nameless City, its true appellation as long forgotten as its location, its purpose and the nature of its architects... where it now lies cannot be said with certainty. There are some who claim it lies in the desert southeast of Zamboula, surrounded by the eternal sands of that insular nation. Others speculate that it lies much further to the south, perhaps in the Black Kingdoms, avoided by the local tribes and given a wide berth by the most formidable civilizations of that mysterious archipelago. Whatever the truth, there are many who would pay well for knowledge of what that forsaken metropolis might hold within its walls.

“Remote in the desert of Araby lies the nameless city, crumbling and inarticulate, its low walls nearly hidden by the sands of uncounted ages. It must have been thus before the first stones of Memphis were laid, and while the bricks of Babylon were yet unbaked. There is no legend so old as to give it a name, or to recall that it was ever alive.”

— “The Nameless City”, H.P. Lovecraft

The Nameless City is, for the most part, concealed beneath the ground. While certain features still protrude from the ground, like the skeletal limbs of the improperly buried, the true extent of the place is immured in sand and earth. The inhabitants, driven by the upheavals of the earth, dug downwards. There, they remade their city, safe from the shifting of the land and the sea, secure in the moist darkness of the underworld. The architects and inhabitants of the place made their city well, securing it against the formless pressures of both age and environment so that it remains intact now, and will for many centuries to come. The construction of the city is ancient and peculiar, with temple complexes and ranks of stone pillars stretching on in the darkness of the subterranean kingdom, hiding much which only the brave might bring to light.

FEATURES OF THE NAMELESS CITY

The Great Pit


Entrance into the Nameless City proper is possible only via the Great Pit. There are a few, small hovels bored into a cliff face — the first signs of any habitation — and through these, the Great Pit can be found. A vast, pitiless void in the earth, stretching down for several miles, light scarcely penetrates

more than a few feet downward. There are handholds carved into the rock, though these seem proportioned to fit inhuman fingers, and the remains of stairs which are prone to collapse. And as to what might lurk in the gloom... who can say?

Momentum Spends

- Player characters might use Momentum to conceal themselves in the darkness, finding a narrow aperture in the rock in which they can squeeze themselves, only to leap out and ambush a foe. Alternatively, hurling an enemy combatant into the pit during a fight is a very effective way of bringing that combat to a brutal conclusion.

Doom Spends

- The gamemaster can utilize the darkness of the Great Pit to hide any number of potential foes or traps for the player characters to have to circumvent. The gamemaster might like to include one of the traps discussed in this book (see page 100) or, alternatively, spring an ambush on the player characters which they cannot avoid. The yawning gulf, just out of sight but always there, might also lead to player characters having to make a Challenging (D2) Fear test or suffer 3  mental damage.

The Portal Beyond

At the remotest extreme of the Nameless City, there is the Portal Beyond. A huge, circular door, constructed from bronze. It is shaped and sized so that it fills the stone corridor in which it sits entirely. Once it is closed, nothing can escape past it, and it can only be opened from one side. There are none living who have passed beyond it; there are very few who have opened it and returned to the surface, either breathing or still capable of speaking. Adorned with strange devices and sigils, it seems certain that this portal was not created by the things which built the city but was added later by some species that sought to hold back whatever lay on the other side. A howling gale sweeps along this corridor, pinning the doors closed, the keening of the wind almost reminiscent of words screeched in an eldritch language by a desperate tongue. What dread battle was engaged in to seal this doorway? What spells were wrought to secure that portal's closure, that even now they shriek along this ancient tunnel?

Momentum Spends

- Spending Momentum might allow player characters to open the door slightly and maneuver, force, or otherwise trick, an opponent onto the other

side of the portal. What happens next is up to the gamemaster. Alternatively, the player characters might spend Momentum to dodge an enemy's blow and have them strike the door instead. The reverberations of such a clash might shake the blade from the foe's hands.

Doom Spends

- The gamemaster might spend 3 Doom to have one of the player characters' missed attacks accidentally dislodge the door, opening it and allowing something on the other side to attempt to come through. The gamemaster might also spend 1 Doom to have the player characters buffeted by the wind, adding an extra step of Difficulty to any challenge they might be undertaking.


The Chamber of Memory

With walls adorned with sinister frescoes, the Chamber of Memory is the clearest proof of the inhuman nature of the Nameless City. Stark images of nameless reptile gods and representations of hideous rites performed in the ancient past festoon every inch of exposed stone. Maps adumbrate the locations of forgotten continents, ancient Valusia, submerged Atlantis and others long consumed by




the voracious earth and ravenous tides. Here, in this small chamber, surrounded by the remnants of another species' defiance of time — statues, small sarcophagi, even mummies — the true irrelevancy of mankind in the face of the cosmos is revealed. It requires a ferocity of spirit to overcome such existential terror and plunge onwards into the darkness...

Momentum Spends

- Hurling statues and mummies at foes can all be achieved with the expenditure of a Momentum point, as an additional attack — causing 1  damage — or as a distraction. The player characters might also use Momentum to ensure that any maps or charts they make, based on those inscribed on the walls, are accurate. Who knows where such information might ultimately lead them?

Doom Spends

- Gazing at the frescoes is enough to cause a moment of horrified revelation for even the most hardened, or narrow-minded, of player characters. The gamemaster may spend 2 Doom to inflict such a moment of universal horror on a player character, inflicting 5  mental damage, should the player character fail the appropriate test.

INHABITANTS OF THE RUINS

The creatures that built the Nameless City were of terrestrial origin. Hideously long-lived and dreadful in aspect, they nevertheless were born on this earth. They remain within the city even now, mostly constrained beyond the Portal, but a few escape and infest the other areas of the conurbation — waiting for those who usurped their grip on the planet to fall into their clutches. The gamemaster should use the statistics for ghouls on page 338 of the *Conan* corebook.

They were of the reptile kind... In size they approximated a small man, and their fore legs bore delicate and evidently flexible feet curiously like human hands and fingers. But strangest of all were their heads... in one flash I thought of comparisons as varied as the cat, the bulldog, the mythic Satyr, and the human being... yet the horns and the noselessness and the alligator-like jaw placed the things outside all established categories.

— “The Nameless City”, H.P. Lovecraft

TREASURE

Trinkets and tokens of the elder species that built the city can be found in small caches throughout the city, and these can be sold for between 1 and 3 Gold, depending upon the buyer. Maps, images of the creatures or other tracings of the frescoes in the Chamber of Memory can be sold to scholars for up to 5 Gold — depending on the quality of the reproduction — and may be used as a bartering method to secure funding for future expeditions.

EXPERIENCE

A trip to the Nameless City is worth the following experience point rewards, for those that emerge from its abyssal clutches alive and, as far as possible, whole:

- 50 points for navigating the Great Pit safely.
- 100 points for confronting and killing at least one of the city's inhabitants.
- 50 points for attaining a usable map of lost lands, based on the contents of the Chamber of Memory.

SANU, THE CITY BENEATH

At the onset of the Thurian Age, the world was ruled by creatures other than humankind. Among these elder races were the serpent men, children of the ancient snake god called Yig, now known as Set. The Old Serpent birthed many monstrous races, in forms as diverse as they were terrible, and the serpent men were the most widespread and populous of them, creating a dreadful empire based on alchemy and sorcery.

When the rough and savage ancestors of humankind rose against the elder races, the serpent men were almost destroyed. Driven from their cities, they scattered across the world, taking refuge in forgotten and lonely places — deserts, jungles, islands, and even beneath their former cities, inhabiting the catacombs from which they had originally emerged.

On one occasion, the serpent men tried to once again exert their influence upon humankind, fostering a serpent-worshipping cult in Valusia, their former seat of power. Using their natural sorcerous ability to mask themselves as humans, they infiltrated the court of that great kingdom. Valusia's king, a barbarian usurper from Atlantis named Kull, discovered their plot, thwarted it, and devoted many years to exterminating the serpent men entirely. Kull was almost successful, and the ophidian species never troubled humankind until the end of the age, when the Cataclysm washed away all the kingdoms of men.

*“Under the covered pyramids
great Set coils asleep;*

*Among the shadows of the tombs
his dusky people creep.*

*I speak the Word from the hidden gulfs that
never knew the sun — Send me a servant
for my hate, oh scaled and shining One!”*

— “The Phoenix on the Sword”

Hardier than humans, the serpent men survived the deluge and brood from their hidden redoubts. They once again vie for power and supremacy, as is evident in the strength of the serpent cult of Set, which holds Stygia in its iron coils. From beneath the cities of humankind the serpent men grow bold, their schemes and machinations increasing in scope and frequency.

Sanu is an example of one of these serpent men holdouts, an ancient labyrinth beneath one of the cities of the dreaming west or nearby, inhabited by a sub-race of serpent men called the Children of Yig, or Yiggites. It is suitable for location in any major city beneath Nemedra, Koth, Argos, Zingara, Zamora, Corinthia, Ophir, or even proud Aquilonia. As such, the gamemaster should provide any information linking Sanu to the location of choice.

Located hundreds of feet below the earth, this bolt-hole was flooded during the Cataclysm, but through their sorcerous metabolism the serpent folk of Sanu hibernated and survived the many centuries, adapting to the flooding. Now they are fully amphibious, as adept beneath the water's surface as they are above.

OLD SANU

In configuration, Sanu is an extensive labyrinth of tunnels radiating outward from a great central well-shaped hub many stories high. The upper levels of tunnels are carved and shaped by Yiggite hands, while the levels and expanses radiating further away from the great central well are natural, guided and widened only for ease of use. Now it is a multi-level warren of narrow tunnels and open chambers, multi-level galleys and subterranean vaults. The Yiggites continue their studies into diabolic sorcery and alchemy, and venture to the surface periodically to pull vagabonds and lone travelers to the dark beneath, to use as sacrifices or as subjects of unwholesome experimentation.

Millennia of continued habitation has given the Yiggites ample opportunity to decorate their abode, and

the walls are all inscribed and carved with the history of their people, as well as depicting the blasphemous rites of their ancestors in lurid detail. Most horribly, a Simple (Do) Craft or Observation test reveals that some of this architecture is human, made by human slaves or willing collaborators with the Yiggites. Scaled patterns cover the columns and walls that are not engraved with the carved reliefs, and a great moist, dank smell fills the entire tunnel complex.

The deepest levels, farthest away from the central hub, are partially flooded, grottoes and wet caverns filled with muck, fed by underground currents. Cold and vile, these places are where the most degenerate of the Yiggites dwell, as well as being home to other foul entities and creatures beyond even their control. Aside from the Yiggites, thousands of other smaller serpents inhabit Sanu, venomous as well as constrictors. Most are normal in size, but a few are colossal, akin to the great constrictor described on page 329 of the *Conan* corebook. These dwell in harmony with the Yiggites, and understand their hissing, sibilant language.

The Well of Sanu

The large central hub of the underground metropolis, the “well” is a great pit, more than ten stories deep, with a slight, sinuous curve to its walls. Nearly ten yards across, the well has many open doors and tunnels leading from it in all directions and at all levels, one great spiraling ramp curling around the outside wall. Windows and slight ledges open into it, and at the peak of the well is a large cluster of phosphorescent moss, giving the whole place an eerie, yellowish glow. The bottom is covered in thousands of human skeletons, picked clean of all flesh or residue, skulls staring upward in mute testimony to their fate.

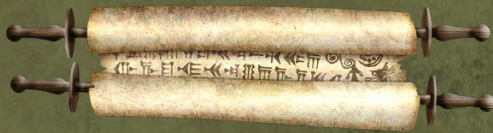
The Vault of Ages

This many-storied vault, located far from the central well, is the repository of much of the sorcery of the serpent men — artifacts, enchantments, alchemical works — as well as serving as a trove of their collected wisdom, engraved on sheets of emerald, bronze, crystal, and other precious metals and minerals. To this grand collection is added a fantastic array of human achievement, magical accoutrements and gewgaws, trinkets and baubles of magical or even mundane worth. This incalculable wealth is strewn across balconies, piled haphazardly on stairs, tucked crowdedly into the hundreds of nooks and niches along the walls. The Yiggites guard this place above all others in Sanu, and the greatest of their ranks is always here... waiting and watching. Should player characters breach the vault, they will find a Nemesis Yiggite ready for them, implacable and deadly.

CHILD OF YIG (TOUGHENED)

The Children of Yig — Yiggites — are kin to the human-headed child of Set (see page 334 of the *CONAN* corebook) as well as the serpent-headed human-bodied forms of true serpent men. However, the Yiggites are deadly hybrids of both species, human torsos and arms fused onto long serpentine bodies, topped with ophidian heads. Thus, they are tool-users in a way the children of Set are not, more powerful than serpent men but unable to move amongst humankind the way their brethren can. These slithering horrors inhabit the abyss of Sanu, haunting its darkened labyrinths and occasionally venturing forth into the realms of humankind to do great wickedness.

If encountered within Sanu, a Yiggite is inevitably in the company of many of its brethren and if one is met outside that hidden place, it is likely be working in concert with children of Set or human worshippers of Set. The example below is a standard Yiggite; others might be more adept in sorcery or specialized in some other form of deviltry, or even clad in partial armor on head, torso, and arms. Nemesis versions may also exist.



ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
10	11	11	10
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
12	13	11	







FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	2	Movement	3
Fortitude	2	Senses	2
Knowledge	2	Social	—


STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 13, Resolve 10
- **Soak:** Armor 1 (Scaled Hide), Courage 2

ATTACKS

- **Tulwar (M):** Reach 2, 6 , Unbalanced, Cavalry 1, Parrying
- **Target Shield (M):** Reach 2, 5 , Knockdown, Shield 2
- **Bite (M):** Reach 1, 6 
- **Envelop (M):** Reach 1, 5 , Grappling
- **Constricting Coils (M):** Reach 1, 5 , Unforgiving 1, only on grabbed targets
- **Eyes of the Serpent (T):** Range C, 4  mental, Area, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Amphibious:** Yiggites suffer no penalty to any Action when swimming and can spend unlimited time underwater.
- **Child of Set:** Yiggites can speak to any reptile, snake, or related species.
- **Coiled Horror:** The creature can make a Constricting Coils attack (above) as a Free Action, once per turn, and then spend 2 Doom to inflict 4  damage upon a grappled target.
- **Fear 1**
- **Monstrous Creature**
- **Night Vision**
- **Yiggian Sorcery:** Many Yiggites are trained in some alchemy and sorcery, and those that are can cast spells such as *Dismember* and *Enslave* with ease. Knowing another spell requires a successful Daunting (D3) Knowledge test, and any Momentum gained can be spent on additional rolls to know more spells. The gamemaster should determine whether any Yiggite is magically adept.

DOOM SPENDS

- **Alchemical Arsenal:** A Yiggite can instantly produce a petty enchantment at the cost of 1 Doom plus additional Doom equal to the Difficulty for making it.
- **Ophidian Call:** A Yiggite can perform a Standard Action equivalent to the *Commune with the Wild* sorcery spell (see page 175 of the *Conan* corebook) as an Average (D1) Knowledge test, at the cost of 1 Doom per point of desired Momentum. This spell only works on reptiles, lizards, and serpents, and has no effect on other types of creatures.

TREASURE

Sanu's vault contains uncountable wealth in the form of coins, gems, jewelry, and other works of art that are mere dross compared to the true worth of its archive of alchemical and sorcerous lore, as well as tomes and other materials enough to fuel a sorcerous cabal until the end of the age. Player characters gaining access to this are now among the wealthiest humans in the land, complete with the difficulty of holding on to such a treasure.

EXPERIENCE

Entering and surviving the Well of Sanu should be worth at least 200 experience points, perhaps more, depending on what tactics are taken and the overall goal.

SARNATH

Such was the glory of Sarnath, the bards sing, that it transcended the material; shifting beyond the mundane to reside upon the very borderland of the waking world and the kingdom of dreams. Doom may have befallen it, but something of its centuries-spanning grandeur is believed to survive, waiting yet to be discovered.

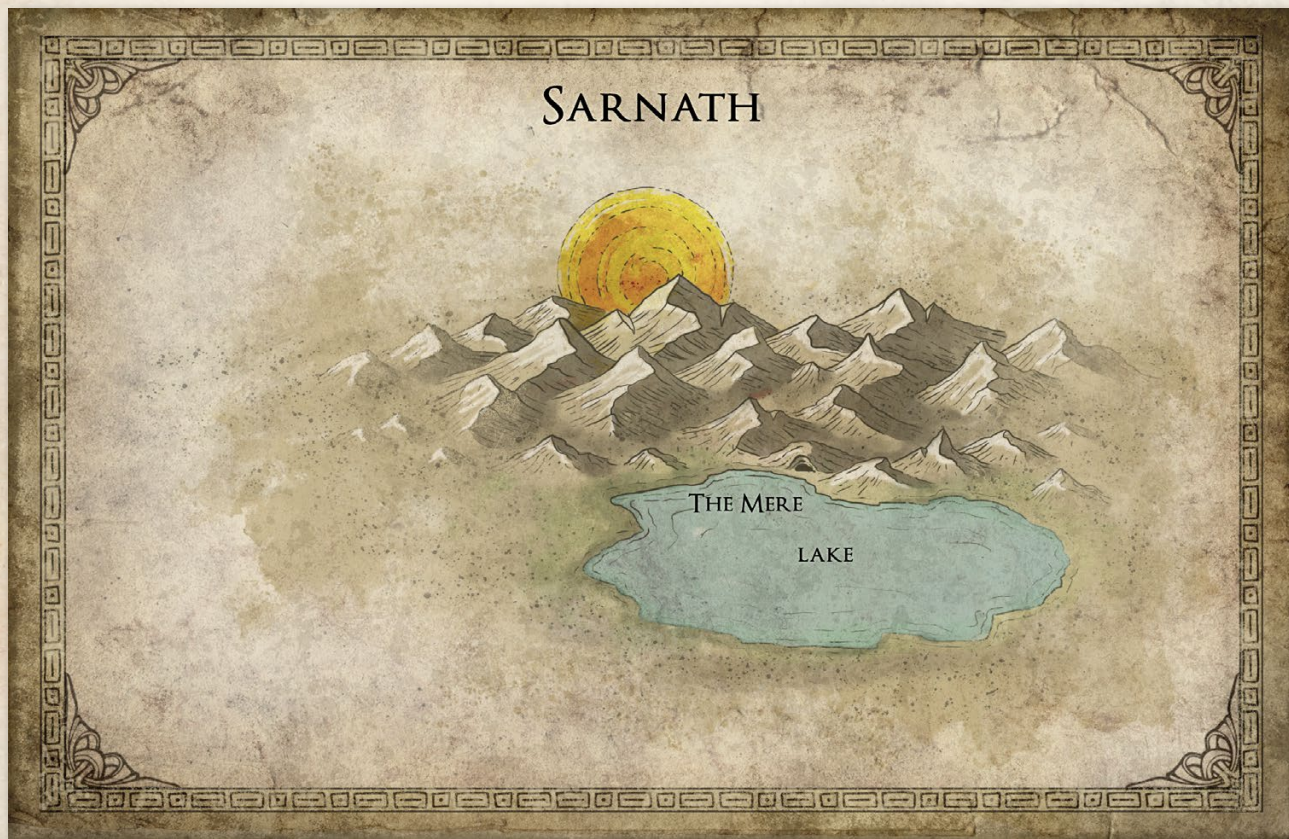
The wonder of the world and the pride of all mankind was Sarnath the magnificent.

— “The Doom that Came to Sarnath”, H.P. Lovecraft

OVERVIEW

When the first men moved onto the shores of mythical Mnar they found they were not alone. Preceding them by centuries was an inhuman race residing in a gray stone city on the shore of a vast green lake. Some of the wise thought these emerald-skinned beings, with drooping lips and bulging eyes, climbed down from the moon to seek a kingdom upon the earth. Although these creatures spoke no language, it became known to the men that their city was called Ib, and that they worshipped a god called Bokrug. An idol bearing its likeness, a monstrous water-lizard, was their most holy of relics and when the moon hung gibbous they danced and cavorted obscenely before it.

In the beginning, the men regarded this alien tribe with wonder. They lived apart, but at peace with them. On



the same lake, they constructed their own humble city of Sarnath. The strength of men grew, and so did their hate. They came to revile these strange outsiders, and knew they lacked strength to defy their rage.

The men attacked the defenseless creatures, slaughtering all in one night. Unwilling to touch them with bare hand, they poled the dead into the lake, sinking their corpses to the bottom. The stone monoliths that made their city were toppled down into the depths with them.

Only the idol of Bokrug did they keep. This war-trophy was given into the hands of their high priest, Taran-Ish, who installed it as a spoil of conquest in his own temple. The night afterwards, lights, weird and pale, erupted over the water. Visitors coming in to worship the following morning found Taran-Ish, dead, heart burst from fright. In his death throes he had scrawled the sign of "DOOM" upon the altar of their gods. The idol of Bokrug had vanished.

Wealth and prosperity came to Sarnath following this incident. Precious metals and its position on the trade routes raised it above all others. At its pinnacle, fifty million people lived within walls that stretched for leagues, strolled in its exotic gardens and worshiped in towered temples. For 1,000 years, all in Sarnath enjoyed riches and delight. Once a year they cursed the bones of the creatures they had overthrown, feasting in memory of their triumph. Taran-Ish's cryptic message upon the altar came to be forgotten.

On the turn of the millennial celebration, a thick green mist rose from the lake, clouding the moon and shrouding the city. Strange lights swirled over the water. The gates of Sarnath burst open, and all who could, fled into the wilds. The king, his court, and slaves had been transmuted! They walked in the form of the green-skinned, bulging eyed-beings their ancestors murdered 1,000 years ago. The Terror of Sarnath spread to every port and crossroads. None dared visit it, and its reality soon, too, receded into fable. Returned to dream and nightmare, some say.

Generations passed before another tribe of men ventured to see Sarnath. They saw no sign of the fabulous city. Only a placid green lake, with gray mountains overhead. A thorough search of the empty vista yielded a curious green idol of stone, coated with seaweed and chiseled in the likeness of a great water-lizard.

ZONES

Approaching the Mere

The gamemaster can place Sarnath in any part of the world. Given its mythic status and antiquity, it should be far away from the places of civilization and knowledge. Roads that once led to Sarnath were ground to rubble by the crush of time, scattered across far fields and sunk into the earth. Looking closer, the player characters will find the signs of a road, of which the flagstones were carved of onyx and

granite, with regular side pieces showing that they have been worked by stonemasons, rather than being natural. Further searching and a successful Challenging (D2) Observation test yield more fragments of materials such as glazed brick, chalcedony, and even strange flat shards of clear crystal.

Once the winding and hidden course to Sarnath has been found, the player characters come upon a lake titanic enough to be mistaken for a small sea. Ringing the northern end is a range of slate-grey mountains, and even a casual examination of the surrounding land reveals that it is dotted with fragments of green stone and occasional sections large enough to be identified as bricks, as if some grand city had once stood where the lake now rests, the brick the remnants of some wall or outermost structures. Also here are many pieces of marble, of which successful Daunting (D3) Lore test reveals that it is of a type found in some deserts, though none nearby.

The Mere


The shore of the vast lake is pocked by marshy reed banks, amidst which stand fragments of columns, small pieces of broken arches, and even jagged spurs that were once walls or towers. One type of especially durable stone is dull grayish-purple but cannot be identified, no matter how successful a Lore test is, or how much Momentum is spent (if any). Vines, moss, and mold cover the ruins entirely, with little of the stone surface still visible. Some parts of the shore may contain malignant plants. No frogs, fish, or insects disturb the still green water.

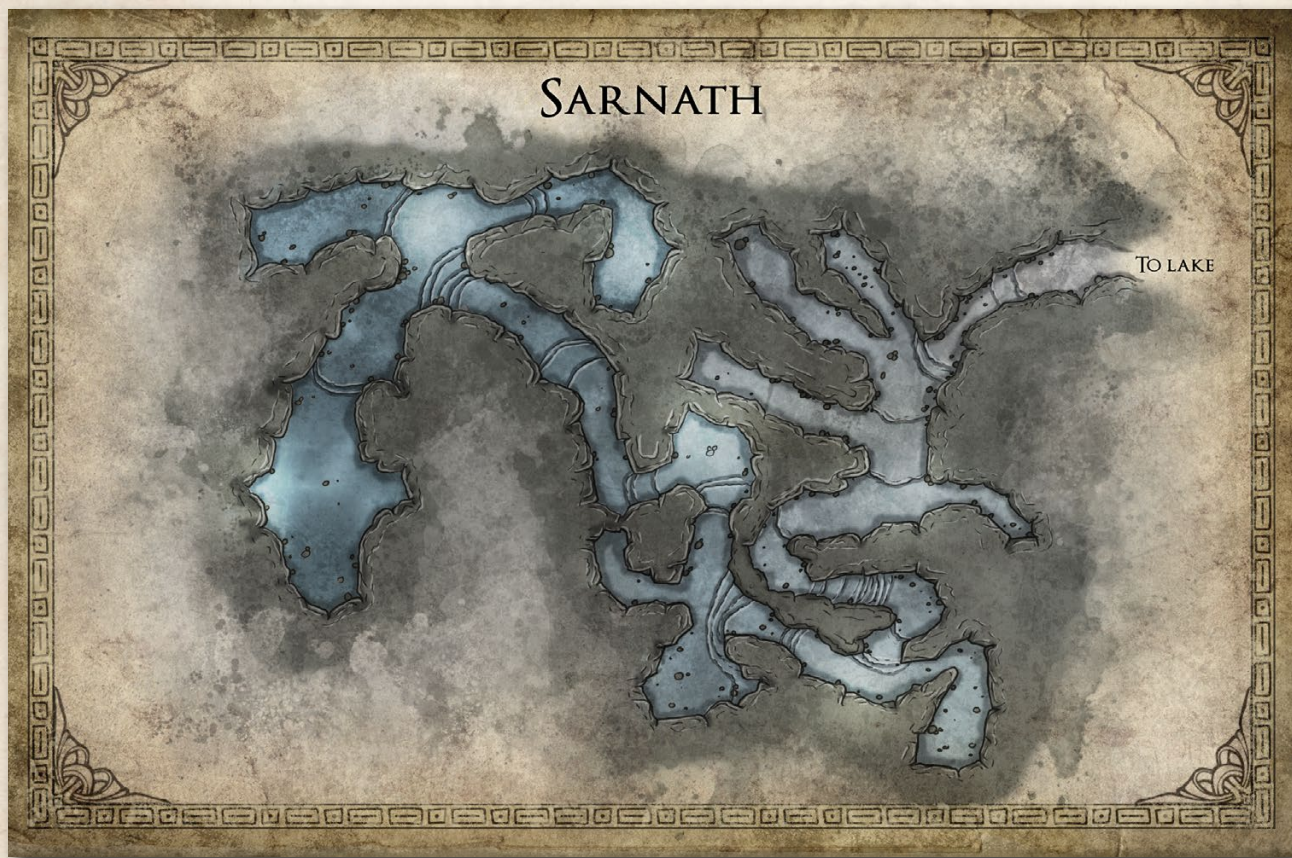
Should any venture into the lake, they find it cold as frost and it clings to clothes and armor like a sheen of oil. It can be drunk but is brackish and carries a faint trace of sulphur. As a rule, the rubble-strewn lake bottom slowly dips in depth for the first twenty feet from shore, then has a sudden plunge, plummeting hundreds of feet down.

Momentum Spends

- Player characters can spend 1 Momentum to spot footprints with clawed toes along the edge of lake, or to see a pair of orbs observe them, before speeding down into the lake.

Doom Spends

- The gamemaster can spend 1 Doom to have a small Malignant Plant growing on the bank grapple with a player, to poison or drown them.
- The gamemaster can spend 1 Doom to have a green mist (slightly poisonous at their discretion) erupt from the lake along with balls of pale light. This eldritch display costs 1  Trauma to behold if an Average (D1) Discipline test is unsuccessful.



The Deep Walk

Observant player characters note a minor eddying of the water along the western rim. This is water sluggishly trickling into a submerged tunnel, about 12 feet down. The tunnel appears to be natural in formation, but is lined with bizarre luminescent coral, something more commonly found on sea beds. The mouth of the opening is nine feet high and half that wide; the interior tunnels are roughly a foot shorter. Because of their sloping nature, the bottom three feet of the tunnels remains underwater. The tunnels are lightless except for the sallow light emanating from near-dead coral formations. They corkscrew and bend, branching into many directions.



Overall, the trend is to descend, and the water rises as a response. By the time the player characters get to the bottom, the tunnels are flooded up to five feet in some places. It is in this narrow, claustrophobic warren that the Dwellers of the Deep (see *Inhabitants*, below) choose to attack the characters.

Momentum Spends

- Player characters can use 1 Momentum to dive flawlessly into the tunnel opening.

- Player characters can use 1 Momentum to spot a jewelled necklace from the time of Sarnath caught among the coral (value at gamemaster's discretion).
- Player characters can use 1 Momentum to realize that they have gotten turned around and are backtracking.

Doom Spends


- The gamemaster can spend 1 Doom to have a large and sudden surge that either carries the player character out into the lake or sucks them down into the tunnels. This can require an Average (D1) Athletics test to avoid being dazed or stunned.
- The gamemaster can spend 1 Doom to have player characters cut themselves upon the coral — this causes 1  damage, and if not immediately treated will become infected for 1  damage.
- The gamemaster can spend 2 Doom to have a section of the tunnel collapse and suddenly flood. Use the drowning and suffocation rules on page 127 of the *Conan* corebook.

The Boneyard



At the lake's bottom is a diamond-shaped chamber, extending back for yards. From a multitude of cracks, slicks of green water perpetually ooze. The floor is submerged for three and a half feet. Thousands of bones lie on the bottom; there are jumbled heaps of bones and skulls, and entire skeletons reposing in the murk. The player characters are struck at the vast number of the dead, and the fact they are clearly not human! These are the remains of the inhabitants of Ib, struck down by spiteful men. It is unknown what force collected their remains in this chamber.

Depending on the story seed, this is either where the idol is coming to rest, or being destroyed, inside its hollowed niche at the point of the diamond.

Momentum Spends

- Player characters can use 1 Momentum to spot the niche that holds the idol, or the cradle to receive the idol.
- If in combat, player characters can use 1 Momentum to impale a foe with the sharpened skeletal remains or smash them with a skull, as an extra attack for another 1  damage.
- Player characters can use 1 Momentum to expertly sprint from point to point to reach the idol opening.

Doom Spends

- The gamemaster can spend 1 Doom to animate 1  of the skeletons to attack, with a result of 1 or 2 equaling that many skeletons, and an effect equaling one skeleton and another  roll's worth. A roll of 3 or 4 means no skeletons manifest, and the Doom point is lost.
- The gamemaster can spend 1 Doom to flood the room for a turn, which will incapacitate the player characters but not the dwellers or skeletons.

INHABITANTS

Sarnath is a desolate domain. A pack of almost two dozen dwellers of the deep lives in the water and caves. These beings are the descendants of the transmuted humans and have slid further into primal savagery with each incestuous generation. These human hybrids are far deadlier than those first encountered by men. They are opportunistic hunters, feeding on weaker prey, needing to eat only once every few weeks. They avoid the player characters at first, then attempt to either stop them from returning the idol or from taking the idol, depending on story seed. The animated

skeletons also attempt the same goals, depending upon seed (an interesting twist would involve the skeletons and dwellers working against one another).

Despite their water-breathing abilities, the human hybrids are equivalent to degenerates and degenerate chiefs (pages 315–316 of the **Conan** corebook).

TREASURE

Most of the wealth of Sarnath vanished along with the city; some say fallen back into dream. At the discretion of the gamemaster the player characters could locate valuable trinkets such as golden tableware or utensils; pieces of precious minerals such as porphyry, zircon, or crystal; or even curiously-stamped coins that make their hardships more bearable. An especially lucky find might be a largish chunk of ivory, broken from a larger carving, but curiously stained with the verdigris of aeons.

STORY SEEDS

A God's Return

The player characters are approached by a caravan master in the twilight of his life. In his youth, he wandered to Sarnath and found the idol of Bokrug in the boneyard. Unable to sell the bizarre piece upon returning home, he made it a family heirloom, calling upon the dragon for fortune. He was wealthy and successful beyond measure, but all his children died tragically, and his daughters bore malformed green-skinned spawn that died shortly after birth.

Fearing losing the idol would cost him his fortunes, he stubbornly refused to bring it back. With the last of his line dead, he seeks to return it to selfishly save his own life. The dwellers do not wish the idol returned, as the pain and misery it brings to the world of men is retribution for their own destruction. But they are too afraid to handle it, and thus require the help of others.

Emerald Slayers

Militia of the kingdom are called into service, and all able-bodied men capable of wielding a sword are formed into patrols. Children from an outlying settlement have gone missing during the last two gibbous moons. A few of the little ones have been found miles away. Their bodies were torn by beasts who leave almost human-like tracks. Seers and holy books lay this evil upon Sarnath, which tales say rose like a ghost on the border. The only way to defeat these fiends is to destroy their idol, which unmoors Sarnath again. The dwellers fiercely protect the idol in this case; knowing to lose it means a return to their sleep.

Wealth

The sea-green stone idol is the most unique piece in this setting. It was carved to reflect the features of an ancient water-lizard. To Hyborian peoples it looks like a dragon. It is three feet long, two feet tall, and is surprisingly light. It is magic, but not of any type that can be controlled by humans. Should a player or non-player character decide to keep the idol, the effect is determined by the *A God's Return* story seed (page 59).

Destroying the idol requires the player characters to inflict 10 Breaks upon it (see *Physical Damage*, page 121 of the **Conan** corebook): the stone it is made from provides Soak 4. When it is sundered, any dwellers within one mile will spend one turn in paralyzing agony transmuted into humans, then another turn disintegrating into shells of bone and black powder. Sarnath will again recede, giving player characters until dawn before they become permanent occupants of Mnar. Those returning to the same spot after this time find only an ordinary green lake, mountains, but of the mundane kind, and no tunnels.

EXPERIENCE

Player characters who locate Sarnath should receive 50 experience points. Those that survived an encounter with the dwellers of the deep should receive 150 experience points. Another 50 points can be given for either returning, or removing, the idol.

THE VALLEY OF ZINGG

The ancient people of the Zingg Valley left behind numerous sites of standing stones. Some are ignored by the people of Zingara, and some are still in use.

OVERVIEW

The Valley of Zingg lies along the lower Black River, a fertile farmland with many fields and vineyards. It was first settled by a farming people more than a thousand years ago. The Picts conquered these simple villages and settled in the valley. When the Hyborians reached the valley on their migration west, they conquered the villages in turn. From the mixture of these three peoples, Zingara was formed. Now, the valley is home to numerous farms, vineyards, pastures, and estates. North of the Black River, the farmland soon gives way to forested mountains marked by fortified towers. The logging camps and mines in these hills are frequently raided by Picts coming down from the north in search of metals and other valuable goods.

The Valley of Zingg itself is dotted with standing stones and stone circles left by the ancient farming people. No one living knows why they were raised, and there are only rumors of what rites may have been originally practiced around them. Many of the stones are inscribed with images of people and animals and with runes of an unknown language. Some of the stones are arranged as solar calendars to mark the solstices and equinoxes. The stones may be decorated at these times, with ropes and garlands of flowers in spring and summer, sheaves of freshly harvested grain and clusters of grapes in the fall, and images of farm animals at Midwinter. The priestesses of Zingg use some of the sites to study the stars and to celebrate certain rites (see *Chapter 4: Myth and Magic of Conan the Pirate*).

The Picts that invaded the valley brought their worship of ancient dark deities such as Shub-Niggurath (see *Chapter 4: Things from the Outer Dark* in *Nameless Cults*). As is their want, the Picts appropriated the stone circles of the Valley of Zingg for their own fell purposes. Remnants of Pictish practices persist in some remote villages, particularly north of the Black River.

To the southwest, a tribe of Picts have invaded the fertile valley of Zingg, conquered the agricultural people there, and settled among them. This mixed race was in turn conquered later by a roving tribe of Hybori, and from these mingled elements came the kingdom of Zingara.

— "The Hyborian Age"

ANCIENT SITES OF ZINGG

However, not all the standing stones have survived the test of time intact. Some have fallen to earthquakes, floods, and to zealous priests of rival cults. Some have been taken down to be used as building materials. Following are some of the most notable sites scattered across the Valley of Zingg.

Barcencia

Barcencia is a trade town between Kordava and Lecindres. In the temple of Mitra there, a stone lying on its side is used as an altar before the image of Mitra. The priests say that it is a sign of Mitra's triumph over the old ways, though some in the town grumble that it is an affront to their local customs.

Estacan

Near the village of Estacan in the mountains north of the Black River, there is a stone circle on a ridge that is aligned with the rising sun of the winter solstice. The villagers in

the area stubbornly cling to the old ways. As part of their midwinter celebrations, they weave an effigy from reeds to represent the old year that they then set alight as a way of seeing the old year out. In particularly bad years, the priests of Mitra say that the villagers bind men into the effigy as a sacrifice so that the new year will be better.

Kantabria

On a hill above the village of Kantabria north of Kordava, there stands a stone with a sweeping view out to sea. Though the villagers swear they have no knowledge of it, each midsummer, someone stains the stone with the blood of a goat or deer. For this reason, most villagers avoid the stone then. Every few years, a brave or foolhardy youth will scale the hill to see what happens at the stone on those midsummer nights. Those youths are either never seen again or it is their blood that stains the stone that year.

Kordava

One of the more famous, but seldom seen, stones is in a garden of the royal palace in Kordava. The queen and the priestesses of Zingg hold rites in the garden and few others are ever allowed there. Sages say that there were once other stones in and around Kordava, but they have since been pulled down or built over.

Kostancia Island

Located just off the coast, the stone circle on Kostancia Island is built on a bluff facing out to the Western Sea. The circle is aligned to catch the setting sun at midsummer. Fishing families on the island continue to host a celebration that begins with religious rites at sunset and then continues with revels and bonfires through the night. The midsummer festival honors Ashtoreth. However, it is whispered that different, darker gods are worshipped there at other times with sacrifices in which goats, or even young girls, are hurled from the cliff into the sea.

Lecindres




The largest and most elaborate stone circle is on Lecindres Hill, south of the Black River and more than a day's ride from Kordava. It is actually two circles. The inner circle is comprised of standing stones so tall that a man on horseback cannot touch their tops. This circle is aligned with the solstices. The outer circle is made up of smaller, roughly man-sized stones that are aligned to equinoxes. Though, some sages argue that there is a third, larger ring made up of four stones placed at the cardinal directions several leagues beyond the outer circle. Once, Lecindres was a large religious complex and the site of great gatherings. Now, the priests of Mitra discourage gatherings. Dedicated followers of the old ways, though, continue to come to Lecindres to practice sacred rites.

Valinsa Island


A group of stones stands on the southern point of Valinsa Island in the Black River. The local fishermen still gather there during the spring equinox to offer ritual gifts so that the fish remain plentiful. Priests also whisper that women from the nearby villages meet there at the autumn equinox to celebrate their own fertility rites. Crocodiles often sun themselves among the stones, and the priests suspect that the stones are still used to honor the crocodile god of the Picts.

LURKERS AT THE ANCIENT SITES

Some of the priestesses of Zingg are soothsayers who know spells such as *Atavastic Voyage*, *Evil Eye*, and *Weave of Fate* (use the stats for a sorcerer, **Conan** corebook, page 321). Villagers who live near a site may be represented using the stats for a Cultist (**Conan** corebook, page 313), each with one or more of the following attacks:

- **Club (M):** Reach 2, 3 , 1H, Stun, Knockdown
- **Farming Flail (M):** Reach 2, 4 , 2H, Improvised, Knockdown, Piercing 1
- **Wood Axe (M):** Reach 2, 4 , 2H, Intense, Vicious 1

Momentum Spends

- **The Stars are Right:** By spending 2 Momentum, a sorcerer may declare that the time is particularly auspicious for magical workings at an ancient site. This spend grants 1 Momentum to the casting of spells for the rest of the action scene. Alternatively, the sorcerer may determine that the stars will be right at some point in the future and then make arrangements to be at the ancient site at the appointed time. The gamemaster could also allow the characters to discover that a villainous sorcerer has similar plans to take advantage of a site.
- **The Harder They Fall:** A character can spend 3 Momentum to knock down a standing stone onto an adversary (Reach 3, 6 , Knockdown) or to block their way so that the character may escape.

Doom Spends

- **Restless Natives:** Villagers who live near an ancient site arrive to disrupt what they see as desecration of the site.

MYSTERIOUS PLACES

Dim doubts and vague monstrous suspicions haunted his mind, but he followed her, through a labyrinthine maze of black corridors that confused even his primitive sense of direction. He mentally cursed himself for a fool, allowing himself to be led into that black abode of mystery; but it was too late to turn back now. Again he felt life and movement in the darkness about him, sensed peril and hunger burning impatiently in the blackness.

— The Hour of the Dragon

What is the nature of exploration but the revelation of mystery? We tread forth in trackless forests, sail upon moon-silver seas, and cross wastes all to peel away the layers of a world we'll never truly understand. But, like pieces of a Khitan puzzle box, we may gain fragments of the larger whole. We may find such places as our minds previously only dreamed. We may discover things which only the Earth and the Old Gods remember. We will never know the whole of it, but that does not stop us from trying.

It was but the ghost of a city on which they looked... Weeds and rank river grass grew between the stones of broken piers and shattered paves that had once been streets and spacious plazas and broad courts. From all sides... the jungle crept in.

— “Queen of the Black Coast”

ANCIENT RUINS OF THE BLACK COAST

South of Kush, a dark river bleeds into the sea. Sailors who venture near the mouth of the Zarkheba swear the water is poisoned. No fish swim in its foul currents, only venomous reptiles are spotted sliding into its depths. Rumor holds that miles upriver a city of immemorial grandeur once stood, and from this fallen place the corruption flows.

OVERVIEW

Mankind had not yet begun its march up from the primal elements when beings from another evolutionary branch ruled this corner of the world. They were similar in aspect to men, but remote in many more ways. Wings spread from their backs, allowing them to traverse the sky. They lived long millennia without dying and possessed an intelligence that allowed them to construct a great metropolis of green stone, nestled on a clear river. The world around them changed; planetary convulsions altered the landscape, miring the city in swamp and jungle.



Unwilling to leave their ancestral home, they continued to live amid the rank squalor for centuries more, sinking back into a more primitive state. Volcanic eruptions followed, then a massive earthquake fractured sections of the ancient city. The river ran black for days, changed at a chemical level by the filth spewed out of the depths of the earth. This vile water was fatal to most who drank of it. Those who did not die began to change. The fall was much faster now, with the water working within their veins, and they turned on one another in an orgy of cannibalistic feuds. It is believed that only one of the ancient winged race has survived into the age of men, roosting over inconceivable glories still waiting to be found in the ruins.

ZONES

River Approach

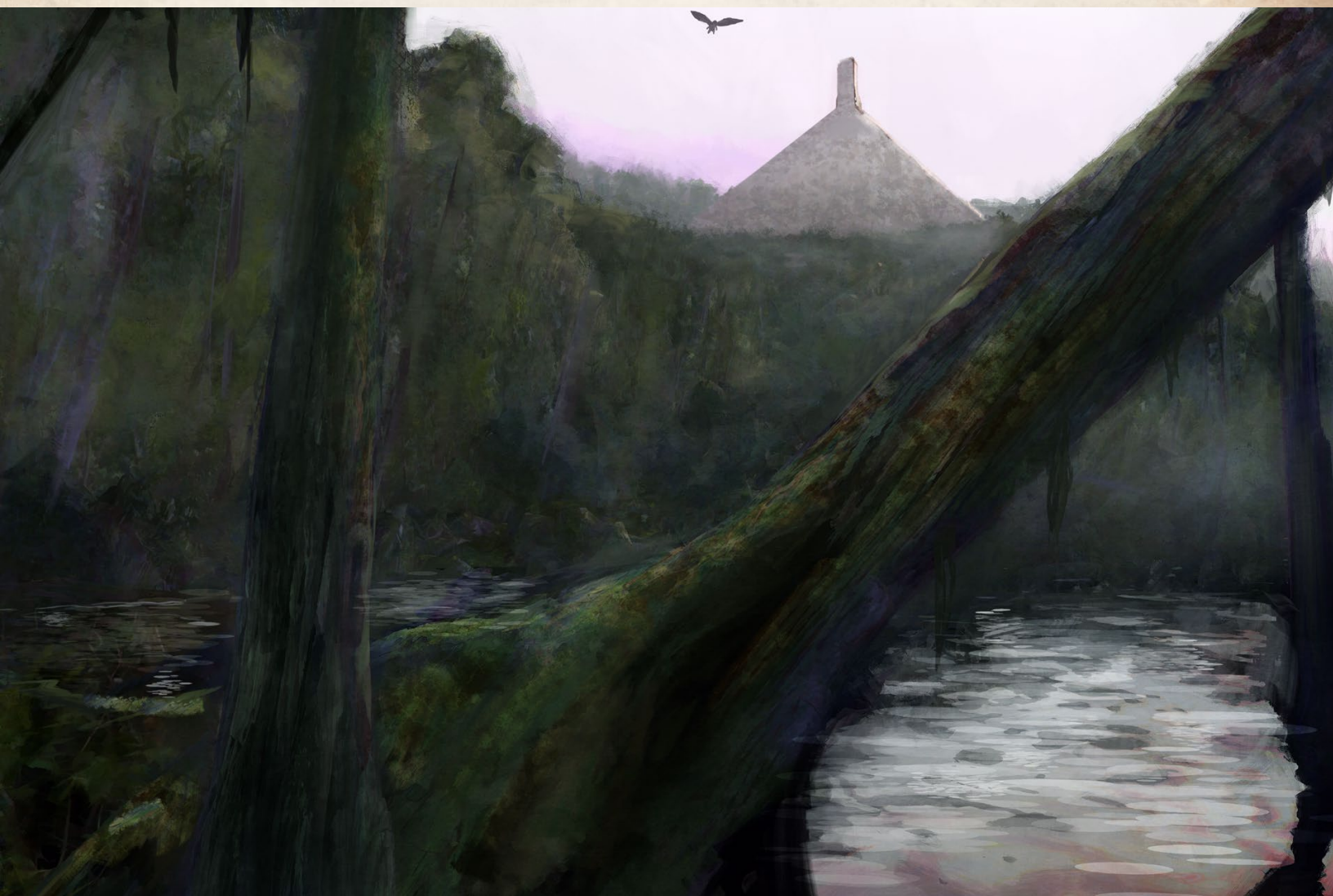
The Zarkheba is marked on the maps of captains whose livelihood takes them south of Kush. Finding it is relatively simple. Beyond its wide muddy opening, much less is known. Superstition has prevented many voyages upriver. Those who have ventured a few miles up in the interior spoke of seeing the ruins of a city from afar. It is impossible to divine more than a series of decaying grey towers until

much closer. Above all can be seen the zenith of a marble pyramid, spired by a single slender column. Depending on the gamemaster's discretion the master of the city; the winged ape (see below) may be upon his perch, watching the intruders.

Fresh water becomes more precious than gold here. None can drink the putrid water without becoming violently ill. A league upriver, gargantuan river serpents are found, mingling in the current along with their smaller brethren. A day and a night's sail up the serpent-haunted Zarkheba takes a vessel to a bend of the river and the remnants of the wharves.

Doom Spends

- Spend 2 Doom to incite riot with the crew; only by disposing of the ring-leaders will the ship return to normal.
- Spend 1 Doom to have serpent(s) crawl from shore or spring from the water to attack.
- Spend 1 Doom to have the winged ape mark the ship, as a prelude for some future act of violence or evil.



The Wharves

The nameless city once served as a bustling entrepot, hosting travelers of other, stranger races faded into myth. The ruins of a vast network of wharves can be found here. Some of the wharves are completely gone. Time has ravaged the others, leaving behind tottering stone frames or cracked wooden-frame ties, planked by rotten wood. None of these are suitable for tethering a ship. The safest course would be to drive ashore and tie off to one of the more substantial remnants. Beyond the wharves lies the corpse of the jungle-plunged city.

The Ruined City

Only a few acres of the once sprawling city have survived. A score of crooked towers, ripe for collapse, still sprout from the earth. Perhaps a half-dozen more of the smaller buildings still peek up out of waist high weeds and rancid river grass. The streets of marble slabs that once linked these places together are practically submerged under this wild growth.

Momentum Spends

- Player characters can use 1 Momentum to cleave a path straight and true to a desired destination, with no impaired movement.

Doom Spends

- The gamemaster can spend 1 Doom to have a large constrictor serpent drop out from a branch or emerge from a ruin.

Old Ones Temple


This is a small rounded tower, set on a foundation of cracked stone blocks, standing atop a festering cypress base. Flanking columns that once provided a stately entrance lie toppled and shivered. Inside, an antiquated, but intact, wooden floor still supports a massive stone altar. As corruption set in, the winged people turned to worship of the Old Ones and offered slaves and each other for sacrifice. Channels are cut across the top of the altar to drain the blood into bowls or cups. These ruts remain stained black.

Those who inspect the altar and succeed in a Challenging (D2) Observation test note the handholds at either end of the altar, which is the key to moving the hollow stone shell. The player characters must pass an Average (D1) Athletics test to begin to slide the altar to one side.


The altar is trapped! If it is moved, the altar suddenly revolves on its side, triggering the implosion of the rest of the temple. This collapse consists of two distinct areas: the bury zone (in the direct path of the falling

debris) and the dust zone (the area the debris spreads out to encompass).

Anyone in the collapsed room is in the bury zone. Those in the bury zone always take damage from the collapse and can be effectively grappled by the debris (in other words, pinned down).

- **Bury Zone Crush (M):** Range 3, 5 , Grappling, Intense, Area

Anyone in an adjacent area is in the dust zone. Those in the dust zone may be able to get out of the way.

- **Dust Zone Strike (R):** Range Special (Adjacent Room, 4 )

Survivors can loot the altar; the treasure is detailed below.

Momentum Spends

- With a successful Average (D1) Thievery test, player characters can spend 1 Momentum to spot scratches in the nearby stone giving a clue to the existence of the secret compartment, and divine how to get at its shining contents. Another 1 Momentum to obtain information reveals that it is likely balanced as if trapped.
- If a successful Average (D1) Observation test is made, player characters can spend 1 Momentum to roll out of the temple before the trap is sprung; or perhaps nobly save another from being crushed to death.

Doom Spends

- The gamemaster can spend 2 Doom to knock one of the player characters unconscious in the temple collapse, leaving them comatose until treated and rested.

Towers

These towers were once holy places to otherworldly entities such as Cthulhu, Dagon, and Shub-Niggurath. There is little left in these places except broken altars and a sense of abject cosmic horror.

Ruined Buildings

Shops, homes, and public buildings once occupied this space. They are almost unrecognizable as such after the march of ages.

The Marble Pyramid

This squat ivory pyramid is the best-preserved building among the ruins. Three of its four sides are sleek white ivory walls; the side that opens to the jungle has a set of frosted



stairs leading up a man's height to another featureless wall. There is no interior to the pyramid; the steps were for supplicants of the winged ape to deliver offerings. This beast regularly perches atop the slender 30-foot column shooting from the tip of the pyramid, surveying its spoiled kingdom.

Momentum Spends

- With a successful Average (D1) Athletics test, player characters can spend 1 Momentum to find a means to scale the side of the pyramid for a vantage point (another point needed to ascend the spire).

Doom Spends

- The gamemaster can spend 1 Doom to have the winged ape make a sudden appearance; it will try to pick the player characters off one-by-one.

The Jungle Beyond

The jungle fringing the city provides a challenge to even the most gallant pathfinder. It slows movement, spoils supplies, and delivers a steady stream of insects, snakes, and other jungle beasts. Ringing the city is a field of dangerous malign plants (see *Inhabitants*, below).

Momentum Spends

- Player characters can spend 1 Momentum to avoid being pulled in to the embrace of one of the malign plants.

Doom Spends

- The gamemaster can spend 1 Doom to have a player character blunder into a thicket of the malign plants, which will render them unconscious. While in this sleep, they will have a vision of a group of Stygian warriors who entered the field long ago and have been sorcerously transformed by the winged ape into the hyena pack.

INHABITANTS

Serpents do not fear the city, but all other mundane beasts shun it. The winged ape takes great interest in any who come too close to its domain. It does not directly attack at first, instead delighting in tormenting and bedeviling the player characters, supping on their pain and anguish like fine draughts. It may destroy the water casks in the ship while they are away, or just outright disable the ship, make off with a lone watchman at midnight, try to lead the

player characters into the field of malign plants, and then attempt to transmute them into more of the hyenas. When it tires of the game, it summons the hyena pack to attack any survivors, letting the battle nearly play out before it intervenes. If grievously injured, it flees for its perch to recover and plot revenge.

Stats for the winged ape can be found on page 343 of the **Conan** corebook, and gamemasters can treat the hyenas as Toughened dogs (page 326 of the **Conan** corebook).

TREASURE

Various relics such as cups, plates, and ornamental items are still left in some of the ruined buildings and would prove to be quite valuable to the right group. The temple to the Old Ones contains a literal king's ransom of jewels and precious gemstones. Transporting any substantial volume of the treasure from this remote place will prove the most difficult task. Any player character can probably haul 10 Gold worth of loot away, or by ship a great deal more.

EXPERIENCE

Player characters who have survived an encounter with the winged ape receive 150 experience points. Another 50 points can be given to those who are able to defeat or drive away the hyenas.

STORY SEEDS

Queen of the Black Coast

The player characters are on board a merchant vessel when Bêlit and her corsairs come upon them! The captain has angered the she-devil in the past by escaping and knows no quarter will be given. He pilots his ship upriver to the one place even she will not follow!

A Dagger's Edge

The player characters come into possession of an exquisite dagger, a valuable weapon of great antiquity. Pitting and splotches show that the dagger was likely used for grisly blood sacrifice. Cleaning the blade reveals scrollwork traced on the grooves. Inspection shows that it is a set of coordinates deciphered by the alignment of stars — a road unto the nameless city and a temple erected to the Old Ones.

THE CITY OF GHOULS

This nameless city of ghouls is an ancient, corrupted city whose remaining inhabitants haunt the surrounding forest, harrying any that stray under its boughs.

Ghouls, men called them, eaters of human flesh, spawn of darkness, children of unholy matings of a lost and forgotten race with the demons of the underworld. Somewhere in these primitive forests were the ruins of an ancient, accursed city, men whispered, and among its tombs slunk gray, anthropomorphic shadows — Conan shuddered strongly.

— The Hour of the Dragon

OVERVIEW

In southwestern Zingara, the road to Messantia passes through the forest that lies between the Western Sea and the hills that mark the border between Zingara and Argos. Deep within the forest lies an ancient metropolis, now abandoned and ruined by catastrophe. It was once one of Verulia's great cities with many noted palaces and gardens. But it was also a place of sorcerers who sought to make pacts with demons, offering up their own children. The city soon fell into decadence and decline. When the great cataclysm rocked the world, tumbling the city's towers of and destroying all the great kingdoms of that age, here lingered the descendants of men and demons: the ghouls, the eaters of the dead.

Sites of the Haunted Forest

The forest is a dense wood of oak, alder, and brambles that stretches from low hills in the east to the shore of the Western Sea. Where the road crosses through it, the forest is not wide, but it is shunned by the folk of Argos and the Zingarans have not settled near it.

The White Road


The road through the forest is shrouded and overhung by trees, and the ghouls seek to ambush those that travel along the road, particularly at night.

City Gate


The city lies well east of the road on the edge of the hills. The gate is one of the few recognizable parts of the city's walls that still stand. Most of the walls are little more than a mound of rubble, overgrown with trees and brambles.



Ruined City

Most of the city has been overtaken by the forest. Its homes and shops are now scarcely more than overgrown mounds of rubble. The trees that grow in the city are dark and twisted, and the brambles have longer, sharper thorns. Player characters that fall or are thrown into these brambles must succeed on a Challenging (D2) Survival test to avoid suffering 4  damage.

Fallen Tower

When the city was shaken by the cataclysm, a great tower fell across houses and shops, leaving a pile of rubble that remains today as a scar through the forest. Player characters must succeed on an Average (D1) Athletics test to scramble across the rubble. Those that fail suffer 4  damage from a fall, or the player characters can avoid damage by paying 1 Doom apiece.

Necropolis

A hill above the city is festooned with the tombs of the city's honored dead, and it is here that the ghouls now reside, dwelling inside mausoleums and burrowing into the hillside.

Central Plaza

In the center of the city, there is a great plaza whose stones have scarcely been disturbed by the trees. The middle of the plaza is one of the few places in the city where the trees allow a glimpse of the sky. The plaza is also the one spot in the city that offers the ghouls no places to hide.

NO REST FOR THE BOLD

When in this haunted city, the overwhelming psychic miasma of dread and suffering is so toxic that player characters must make a Challenging (D2) Discipline test to restore any lost Stresses (Vigor, Resolve, Wounds, Trauma), or to shrug off any Despair. Any attempts at Healing or Counsel are increased by one step of Difficulty.

Lyceum

On the east side of the central plaza, a building still stands. Once it was a site of education and learning. Now, beyond its colonnaded front, it is the center of corruption in the city, where the demons supplanted the knowledge and wisdom of the city's founders. The tiered ranks of marble benches that were once the site of erudite debates remain, but the racks of scrolls that filled the building during its heyday have been smashed and torn apart so that only the barest fragments remain among the litter on the floor.

Bathhouse

Once the focus of civilized life in the city, the baths are now polluted dens of stagnant water, and the pipes that once brought water from the hills into the city now allow the ghouls to move unseen through the ruins.



Sewers

The vaulted sewers were designed to improve the health of the city. Now, many of them have collapsed, and those that remain are used by the ghouls as dens and pathways.





GHOULS OF THE HAUNTED CITY

The stats for ghouls can be found in the **Conan** corebook on page 338. Most of the ghouls that prowl the forest are Minions. Generally, one Toughened ghoul may be found leading 2–4 groups of Minion ghouls. Deep within the city, a more powerful ghoul can be found that retains a sorcerous bond to the demons that corrupted the city. Such a ghoul sorcerer has the stats of a mummified sorcerer (**Conan** corebook, page 339) with the attacks of a ghoul and with *Charnel Stink*, *Inured to Disease/Poison*, and *Night Vision* in place of *Inured to Cold/Pain* and *Unliving*. Avoiding the ghouls requires a successful Challenging (D2) Stealth test in the forest and a Daunting (D3) test in the ruined city.

Momentum Spends

- **Brambles:** A thicket of brambles into which a player character may hurl a ghoul, rapping it for one round, or in which a character may hide.
- **Loose stones:** The crumbling ancient masonry may give way beneath a ghoul, causing it to tumble from a wall or bridge, or a player character might knock down a wall onto a ghoul or to gain an escape.
- **Statuary:** Statues from before the city's fall show the residents in brighter days when they were students of science and the arts and when they had clean, clear features. These statues may be toppled onto ghouls to pin them or to block their path.
- **Treasure:** A loose stone or crumbling wall reveals an ancient treasure. It may be gold coins, jewelry, or an artifact that could be of great interest to a sage or sorcerer.

Doom Spends

- **Charnel House:** A den or other enclosed space long used by the ghouls is so infested by their charnel stink that anyone entering the zone must attempt a Challenging (D2) Resistance test or gain the Dazed condition until the end of the round. Alternatively, they may add 1 to Doom, in which case they suffer 1 Fatigue and 1 Despair (**Conan** corebook, page 338).
- **Malign Plant:** The demonic taint that brought down the city has seeped deep down into its soil. Plants rooted in the ruins have absorbed the corruption and will lash out at any creatures that draw near (**Conan** corebook, page 340).
- **Collapse:** The paving stones give way beneath the player characters' feet, dropping them into a room or tunnel, and they suffer 2 , Stun from the fall. They cannot climb out and must find another way back to the surface.
- **Marks on the Walls:** The ghouls have been defacing the walls of the city, making deep scratches with their claws. A player character that succeeds on a Challenging (D2) Observation test sees in the scratches a sign of the corruption and madness that destroyed the city, suffering a *Display of Dread*, 2 , Stun.
- **Pack of Ghouls:** For 2 Doom, a pack of Minion ghouls may appear, joining a fight already in progress or surprising the player characters as they round a corner while exploring the city.

DEAD MAN'S GULCH

Tortage is a pirate's paradise. Set apart from the mainland, protected from the navies and privateers of the oceans by sharp rocks and a labyrinthine path between them, Tortage is a haven. Yet, even such a sanctuary must preserve itself from those within who breach its codes, and those without who infiltrate it, believing it to be ripe for conquest. As those foolish enough to take advantage of Tortage's apparent moral laxness often discover, to their cost, there are certain boundaries which one does not cross... even in a kingdom built by pirates.

OVERVIEW

Dead Man's Gulch is one of many rocky valleys amidst the stark, almost barren outcrops of inland Tortage. This place,

however, is unlike the other depressions in the landscape. It is filled with the remains of the dead — dozens of corpses in various stages of decay, bones from dozens more bodies which have since been disturbed by birds, picking amongst the scraps of flesh. This is where those who contravene the pirate code (and get caught) are dealt with.

Mutineers who killed their captain and put in at Tortage believing themselves safe, perhaps, or those who murdered a fellow pirate in cold blood — all can be found here. The methods of execution are as varied and as hideous as one might expect from such a depraved class of men and women as pirates. Some are crucified, others staked out beneath the sun with narwhal tusks driven through each hand and left to the ministrations of the birds. The luckiest are garrotted or simply stabbed with a cutlass through the throat.

He had his opportunity to kill Conan, and he let it pass, engrossed in his own gloomy ruminations. He did not find it easy to think any of the dogs beneath his feet constituted a menace to him. He had stood in the high places so long, and had ground so many foes underfoot, that he unconsciously assumed himself to be above the machinations of inferior rivals.

— Zaporavo, “The Pool of the Black One”

The most common method of execution, however, is the gallows. Built from the warped lumber brought to Tortage's shore over many years and built so it resembles the hanging spot which many pirates have only narrowly escaped on shore, it is considered cursed. As in any place where death is so frequent and so bloody, strange stories have accreted around the gulch — of sinister, canine creatures that steal out from fissures to gorge themselves upon the flesh of the dead. Other stories whisper of vengeful spirits that linger, awaiting the opportunity to wreak terror upon those who wronged them. The most sinister stories tell of a fine seam that crosses the gulch, through which screaming voices can be heard, begging for blood and death and pain. After all, there must have been a reason for choosing this valley, over and above the others which can be found throughout Tortage's narrow span.

KEY FEATURES

Amidst the crawling maggots and swarming flies, there are other areas of Dead Man's Gulch which might draw a player character's attention...

The Pyramid of Skulls

Who constructed this mound of skulls is uncertain; was it the pirates themselves, as a macabre joke? Possibly. What is certain is that the pirates have not disassembled it, however much it might seem to mock them. The pyramid is nearly six feet tall and describing it as a pyramid is something of a grandiose term. It is, by most definitions, simply a large pile of skulls — though there are other bones within it. It is a sinister spectacle and some claim that the strange, charnel spirits which infest this place are centered on it, their totem of death.

Momentum Spends

- Spending Momentum might allow a player character to achieve a surprise attack by appearing from behind, or from on top of the pyramid. Alternatively, it can be toppled over, dislodging dozens of bones and causing an avalanche which knocks those at its bottom over. A long thigh bone might also be conceivably used as a replacement weapon for anyone whose spear or sword or dagger has snapped in the fray.

Doom Spends

- The gamemaster can use Doom to have player characters fighting on or around the pyramid slip and fall on a skull which gives way beneath their feet. A spend might also allow an enemy to seize an arm bone or a ribcage and use it to ward off what might otherwise have been a killing blow.

The Gallows

This is a sinister, listing parody of those gallows awaiting the pirates on the mainland. To be executed here is to be officially denied the title of ‘pirate’ in death. Only the worst of crimes against one's brothers and sisters are punished in the gulch, and only the most heinous are resolved with the noose and the drop. Built from the wreckage of four major pirate ships, all recovered on Tortage's beaches, the gallows is far from perfect in its lines and its symmetry. But it is stable, resolute and, even as the condemned clammers up the warped stairs, ideally suited to its grim task.

Momentum Spends

- The daring player character might spend 1 or more Momentum to use the hanging rope as a means of swinging, in true pirate style, over their foes, brandishing their cutlass. Opening the trapdoor at an opportune moment, using 1 Momentum, can also send an enemy plunging below for 3 ⚔, as well as

allowing the player character to finish the job, far more easily, a short while later.

Doom Spends

- Fighting atop something as tainted as the gallows can visit all sorts of bad luck on player characters — dropped blades, stumbles, and minor injuries can all be inflicted with the expenditure of Doom. The gamemaster can also spend 2 Doom to have the player characters the subject of social exclusion and hostility as a result of profaning something so steeped in meaning. This can result in allies suddenly becoming neutral combatants, or, at the worst, new enemies.

Ghoul Tunnels

This is an optional feature which a gamemaster might choose to include or omit from their version of Dead Man's Gulch. At the farthest extreme of the shallow valley, there is a dark aperture. Only just visible, behind the mounds of the dead and the implements of their execution, it is sunk deep into the rock. Too deep, it seems. And from within it... there are sounds. Gibbering, meeping, inhuman sounds. Sometimes, sometimes, creatures emerge from the confines of the dark — rubbery, hideous things with clawed fingers reaching...

Momentum Spends

- A player character might spend 3 Momentum to precipitate a foe into the darkness of the ghoulish tunnel — from which it is unlikely they will return. Any player characters with broken or damaged weapons or armor can spend 2 Momentum to find a replacement around the perimeter of the entrance to the chasm — dropped by someone unfortunate enough to be carried off, while only half-dead, into the underground warren.

Doom Spends

- A gamemaster can spend 3 Doom points to summon two ghouls, or 5 Doom to summon three. These can be the player characters' chief opponents in this situation or, alternatively, they might attack the player characters and the foes with whom the player characters are already fighting for their lives.

INHABITANTS

The main inhabitants of the gulch are likely to be ghouls, as noted above (for more, see page 338 of the *Conan* corebook)

or, potentially, ghosts of wrongfully executed pirates (see page 337 of the *Conan* corebook). Perhaps a tyrannical ruler of Tortage used Dead Man's Gulch as a convenient spot for disposing of enemies — in which case, wrathful phantoms might be plentiful, and, at least initially, unlikely to be picky against whom they revenge themselves.

TREASURE

The pirates killed here are unlikely to have been allowed to keep any significant treasure when they were sentenced to execution. A few trinkets are discoverable, with careful searching, which altogether might fetch 1 Gold. This isn't a place with extensive pickings.

EXPERIENCE

An expedition to Dead Man's Gulch is worth the following experience point rewards.

- 150 points for using the gallows in combat.
- 50 points for using a part of the pyramid of skulls during combat.
- 50 points for tricking an enemy into a ghoulish tunnel.



ENCLAVE OF THE SNOW-APES

When the Cataclysm drove the peoples of the earth into far and inhospitable corners, they found many things and strange creatures waiting for them. With the ferocity and ingenuity of near-men, the savages slaughtered these beings and drove them into near-extinction. But some creatures endured. The snow-apes were one such race. Brutal, towering beings, though dwindling in number, these beasts fought with cunning and enormous strength but could not stem the tide of savages from the south. Instead, they retreated into the arctic north, to old places which the savages would never be able to find amidst the trackless tundra and freezing heights of the mountains. There the snow-apes waited, for the world to change again and for man's ascendancy to be halted.

OVERVIEW

The enclave of the snow-apes is an ancient temple, constructed from cyclopean blocks which were ancient even before Valusia fell. Whether the ancestors of the snow-apes built them, before falling into decadence and, finally, regressing to the state of primitive beasts, or whether the snow-apes merely occupied that which had been long abandoned, none can say. There are carven tablets, hewn from stone with skill and craftsmanship and then set into the ground about the altar. It is a peculiar, desolate place, filled with an eerie sense of loss. The air is filled with snow and ice and the apes can appear, as if from nowhere, in a single moment.

They found the snow-countries inhabited only by a species of ferocious snow-apes — huge shaggy white animals, apparently native to that climate. These they fought and drove beyond the Arctic circle, to perish, as the savages thought. The latter, then, adapted themselves to their hardy new environment and thrrove.

— “The Hyborian Age”

ENCLAVE OF THE SNOW-APES FEATURES

The sanctuary which the snow-apes created for themselves in this mountainous, inhospitable region, has several unique elements which might prove useful to a gamemaster.

The Altar

The purpose this altar was originally put to has, perhaps thankfully, long been lost. The stone from which it is made is old and pitted but just discernible are ancient markings carved upon it, in a language long since lost. Faint remnants of strange sorcery are detectable, to those sensitive to such things who stand near it. Coarse fur clings to its sides, indicating that the snow-apes recognize the potency of this carven altar and use it themselves, as part of some unknown ritual. It functions in most regards as a circle of power, as described on page 144 of the **Conan** corebook.

Momentum Spends

- A player character using sorcery can spend 3 Momentum to cast a spell at the altar without

sacrificing a Fortune point. This can only be done once, as the resources of power near the altar will be expended by drawing on them in this way. The numinous vestiges of power take some time to replenish themselves. If the player characters visit this spot a second time, this Momentum spend may be available once again.


Doom Spends

- Snow-apes, ancient and strange creatures, are susceptible to the ebbs and flows of magic and the Outer Dark's intrusion on the real. If a snow-ape touches the altar, the gamemaster may ignore damage inflicted upon that ape at double the cost of Doom spent (that is, a gamemaster might spend 2 Doom and ignore 4 points of damage).

The Standing Stones

What the strange tablets, jutting from the ground, were intended for is as mysterious and unanswerable as the true nature of the enclave in the first place. They exist, and that seems enough, certainly for the snow-apes who have left them where they stand for the millennia in which they have been the Enclave's sole occupants. Certainly, they could have torn them down with little difficulty, and yet the stones still protrude from the earth — sporadic teeth in the gums of a vast giant. They each possess a single engraving, though again, what this engraving is meant to be is obscure. Is it a rune? A crude depiction of a man-like figure? A sigil of protection? None can be truly certain and indeed, there have been no scholars fortunate enough to venture this far north and learn of such things. Instead, they remain a mystery... one more scintilla of ancient knowledge, lost to history forever.

Momentum Spends

- Player characters can spend Momentum to hide behind the stones and launch surprise attacks on enemies, even if already engaged in a Melee combat. Alternatively, a 3-point Momentum spend can allow a player character to topple one of the stones onto a foe, causing 8  of damage.

Doom Spends

- The snow-apes are much more circumspect and careful around the standing stones than a player character is likely to be. The gamemaster might like to suppose that this is because the apes know what lies beneath. A gamemaster can spend all their Doom (with a minimum spend of 4) to have one of the stones tumble over and a child of the

dark (see *Conan* corebook page 346) emerge from where it has been contained for uncounted centuries. The snow-apes will flee at this point... returning only if the child of the dark is killed; they will then carefully re-erect the standing stone.

The Darkling Wood

Fringed on all sides by thick pine forest, the enclave of the snow-apes is protected from the depredations of civilization. But the forest is a dangerous place itself; darkness gathers there, amongst the trees. Little light can penetrate the thickets of branches and, once within the tree line, visibility is curtailed. Instead, there are strange, animal scents — iron and ozone and fetid breath — and the ominous sounds of inhuman feet falling, heavily, in the near distance. The snow-apes know this wood with the perspicacity that any animal has towards its home. Becoming separated from one's comrades in such a spot would be a truly dangerous thing to do...

Momentum Spends

- Disappearing, quickly, into the shadowed confines of the forest is a good way of gaining some breathing space in a desperate battle. A player character can spend 1 Momentum to make a Challenging (D2) Stealth test as a Free Action to conceal themselves within the forest. Alternatively, the player characters can spend Momentum to climb the trees and then leap onto enemies from above!

Doom Spends

- The gamemaster may spend 2 Doom to have a random animal foe emerge, unexpectedly, from the impenetrable wooded thickets and attack (use one of the animals from *Wild Beasts* on page 322 of the *Conan* corebook) and have the creature seize the initiative. Being trapped in these incalculably ancient forests might also necessitate a Dire (D4) Stress test, at the cost of 2 Doom.

INHABITANTS

The snow-apes are the only inhabitants of the enclave. Anything that might have lived here before them has been long since killed, driven off or else dwindled away. Snow-apes are described on page 86–87 of *Conan the Barbarian*. Alternately, the gamemaster can update the ape description on page 322 of the *Conan* corebook by making them Toughened foes or improving their Brawn and Combat Field of Expertise to make them more formidable.

TREASURE

The pelts of snow-apes make highly prized clothing or wall-furnishings, depending on who they are being sold to. Bargaining can secure a price of 2 Gold for each pelt in reasonable condition. There are also pieces of strange, ancient jewelry to be found decorating the altar. These can be sold for 1 Gold each. How many of the curious items and amulets can be found is up to the gamemaster.

EXPERIENCE

Finding and exploring the enclave of the snow-apes is worth the following experience points.

- 100 for killing a snow-ape and securing its pelt.
- 50 for killing a snow-ape and leaving its pelt behind.
- 100 for killing a foe by toppling a standing stone on top of them.
- 50 for casting a spell utilizing the remnant sorcerous potential of the altar.

THE HULK OF THE DAMNED

A vast, rotting ship drifts upon the tides, a forgotten relic from the days of old Atlantis. Centuries past, its countless decks and passageways teemed with humanity, desperate survivors of a bygone cataclysm. Now decrepit and waterlogged, it is little more than a floating ruin of creaking timbers and tattered sails. But it is not entirely lifeless. Something old and foul nests deep within the hulk, ravenous and sly, damned to drift with the waves for all eternity.

But as a viper in a verdant garden lay that sullen black ship, anchored just outside the shallow water.

— “The Isle of Pirates’ Doom”

OVERVIEW

This ruin is a great, antique ship. Quiet and still, it drifts in the sea, shunned even by gulls. Grotesque, tattered remnants of sails cling to jagged broken masts, flapping ineffectually in the wind. The entire ship lists markedly to one side, and several holes in the hull just above the waterline indicate that the hulk is partially flooded. Its

oars are lost. Its figurehead is naught but a ruined spur of weathered timber, and its rudders have sheared off long ago rendering the vessel quite unsteerable.

The hulk is ancient indeed, a great vessel of the Atlanteans themselves who built it to sail the mighty oceans of the world. It survived the Great Cataclysm that befell that earlier age, drifting on the swollen seas beyond the shattered continent, decks heaving with hundreds of desperate survivors. But lack of food and water eventually became a matter of life and death, and the survivors fell to fighting, murder, and finally cannibalism to survive. At length, a mere handful of desperate people were left, living off the meat of their fellows. Then even they fell to one another, save one, more desperate, more iron-willed than the rest.

The ship's very existence is but a rumor among seagoing folk from the Baracha Isles to far Khitai. Haunted-eyed pirates, deep in their cups, may mutter of the ghost ship that drifts on distant tides or of foolhardy fortune seekers who set sail in search of that damned hulk and never return to port.

The hulk may be encountered anywhere on the high seas drifting with the current or else briefly beached on some lonely isle, reef or stretch of coastline far from the settlements of men.

KEY FEATURES

The style of construction is alien in its antiquity, dating back before the rise of the Hyborian Age. Its size and construction are certainly beyond anything that the men of Argos or Stygia could build today. The ship looks like it could easily support a crew of two hundred oarsmen. An Average (D1) Sailing test lays bare the age of the vessel.

The hulk's timbers are well weathered, smooth, and quite old. The wood itself is of a species of tree that no longer exists, save for certain walled gardens in Khitai or Vendhya. This fact is noted by passing a Challenging (D2) Craft test.

Some of the internal timbers bear signs of the ship's original splendor: flecks of gold leaf on a wall panel here, a suggestion of intricately carved table legs there. If there is any loot to be had onboard, it has not been left carelessly lying around.

Small traces of those who have previously boarded the hulk may be found by the sharp-eyed, requiring a Challenging (D2) Observation test. A Shemitish coin lodged between two planks, the broken tip of a Vanir's axe embedded in a bulkhead, wispy strands of fine Ophirean silk caught on a rusted nail, old bloodstains, woodwork gouged by something sharp. These fragments may be years, even decades old, but they are far more recent than the ancient ship itself, suggesting that others have come aboard the hulk before.



THE KA-GHOUL

An ancient survivor of the Atlantean cataclysm, transformed by centuries of cannibalism into a foul inhuman horror. Use the write-up for Saadan, Ghoul King on page 377 of the CONAN corebook, but replace his *Charnel Stink* special ability with the following.


SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Cursed Immortal:** While aboard the hulk, the ka-ghoul can spend 2 Doom to completely heal all its Vigor or 4 Doom to regrow lost limbs. If the ka-ghoul is moved off the ship it ages rapidly, gaining 2 points of Fatigue and taking 5 damage per round which it cannot resist or soak, eventually turning to bones.




The size and height of the hulk suggests that it has many decks, which is indeed the case. Explorers may discover that some decks are exceedingly low, requiring normal sized folks to stoop or even crawl. Add 1 Doom for every deck that explorers descend toward the ka-ghoul's nest, so oppressive is the damned hulk's atmosphere. The haunted vessel may itself generate Doom as per the rules on page 270 of the **Conan** corebook.

Momentum Spends

- Player characters may spend 4 Momentum to bring an entire section of the deck above crashing down. This does 4  physical damage to all within Medium range.

Doom Spends

- For 2 Doom, the gamemaster may cause a section of worm-ridden planking to give way, dropping an explorer to the deck below and doing 2  physical damage and inflicting the Staggered condition.

Some secret passageways have long since been sealed off from the rest of the hulk, save for certain small, hidden panels.

Momentum Spends

- Player characters may spend 2 Momentum to open a small, secret passageway unknown and inaccessible to the ka-ghoul.

Doom Spends

- For 1 Doom, the ghostly, unnerving wails of murdered passengers echo down the darkened passageways. This increases the Difficulty of Discipline and Sorcery tests by one step.

Concealed beneath cunningly carved trapdoors in the decks, several greasy chutes drop unwary explorers down to the lower decks and the bilge. One can spot and avoid this with a Daunting (D3) Survival test.

Momentum Spends

- Player characters may spend 1 Momentum to quickly grab onto a plunging comrade and save them from disappearing down a chute.

Doom Spends

- The gamemaster may spend an amount of Doom equal to the number of explorers minus one to have a previously undetected trapdoor plunge

a single explorer down several decks through a branching chute.

Several sections of the hulk below the waterline are flooded due to holes in the hull. Loose timberwork and other debris drifts and shifts in the black waters of these sections, making progress slow and perilous (see *Hindrances* on page 111 of the **Conan** corebook).

Momentum Spends

- Players may spend 3 Momentum to push on the rotting floorboards beneath their feet, causing them to warp, causing the black waves to wash everyone in Close range from starboard to port, or from bow to stern.

Doom Spends

- Shifting debris blocks the way ahead at a cost of 2 Doom, forcing the explorers to take a longer, more perilous route.

INHABITANTS

Deep within the hulk's lower decks lurks the cannibal ka-ghoul, the last savage survivor of the ship's original inhabitants. Perhaps he was cursed by one of his victims or damned by the gods for his monstrous acts. Whatever the reason, this foul centuries-old creature yet lives, subsisting on a sporadic diet of human meat. Immortal and near unkillable, the stooped, emaciated ka-ghoul barely resembles a human being any more. Its lean, elongated flanks are blackened with caked blood, floor-length hair matted into a greasy whip-like rope, hands and feet clawed and iron-hard, and teeth too many and too large for its distended mouth.

Bestial and maddened by centuries of isolation, the ka-ghoul grunts only in pre-Cataclysmic oaths, requiring a Dire (D4) Linguistics test to decipher these whilst the creature attacks. It dozes patiently in its stinking nest — a low, hidden deck in the heart of the ship where it feels most safe — and slumbers for months or years at a time between feasts. When the hulk drifts within sight of another ship, the creature awakens at the scent of approaching humans and hungrily stalks the explorers.

Cautious and sly, the ka-ghoul prefers to attack small numbers of prey, stealthily shadowing explorers and waiting for them to be split up before striking (see Doom spends in *Key Features*, page 73). It favors slaying all but one victim in a grisly fashion then dragging the captive survivor down to its nest to be consumed, returning later for the other bodies. If the explorers remain together, the

ka-ghoul resorts to bursting from the darkness to seize the rearmost person and then leaps down a hidden chute with its struggling captive.

Once they are picked clean over a period of days and weeks, the bones of the ka-ghoul's victims are thrown down a chute to accumulate in the bilge in the deepest part of the hulk, where the yellowing bones of the dead shift back and forth in waist-deep dunes with the endless tides, making it difficult terrain. The unquiet remains of several victims lie submerged among the bone dunes, rearing up as skeletal warriors (see page 342 of the Conan core book) when the living disturb their tormented resting place.

Explorers may spot, with a Dire (D4) Observation test, that the ka-ghoul is careful to avoid coming too close to the rails of the upper decks or to any open holes in the hull. For while it remains onboard the damned hulk, it can recover from almost any injury, even major limb loss, thanks to the curse. But the creature cannot leave the confines of the ship without dooming itself. Should it do so, willingly or otherwise, the long years of its immortality will rapidly catch up with it, aging the horror to a husk and then bones within seconds.

TREASURE

A few treasures and trinkets from past victims are heaped around the ka-ghoul's nest. While much of it consists of rotting, ruined silks and finery, there are some valuable gems and jewels among the detritus, perhaps even some rare Atlantean coins amounting to 20 Gold.

An ancient, yellowing cameo lies among the trinkets, depicting a man and his family in profile. The man bears a faint resemblance, revealed with an Average (D1) Observation test, foully distorted, to the features of the terrible ka-ghoul. As a pre-cataclysmic artifact, this could be worth up to 15 Gold to the right collector, but perhaps its close association with the ka-ghoul carries a touch of the creature's curse.

EXPERIENCE

For surviving an encounter with the ka-ghoul and getting off the hulk alive, the gamemaster should award each of the player characters 50 experience points. Some reasons why 50 additional points might be handed out are given below:

- Braving the ka-ghoul's nest to rescue a captive (whether the victim is still alive or not).
- Surviving an encounter with the skeletal warriors in the bone dunes of the bilge.
- Uncovering the pre-cataclysmic origin of the ka-ghoul.
- Deducing the ka-ghoul's weakness and using it to force the creature off the ship.

The gamemaster should try to ensure that no player character earns more than 100 additional experience points.

LEMURIAN SWAMP RUIN

Located far to the east, perhaps in the sultry jungles of Khitai, is an ancient and forgotten place, a shrine of some sort built before the Cataclysm. Once adorning a mountain-top, it is on a small and rocky island, now lost in the marches of a reeking swamp. Dense is the growth that surrounds and envelops the site, florid with black roses and orchids whose scent pervades all like a thick fog.

Hidden amidst purple and black shade, little remains of note, save for sections of marble flooring, long broken by twisting vines and bold weedy growths, and tall granite columns, of which some remain, their bases carved with monstrous forms of creatures lost to memory. These frame the onetime center of the shrine, a squat and curious silver idol with huge eyes of ruby, toppled from the pedestal it once stood upon. It stares blankly at any who enter the shrine, its expression unknowable, though light still seems to glimmer in the eyes.

Rotath cursed the limitations of the flesh. He felt his brain crumbling and he cursed all the men of all the worlds. He cursed them by Hotath and Helgor, by Ra and Ka and Valka.

He cursed all men living and dead, and all the generations unborn for a million centuries to come, naming Vramma and Jaggta-noga and Kamma and Kulthas. He cursed humanity by the fane of the Black Gods, the tracks of the Serpent Ones, the talons of the Ape Lords and the iron bound books of Shuma Gorath.


He cursed goodness and virtue and light, speaking the names of gods forgotten even by the priests of Lemuria. He invoked the dark monstrous shadows of the older worlds, and of those black suns which lurk forever behind the stars.

— "The Curse of the Golden Skull"

Lying in the middle of this place is a curious sight that give make any human pause: a human skeleton, incredibly fashioned out of — or encased in — the brightest and purest gold, lying upon its back as if looking upward at the stars.

It does not look entirely human. Examining the skeleton with a successful Challenging (D2) Healing test reveals that the finger-bones are longer than a human's, the eye-sockets deeper, the skull's shape more elongated than that of a human being, but from all details, the skeleton was once clothed in human flesh.

Should any player character succeed on an Epic (D5) Lore test, they will remember a tale told long ago of a of considerable fame — Rotath of the Moonstone and the Asphodel, a sorcerer-priest of the time before the oceans drank Lemuria — who taught the Lemurian king strange magics but was slain by King Kull of Valusia dying out of sight somewhere in a mountaintop shrine. Legends say that a great curse was forged that day, calling upon forgotten gods, demon-lords, and other terrible entities. Such a terrible enchantment was wrought that day, whisper those who are wise and fearful, that it will supposedly outlast eternity itself.

Should any be so bold as to interfere with this curious skeleton, they must make a Daunting (D3) Observation test. Success means that they see an adder strike forth with blinding speed from its hiding place within the golden skull, while failure means that the gamemaster may spend 1 Doom to have the adder strike immediately with a Simple (D0) Difficulty. See page 330 of the *Conan* corebook for the venomous snake but increase its damage to 5 .

The eyes of the silver idol are rubies, each worth 10 Gold. The idol itself is quite heavy (Encumbrance 50) and is solid silver. If the skeleton is removed from the shrine (Encumbrance 30), it is worth 20 Gold to a prospective buyer, should one be found for such an ill-favored thing. The gamemaster should be creative in applying following states to Rotath's death-curse, perhaps even allowing for the skeleton to be haunted by its former owner. Additionally, the ghosts of those who died on Rotath's altars are bound to his remains and this place and may still linger in one form or another.

Should one of the players be familiar with original Kull story, the gamemaster is encouraged to alter the encounter or have the adder be absent entirely, to appear later when it is not expected.

MARSH ISLAND

Many leagues west of the Pictish coast, the island of Marogoz — 'Marsh Island' — squats in festering isolation. Windswept, marsh-bloated, and far from the eye of civilized man, it was once a small but industrious fishing village. Now Marogoz is a ghost isle. An old, abandoned village sits moldering down by the harbor, lifeless and rotting. Warehouses, piers, homes, mansions, and a curious temple lie empty and long forsaken.

But look closer and see the makeshift fortifications and traps that have turned the settlement into a labyrinthine fort where a half-mad hermit fights a nightly battle against loathsome horrors from the sea, a battle he cannot hope to win much longer.

"Here and there the ruins of wharves jutted out from the shore to end in indeterminate rottenness, those farthest south seeming the most decayed. And far out at sea, despite a high tide, I glimpsed a long, black line scarcely rising above the water yet carrying a suggestion of odd latent malignancy. This, I knew, must be Devil Reef."

— "The Shadow Over Innsmouth",
H.P. Lovecraft

OVERVIEW

The island was colonized more than a century ago by disaffected Zingaran commoners led by a charismatic sea captain called Kortonez who had voyaged far and seen much. He told them of a place they could settle, an island surrounded by waters rich in fish but far from warfare and the cruelty of petty nobles. Consisting of low hills, a natural harbor deep enough for fishing boats, and miles of surrounding, boggy saltmarsh, the colonists dubbed their new home Marogoz, or 'Marsh Island'.

Around the harbor they built wharves and on the hills above constructed a village of houses, palisades and a little grazing land for goats and hens. The near-impassable bogs and a large, jagged reef to the south and west afforded the islanders considerable protection from pirates and other shipborne raiders. For years, the people of Marogoz lived in peace and comparative prosperity, with little contact with the outside world.

At some point Kortonez began to traffic with inhuman, amphibious dwellers of the deep. Most islanders believed that the sea creatures had been lurking in the nearby reef for years, waiting for the right time to show themselves. But others whispered nervously that the captain himself had brought them back from one of his protracted voyages far to the south. Whatever the truth, Kortonez contrived for his people and the creatures to meet, mix, and even mate. Their children were strange hybrids, at home both on land and under the water. To seal their union, the islanders built a temple down at the harbor to a watery god called Dagon.

The changed people of Marogoz gradually forsook the village to frolic with their monstrous relatives in the briny deeps of the reef. Only a handful of families remained on

dry land, choosing to remain untainted by the sea-creatures' blood. But their watery neighbors became bold and large in number, venturing back onto the island each night to stare up at the village with dark, unblinking eyes. They clambered over the harbor wall and hopped up the village lanes to drag the struggling people down to the shoreline for sport and for mating. Now only a single human survives, driven half-mad by years of lonely nocturnal struggles to repel the assaults of the dwellers of the deep and their mocking hybrid children.

Players characters may learn of the existence of Marsh Island from an old Zingaran sea map, or from gossip and folklore among sailors and merchants who recount the legend that old Kortonez found a fabulous treasure far to the south and brought it back to his secret island west of the Pictish Wilderness.

KEY FEATURES

The eerie, ghostly region known as Marsh Island is broken into the following areas, which may each contain one or more zones.

The Streets of Marsh Island

The narrow, fortified streets of the decaying village are choked with staked barricades, booby traps, and pits (see *Hazards* on page 274 of *Conan* corebook). This deadly labyrinth surrounding the hermit's mansion enforces cautious, single-file movement (see *Hindrances* on page 111 of the *Conan* corebook). Avoiding the traps is a Daunting (D3) Survival test.

Momentum Spends

- Player characters may spend 2 Momentum to maneuver an enemy in Close range into a trap.

Doom Spends

- At a cost of 2 Doom, the webs of interconnected tripwires and snares lurch and shift perilously, increasing the Difficulty of disarming (Thievery tests) and avoiding (Survival tests) the traps by one step for the rest of the scene.

Bright braziers burn at night throughout the streets, increasing the Difficulty of Stealth tests by one step.

Momentum Spends

- For 2 Momentum, player characters may spill a burning brazier over an enemy within Close range, or to drive them face first into a brazier.

Doom Spends

- Some of the open braziers have fallen or been knocked over. With a spend of 2 Doom, old timber buildings catch fire, and it begins to spread across the village, coming between the player characters and a place of safety.

The Mansion

The hermit's fortified mansion is well protected from conventional attacks with high walls, firing holes, and barred doors. A Challenging (D2) Warfare test indicates the defenses are professional in nature.

Momentum Spends

- The player characters may spend 2 Momentum to knock a handy barrel of slippery, flammable oil over the floor.
- Another 2 Momentum lets a player character reach out and trigger a spike trap in the ceiling (3 damage to a single enemy).

Doom Spends

- The dwellers have been secretly tunneling under the mansion. For 4 Doom, they erupt from the floor in a flood, having finally breached the cellar!

The Temple of Dagon

In the temple of Dagon, art depicts a horrid union of man and dweller, as well as some of the history of Kortonez and the islanders. A Daunting (D3) Lore test suggests the connection between the dwellers, Dagon, and these humans.

Momentum Spends

- Magic is tinged by the god's dark influence in this place of power. Each point of Momentum spent on Sorcery tests inflicts 2 mental damage on enemies in Medium range, while the caster takes on a temporary amphibious tinge to their skin.

Doom Spends

- At a cost of 4 Doom, Dagon's presence is felt, reaching out across the void to assault all non-worshippers present with paralyzing fear as the temple floor appears to become a great yawning cetacean mouth, threatening to swallow everyone (6 mental, Stun).

THE HERMIT'S COMPANION

If the player characters lack a strong fighter, the hermit has a powerful companion he calls "Winter" — a tall, mute Cimmerian. The sole survivor of a shipwreck, Winter is named for the season when the barbarian washed up on the shore. Winter is loyal to the hermit but possessed of a certain nobility toward those who act with honor and bravery.

Use the Bodyguard (Nemesis) template (page 313 of the CONAN corebook) or use the writeup of Fenwar (page 389, CONAN corebook) for Winter.

THE HERMIT'S TRUE IDENTITY

One option for the gamemaster to consider is that the half-mad hermit is the old sea captain Kortonez himself, his lifespan extended through herbal preparations stowed in his fortified mansion. Perhaps Kortonez now regrets his hubris and wickedness and mourns what he did to the islanders. Or perhaps he is unrepentant and seeks only to survive the ungrateful creatures' attacks and escape the island for good.

INHABITANTS

Though the island's only remaining fully human inhabitant is mad, there lies greater madness in the black fish-eyes of the bastards which assault him nightly.

The Hermit (Nemesis)

An aging half-mad Zingaran mariner with a talent for building defensive fortifications. Clad in rusting armor cobbled together from scrap metal, he talks to himself and to the handful of goats and hens penned in the mansion he claims as his own.

His instinct is to drive off any newcomers with his traps, but he doubtless fails. If subdued or befriended, the hermit tells a little of the island's history, but glosses over his own role if he is in fact old Kortonez himself — see *The Hermit's True Identity* sidebar, page 78. He asks the player characters to help defend the village against the nocturnal assaults of the dwellers of the deep and their hybrids.

ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
9	10	9	10
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
7	7	7	


FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	2	Movement	1
Fortitude	1	Senses	1
Knowledge	1	Social	2

STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 8, Resolve 11
- **Soak:** Armor 2 (Rusting Armor), Courage 2 (Madness)

ATTACKS

- **Rusted Cutlass (M):** Reach 2, 3 , 1H, Parrying

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **The Marsh is My Home:** The hermit never needs to make Survival tests in the marsh and can pay 1 Doom to avoid any trap or hazard. In addition, he can pay 3 Doom to simply vanish so long as he can gain full cover from all characters at the same time. After he vanishes, a Daunting (D3) Observation test will discover a secret tunnel, ladder, rope bridge or other such construction, which will have been broken to prevent pursuit.
- **Traps, Tricks, and Pitfalls:** The hermit has a personal pool of 4 Doom which he can use to activate Hazards (see the *Conan* corebook, page 273) or use his other special abilities.
- **A Sharp Blade Rife with Filth:** The hermit has many rusty sharp pieces of metal hidden in the marsh. When he triggers a trap it automatically gains +2  damage with the Vicious 1 Quality.

The Dwellers of The Deep

Foul amphibious humanoids, as presented on page 336 of the *Conan* corebook. These croaking creatures of the sea attack the village every night from different directions; sometimes directly up over the harbor wall, sometimes across the marshes to the rear of the town. They are intent on taking the hermit, who they seem to have a fixation on, down into the water to their reef.

The creatures can be defeated through sufficient force of arms, intelligent deployment of traps, or risky use of fire. They can also be led on a chase away from the village, allowing other player characters to escape or even take the fight to the reef itself. If not dealt with decisively, the amphibious horde eventually overwhelms the hermit's defenses, dragging him and anyone who stands with him down to a horrific, watery fate.

Dweller of The Deep Hybrids

Half dweller, half human. See page 337 of the *Conan* corebook. One of the attacking hybrids is the grizzled

hermit's own daughter, who comes every night specifically to taunt him. If pressed the hermit admits that he had once lain with a dweller. A Challenging (D2) Awareness test reveals the physical similarities between hermit and spawn.

TREASURE

Idol of Dagon

This horrid batrachian statuette greatly increases the charisma and persuasiveness of whatever of the marsh folk possesses it when they are speaking to their own kind. It is sacred to the dwellers of the deep but worth up to 10 Gold to the right buyer.

EXPERIENCE

For escaping Marsh Island, the gamemaster should award each of the player characters 100 experience points. Some reasons why 50 additional points might be handed out are given below.

- Discovering the full history of the island.
- Deducing the hermit's complicity in the doom that came to Marogoz (if he is old Kortonez).

- Particularly brave defense of the village or creative use of the fortifications.
- Clever ruses to mislead the dwellers leading to escape.

The gamemaster should try to ensure that no player character earns more than 100 additional experience points.

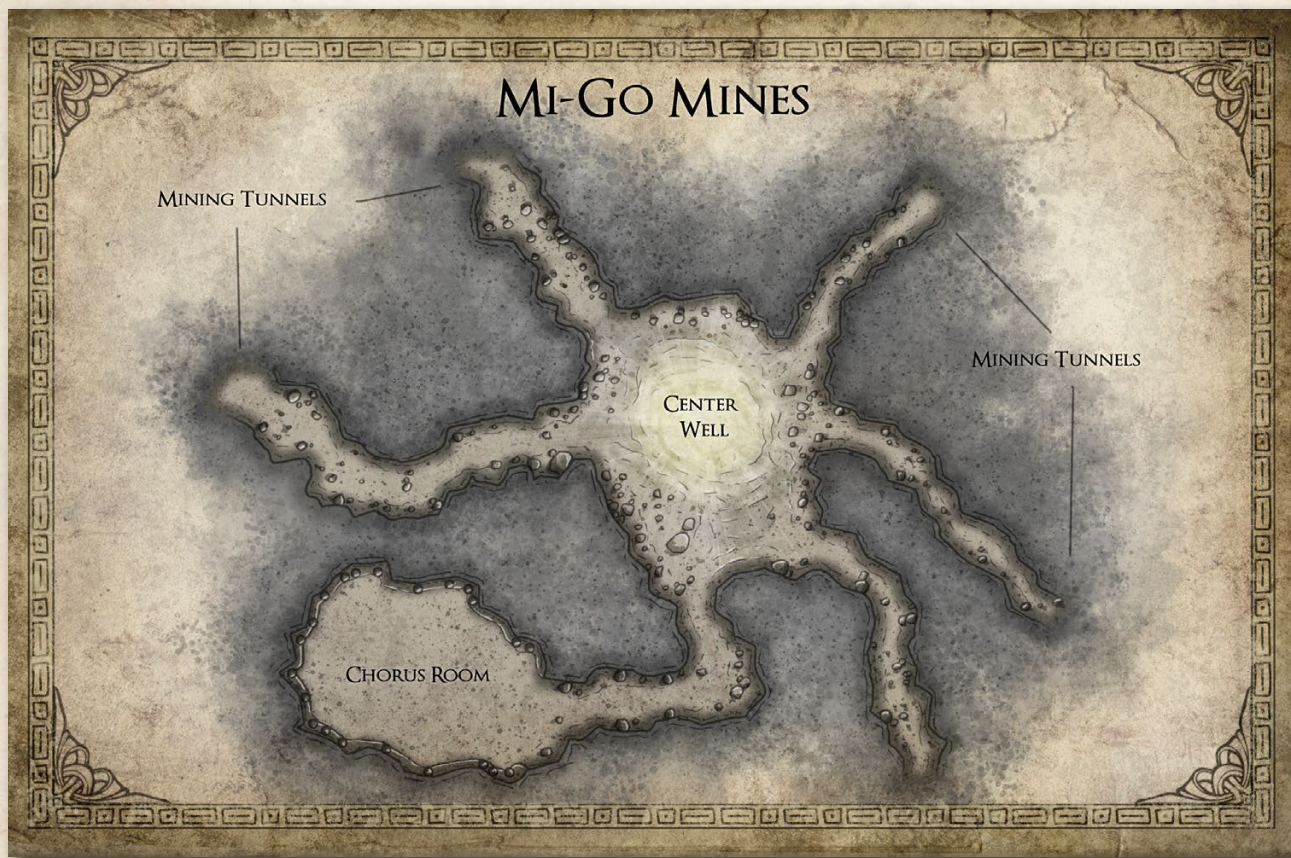
MI-GO MINING ENCAMPMENT

Bizarre alien entities have descended from the stars! The mi-go have landed upon a Hyborian mountain range, drawing out precious metals and harvesting fossilized organic matter. They have chosen a remote corner, sparsely inhabited. They do not wish to draw the attention of the natives, finding contact with such primitives creates unnecessary delays. This caution should not be mistaken for fear; they are entirely capable of defending themselves.

OVERVIEW

The mi-go mining encampment can be placed in any place in the world, away from any major settlements or trade routes. The alien beings will work day and night until





their task is done, then unceremoniously depart. Their work site involves a few outer structures, necessary for collecting the ores and fossils, and a few interior chambers to make burrowing into the rocky earth easier. The most horrific site is inside the mountain, the place that holds the human salvage.

ZONES

The mi-go mountain mining camp contains the following zones.

Mountain Approach

The mi-go are deliberate in selection of their base of operations. Seeking peace from any meddling natives, they target rugged, primal places, inaccessible by road or sail. Simply carving through the wilderness will require days of hard travel, and perhaps several feats of endurance. Rocky paths, wild streams, bramble-choked forests are just some of the hazards the player characters may face. There are also those desperate souls, bandits and criminals, who may not wish to have their solitude ruined.

Momentum Spends

With a successful Average (D1) Survival test, each player character can spend 1 Momentum to do any of the following:

- Ford a stream while others flounder.
- Climb a tree that will show a clearer path ahead.
- Swing from a tree or branch to attack a foe.

Doom Spends

- The gamemaster can spend 1 Doom to trap player characters in a thicket that slows movement to a crawl.
- The gamemaster can spend 2 Doom to have a flash flood that threatens to wash away player characters and their possessions.
- Foes can spend 1 Doom to successfully ambush the player characters; perhaps carrying one away without the others noticing.



Work Site

Weeks ago, when the moon was hidden and the stars veiled, the mi-go landed. Using their membranous wings, they spiraled down to their chosen site. Once assembled, they set to their work. Strange machines, borne across the cosmos in their clawed clutches, were used to rip open the mountain-side. They constructed along the perimeter three 20-foot-tall, conical buildings, angled too oddly to be towers or silos perched here. These windowless and doorless structures were pieced together from clumps of a secreted substance akin to black basalt in appearance.

Momentum Spends

- Player characters can spend 1 Momentum to make it to the buildings undetected.

Doom Spends

- The gamemaster can spend 1 Doom to have mi-go patrolling over the work site, spotting any arriving player characters.

Storage

Two of these buildings serve as storage bins for the raw materials. To gain access will require the imprint of one of the mi-go's pincers. Upon its touch, whether flying or on the ground, the basalt sludge will coil inwards to allow access into the interior. The rock exerts a weird gravity and its pull will keep any of the stored materials from spilling out. Player characters can learn this by watching it happen, or perhaps making a Challenging (D2) Observation test to spot the fading residue of a mi-go palm print. Once inside, player characters will have extreme difficulty with perspective and coordination, adding two steps of Difficulty to any appropriate skill tests.

Another of the rock's properties is that it vibrates pan-dimensionally, making the interior larger than is possible on the outside. Because of their limited perception, it will appear that the rock is at times expanding or melting, potentially causing mental trauma. Time itself may seem to loop or be non-linear to those affected. If given a moment to stabilize, the player characters find one vast room lined with rows of rock shelves, holding containers of chipped metals or an assortment of bizarre fossils. The mi-go are completely unaffected by any type of disorientation.


Momentum Spends

- Player characters can use a point of Momentum to stabilize themselves and get a truer sense of orientation.

Doom Spends

- The gamemaster can spend 1 Doom to have player characters suffer from spatial poisoning — they will find themselves forced to re-enact their actions of the two prior turns for next two turns. If they do not do so, the gamemaster is awarded 2 Doom per action.
- The gamemaster can spend 1 Doom to have mi-go arriving to get an item from storage, spotting any arriving player characters.

Barracks

“Barracks” is the closest human counterpart to this structure. It also has the warping effect described above on any human intruders. A clear view will show a two-story tower-like room, with an assortment of fleshy tubes, and metal-plated hoses dangling limply from the walls, in no discernible pattern. The mi-go do not rest, or sleep, as terrestrial beings. They will work until their biological frames need to be re-nourished. When it is time, they will enter this building to attach themselves to the network. At any given time, there may be 3  mi-go here undergoing this procedure.

Momentum Spends

- As in the storage facility, player characters can spend 1 Momentum to stabilize their mindset.

Doom Spends

- The gamemaster can spend 1 Doom to have mi-go finish re-nourishment just as player characters enter.

Extraction Point

A section of rock wall, 60 feet deep and 80 feet wide, was gouged free by the mi-go in their first night. At all times, two mi-go will be stationed here. One will patrol this area, flying a circular perimeter of roughly a quarter mile. It does its best to maintain its invisibility, using the darkness of the night, rocky outcroppings, and the trees in the area. If it senses the player characters, it will attempt to swoop in for a closer look. If attacked, or if it deems the player characters a threat, it will attempt to fly to the best vantage point and use its antennae to summon the workers and other guard on duty.

If the player characters can make it to the rim, they will have to use ropes or other means to make the drop down into the mountain. The mi-go have no need to erect any ladders or ramps, and simply use their wings.

Momentum Spends

With a successful Average (D1) Stealth test, a player character can spend 1 Momentum to:

- Make it to the rim undetected.
- Stealthily make the drop unaided (acrobatic style).

Doom Spends

- The gamemaster can spend 1 Doom to have mi-go patrolling over the extraction point, spotting any arriving player characters.
- The gamemaster can spend 1 Doom to have a section of rim break away, forcing player characters to make a Coordination roll or fall below and take falling damage.

Center Well

A vast, inverted bowl-shaped chamber. Rough-hewn channels have been bored away from the central bowl in all directions. The center well is the hub of the mi-go operations at

STORY SEEDS

Black Smoke on the Mountain

The people in this part of the world know how to keep secrets; it's what binds this collection of trappers, hunters, farmers, and fishermen together. Each keeps to their own. This makes their tales of the strange happenings on the mountain that much more credible. At the trading posts these recalcitrant souls all talk about the eruption of fire and smoke a few weeks past. All know that the mountain is rich in ore, but so far none has cut a path to it, or tunneled into its depths. Has some noble or king ordered for work to begin up there? Will these miners soon swagger to market stalls with pouches of ore, smuggled out of the mining camp?

The Woodsman and the Wizard

Vulko, a man of the Border Kingdom, is renowned for his tracking abilities. His service on the Pictish frontier gave him a talent unmatched. The strange Brythunian scribe Isidor, decked in silks like those of a wizard, some say, recently sought out Vulko and paid richly for his service. The two have been gone into the wilds at the foot of the mountains for weeks. Where have they gone? Did a rockslide or beast kill them? If one can find their tracks, then perhaps they can find the answer and any coin now unneeded by the scribe? What if Isidor's brain is now a resident of the chorus room?

this camp. By accessing a network of subterranean tunnels, they can mine deep and wide. There may be 3 mi-go here at any given time, carrying conical basalt rock containers filled with their finds back up to the surface.

Momentum Spends

- With a successful Average (D1) Acrobatics or Stealth test (player choice), a player character can spend 1 Momentum to remain undetected (diving at the last minute inside an empty tunnel space).

Doom Spends

- The gamemaster can spend 1 Doom to have mi-go spot and attack player characters.

Mining Tunnel

Unless some disturbance has called them away, most of the mi-go will be scattered through the tunnels, boring through the rock with slices of their claws. These unlit tunnels will be roughly eight feet high, six feet wide, and may go for any distance ranging from feet to miles.

Momentum Spends

- With a successful Average (D1) Acrobatics or Stealth test (player choice), a player character can spend 1 Momentum to remain undetected (diving at the last minute inside an empty tunnel space).

Doom Spends

- The gamemaster can spend 1 Doom to have mi-go spot and attack player characters.


Chorus Room

A secondary objective for these invaders is cultural knowledge. Any local, or player character, who learns or sees too much about the mi-go is at risk of a bizarre fate. Particularly capable leaders or wizards may find themselves as part of the chorus room.

As the player characters approach this room they will hear dozens of voices, speaking a variety of languages, droning, babbling, or screaming over one another. They do not sound human, but rather a metallic chorus imitation of the human throat. Hearing it for the first time can cause the player character to suffer a point of Trauma, at the gamemaster's discretion.

Proceeding into this chamber puts any player character at risk of suffering another point of Trauma. Three tiers of shelves have been carved out of the rock walls and sitting upon them are about 40 metal cylinders with a small cluster of precise, tiny holes grouped at the bottom. Should a

player examine a cylinder, they will find that a portion of each metal cylinder is like a sheathe, sliding up to reveal the ghastly contents. Floating inside the cylinders, bobbing on a current of noxious bluish water are the collected brains. Electrodes and wires, which look to the player characters like thin silvery cords running from metal coins, attach the brain to the base of the cylinder. It is from this pocked opening (an audio microphone) that the mechanical voices babble. The mi-go plan to transport these brain-cylinders to their home on the celestial frontier of the solar system, the planet Pluto.

This experience has greatly traumatized the individuals inside the cylinders. Most of them are outright mad, lost in their own conversation, or cursing the player characters, while others are convinced they are in hell. Some are from distant kingdoms and may be speaking a language never heard in this part of the world. If the player characters can contact one of these unfortunates through a successful Average (D1) Linguist test, they will have 2  turns of coherent conversation before it breaks down again.

Removal of the cylinder from the site will result in death of the brain within six hours, as neither the player characters or the brains themselves have any idea how to operate the nourishment filters.

Momentum Spends

- With a successful Average (D1) Discipline test, a player character can spend 1 Momentum to ward off the effects of trauma.
- With a successful Average (D1) Linguist test, a player character can spend 1 Momentum to contact one of the harvested brains.

Doom Spends

- The gamemaster can spend 1 Doom to inflict another point of trauma upon a player character (one that hears one of these things calling directly to him).

INHABITANTS

The mi-go (described in *Horrors of the Hyborian Age*) and the harvested humans are the only occupants of the encampment. Rather than have the mi-go attack the player characters when spotted, they could simply streak past, call to others, and assemble to attack when the player characters are at rest, or they could choose one player character to try to carry off and drop from great height, or take to the Chorus Room. If the mi-go begin to feel their operation is compromised (loss of workers, damaged brains, destroyed tunnels) they will pull up encampment and return to the stars.

TREASURE

The treasure held in the encampment is from anything left behind by the mi-go. Raw ore is plentiful, and it is likely the player characters would see gold, silver, and maybe precious stones in some of the rooms.

EXPERIENCE

Blazing a path to the encampment should earn the player characters 50 experience points each. Getting into the encampment and confronting any of the mi-go is worth another 50. Causing the mi-go to leave is worth 300 experience points.

PLATEAU OF LENG

North of the mighty Himelian Mountains lies the high, arid Plateau of Leng where the ever-present wind blows across the plateau and through its ravines and heights with irregular cadences that suggest a wild and half-sentient musical piping. The plateau receives little snow and has no vegetation larger than a small bush. At night, in the cold air, the stars are so bright that they seem preternaturally close.

“A merchant in Ulan Bator spoke of Leng and showed me a small figure of striking transparency that he explained was used to access the forbidden plateau. Gazing on the broad-faced figure, the piping from the inn’s musicians took on a striking cadence, and an obsession began to grow in my mind.”

— *Unaussprechlichen Kulten*,
Friedrich von Junzt

OVERVIEW

The remote Plateau of Leng is cloaked in mystery. Surrounded by high, inaccessible mountains and cold, arid deserts, the plateau is difficult to reach, and few travel there willingly. The site is also notable as it offers gateways to other places and times, or it may be that it is unmoored in space and time. As well as the many hazards involved in traveling to the plateau, there is the added risk that you may not return to the same time and place from which you left. Dreamers under the influence of black lotus have reported finding their way to this place through a land of dreams adjacent to our earth.

There are a few merchants who claim to know how to reach the plateau and its unspeakable monastery. These traders are as likely to abandon or enslave anyone who hires them as a guide as to take travelers to the plateau.

Doom Spends

- The wind blowing across the plateau has an eerie, lilting cadence, sounding like unearthly piping. For 1 Doom, a gamemaster may inflict on a player character, or for 3 Doom on an entire group of player characters, a Challenging (D2) Willpower test where they suffer 2 mental damage if they fail. Any character that fails will also be haunted by the sound of the piping while they remain on the plateau, and any future tests against it will be Daunting (D3).

FINDING THE PLATEAU OF LENG

Friedrich von Junzt completed his masterwork *Unausprechlichen Kulturen* shortly after he returned from an expedition to Mongolia. It is not known whether he visited the Plateau of Leng as part of this trip. However, his Black Book has several passages that discuss “keys” that are used to access realities similar to Leng, hidden within space and time. The keys range in size and type, from a jewel small enough to be set within a necklace to a monolith. They can be of red, black, and a variety of other colors, but the one trait that they all have in common is that they are made from stones unknown to even the most discerning of crafters.

Surprisingly, the keys are widely distributed around the world in locations as diverse as Hungary and Central America. While such keys are not mentioned in the *Necronomicon*, Abdul Alhazred did describe the dog-headed sphinx amulets as the soul-symbol of the cannibals of Leng.

It is possible that the keys are related in some way to the tribe of the Tcho-Tcho. Several chronicles associate the Tcho-Tcho with the Plateau of Leng, and the tribe is unusually dispersed across Central and Southeast Asia with isolated populations in remote locations.

Professor William Dyer reported that he found evidence of Leng in Antarctica during the 1930 Pabodie Expedition from Miskatonic University. However, it is possible that, under the stresses of their exceptionally arduous expedition, he merely developed associations between Leng and the Antarctic wilderness that became fixed in his mind.

—Professor John Kirowan, Miskatonic University

THE UNMENTIONABLE MONASTERY

The only significant structure on the plateau is a monastery built of ancient stones. The monastery is a windowless, squat building set within a circle of crude, stone monoliths. This vast building with cold, dark halls is home to only a single priest who wears a mask of yellow silk over its face. The walls of the monastery are decorated with frescos that display frightful scenes older than history and more recent settings. Every traveler describes the frescos differently, for it seems that each visitor sees a mix of scenes showing both the history of the monastery and places and people from their own journeys.

It is not clear what god the monastery and its priest honor. Some claim it is an avatar of Nyarlathotep who dwells there. It is possible that the monastery was raised by an even more ancient race and that the lone priest is but the most recent inhabitant.

A common epithet is that the plateau is “demon-haunted”. Visitors returned from the place speak of evil presences and nameless sentinels that dwell among the scattered rocks. It is possible that abominations, devils of the Outer Dark, or other horrors may be found there (*Conan* corebook, pages 345 and 347). It is not known who, or what, the lone priest is. Certainly, it is a being of great power. It may be of surpassing antiquity or outside of time as we know it. Its power would certainly be greater than that of a mummified sorcerer (*Conan* corebook, page 339) and likely exceed that of the demons that haunt the plateau.

Momentum Spends

- A fresco in the monastery provides an insight into future events, and the player character may spend 1 Momentum to gain 1 point of Fortune, once per day.

Doom Spends

- A player character that studies the frescos in the monastery and succeeds on a Challenging (D2) Observation test sees a fateful sign of their death and suffers a *Display of Dread*, 3 mental damage, Stun.

TRIBESMEN OF THE PLATEAU

The only other people found on the plateau are a savage, cannibal tribe that are described in chronicles as a degenerate, mixed race of yellow-eyed men whose ancestors interbred with serpents or other unknown monsters. They dwell in horrible stone villages along the edges of the plateau and, at night, their evil fires can be seen from afar through the

thin, cold air of adjacent regions. The few neighboring tribes despise them and avoid them whenever possible. They use images of a sphinx with a canine head as a sign on posts and piles of stones to mark the boundaries of their lands and as a warning to others. The rare trader who braves — and survives — meeting with the tribesmen may be granted an amulet bearing an image of such a sphinx which the trader can use to regain admittance to the plateau. Use the stats for Savages, *Conan* corebook, page 320, with the attack *Dread Name* (T), Range C, 3 mental, Stun, and with the following additional Doom spends.

Doom Spends

- The savage tribesmen of the plateau do not fight fairly and rely on sneak attacks and skullduggery to attack travelers. They receive 1 bonus Doom on all Movement tests to gain surprise at the start of a combat.
- With an ancient heritage that goes back to Yig or Set, the tribesmen of the plateau cannot be trusted. They automatically gain one success on a test to resist a Grapple, and reduce the Difficulty of the test one step.

SUNDERED MOUNT

All know that cataclysm has come to the world before, and that on a whim of the gods it will descend again. Pieces of the older realms survive, cast about the continent like pieces of an obscene puzzle. These fragments can bring knowledge, power, and wealth (but seldom wisdom) to those who can locate and decipher their mysteries.

*Volcanoes broke forth and terrific earthquakes
shook down the shining cities of the empires.
Whole nations were blotted out.*

— “The Hyborian Age”

OVERVIEW

During the reign of Xaltotun, an army flying the banner of Acheron marched far into the Kothian Hills. Seeking slaves and plunder for their necromantic master, the invaders drove their way into a remote western corner of a desolate mountain chain.

Among the towering field of rock loomed a strange peak. It soared above the rest yet was riven in scores of places.



Immense cracks burrowed down through its base and crept upwards, converging to crack open the summit to its core. Bulbous slabs of rock, ill-fitted against one another, juttied outwards like warring hands. Cavernous openings pocked the places between.

Native legends, gleaned from their prisoners, named it Sundered Mount, claiming it was the sole remnant of a once-majestic range that straddled a green coast in a remote age. Ancient pre-Kothian tribesmen once lived in its shadow. This vanished tribe buried their dead, swaddled in sacred cloth, inside its hollows for reasons unguessed.

Adepts from Python were summoned to mine the secrets of the mount and the cairns but were killed by the treacherous rock. Another expedition was planned, but then came the collapse of Acheron, and lost were any records with a mention of the mount.

ZONES

The Approach

Petroglyphs halo the base of the mount. These pictures were chiseled with crude tools in a non-linear fashion. Due

to their age and fading, success with a few Average (D1) to Daunting (D3) Observation tests is needed to spot them all. Another Average (D1) Lore test is needed to mentally shuffle the information into a usable order and decode its allegorical information. The images (which can be doled out in any order by the gamemaster) show the following:

- Angry gods breaking the old world.
- A Lemurian sorcerer taking refuge on the mount as a tidal wave crests behind her.
- The sorcerer calling upon her patron (a winged horror).
- The horror lifting the mount (with the sorcerer clinging upon it) and dropping her in a strange country.
- The precursors to the Kothians coming upon the mount and worshipping the sorcerer (depicted as atop the mountain drawing down lightning).
- The sorcerer dying and being wrapped in cloth.
- The sorcerer's remains being lowered into the crest surrounded by riches.
- The precursor Kothians following suit with their own dead, mummifying them, putting them in cracks and erecting cairns over the bodies.

Momentum Spends

- Player characters can spend 1 Momentum to spot some of the more difficult petroglyphs or intuit the meaning of one that is faded beyond comprehension.

Doom Spends


- The gamemaster can spend 1 Doom to have player characters inadvertently destroy a key petroglyph.

The Mountainside




Because the mountain is so broken, climbers will sometimes find plentiful handholds and edges. Other times these openings can be dangerous to use, as they are prone to collapsing. The skill of the climber and equipment used can make a difference here. The suggested Difficulty ratings and number of tests are found at each of the cairn descriptions. The Momentum and Doom spends below can be used during any of the treks to the cairns.

Momentum Spends

- Player characters can spend 1 Momentum to make an easy ascent for one roll.

- Player characters can spend 2 Momentum to help another character on their ascent (or catch a falling ally).
- Player characters can spend 1 Momentum to avoid a slide of jagged rocks — 2  of damage otherwise.
- Player characters spot movement at the Archer's Cairn and are forewarned about an attack.

Doom Spends

- The gamemaster can spend 1 Doom to have a player character miss a handhold. Alternately, their rope breaks, or a grappling hook comes loose! The player character must succeed in a Challenging (D2) Athletics test or fall.
- The gamemaster can spend 2 Doom to rain an avalanche down upon the players — they must pass a Challenging (D2) Athletics test to maintain their grip or fall. Either way, they take 6  damage, +1  damage per additional Doom point spent.
- A barbed arrow flies from inside the Archer's Cairn (see page 87, below), targeting the player character having the greatest difficulty climbing. It has a TN 10, and if it strikes, the arrow inflicts 5 , Vicious 1. If surprised, the wounded player character must make a Challenging (D2) Athletics test or lose their handhold (they will hang on for one turn and fall the next if not assisted).

The Scorched Cairn

The player characters must make an Average (D1) Athletics test to reach the lip of this lowest cave. The inside of this oblong space is fire-scorched (from the last stand of the Acheronian wizards). There was once a cairn and a body here, but the rocks have been scattered (now covered with ash) and the corpse is gone. One of the Acheronian wizards set loose a shadowy creature (see *A Shadow on the Wall* on page 183 of the **Conan** corebook) during the battle with the horror they unleashed here. The shadow is bound inside this cave and will use the darkness to its advantage. It will attack any sorcerers in the group first. If defeated, it will become a permanent black blotch on the wall or floor where it was felled.

The Shepherd's Cairn

Breaching the pile of stones covering the entry to this cairn requires a Challenging (D2) Athletics test. Just inside the entrance is a grave dug into smooth river rock, with several flat and relatively thin pieces of stone arranged to cover it. Beneath the stone cover is a badly-decayed body of a man, wrapped in rotting strips of linen. Next to him is a stout

shepherd's staff. While not fashioned for combat, it was made from the wood of a tree that no longer stands anywhere in the world. In addition to having the attributes of a wooden staff (page 147, *Conan* corebook), it has the Stun Quality.

The Fighting-Man's Cairn

This cairn requires a Challenging (D2) Athletics test to breach. The cavern is T-shaped: on the left end of the T is a cairn of heavy stones (the kind used in catapults). Beneath the cairn are the remains of a once-eminent warrior. He has been wrapped, and then encased in a crude bronze hauberk, still well-preserved. A great sword is at his side. The hauberk is treated as Light Armor, covering the torso, but has Encumbrance 2.

Commoner Cairns (4)

These cairns require a Challenging (D2) Athletics test to breach. Inside each of these octagonal chambers are two or three cairns fashioned from a hodgepodge of rocks. Beneath each is a family of commoners, deemed pious enough to deserve a space in the mount. Broken tools, satchels of seeds, tanned hides, etc. are the sort of items buried with them.

The Archer's Cairn

This cairn requires a Daunting (D3) Athletics test to reach. The archers once buried here have clambered out from the rocks as ghouls (*Conan* corebook, page 338), two to four in number, to repel the invaders. They will each fire one arrow every turn (see potential Doom spends above) at random targets. The bows they are using are treated as Stygian short bows, and the arrows have Vicious 1 Quality. Because of their superior position, they fire at an advantage, the player characters at a disadvantage.

Each ghoul has five usable arrows in its quiver; after that they will attack with knives. If the player characters are outside, they will attempt to engage them on the slope!

The Sorcerer's Cairn

This cairn requires a Challenging (D2) Athletics test to reach. At the summit the player characters see a narrow path down, leading to an area like a flattened volcanic cone. The risen mummified sorcerer is here, chanting a prayer to her patron in an ancient tongue (use the statistics for a mummified sorcerer, on page 338 of the *Conan* corebook). She is clad in faded and moldering robes of Lemurian make, with a distinctive peaked head-dress, her long now-white hair pleated into tail-like braids woven with gold wire. Her eyes glow like green fire.

Depending upon the story seed used (see page 87), a female captive will be buried beneath the cairn, wrapped in bandages. She is still very much alive, and nearly mad with terror; shouting occasionally loud enough to be heard as a whisper. She will breathe her last in the next hour if not freed.

The defeated sorcerer leaves behind a silver signet ring of Lemurian make, worth 10 Gold.

Inhabitants

Besides curious locals (who will keep their distance) the player characters can encounter a shadow on the wall, archer ghouls, and a mummified Lemurian sorcerer. If the captive story seed is used, she will travel with the player characters until reaching the nearest city and arrange a reward of 100 Gold for her rescuers to split amongst themselves.

TREASURE

The individual cairn descriptions contain the treasure for this location.

EXPERIENCE

Those that successfully explore the cairns should receive 50 experience points. Defeating the archers is worth another 25. Rescuing the captive is worth another 50 and defeating the sorcerer should net another 100 experience points.

STORY SEEDS

The Coward of the Caravan

The player characters come upon the ruined train of a merchant caravan. The guards and passengers have been horribly slain. The wagons have been knocked over and burned, but much of the trade goods lie scattered about the road undamaged. Lurking in the woods, and visible with an Average (D1) Observation test, is a paid guard who refused to fight. He says that last evening as they camped, there was a minor earthquake rumbling out of the mountain. Shortly afterwards, "a devil" came out of the woods. The devil slew everyone but him with magic, and took a female passenger, a minor noble, captive. They went back towards the mountains.

Under duress, the guard will confess that he fled in the woods upon seeing the devil and hid until after the slaughter. He will offer to help track the prisoner to redeem himself.

Lightning Strikes

The player characters are camped on a Kothian trade road when a storm brews up suddenly around them. In the distance, they see bolt after jagged bolt of lightning called down onto the Sundered Mount. If they do not go on their own to investigate, they are approached by locals who implore them to put an end to the old evil on the mountain. They know that after sleeping for centuries it has woken again and will give them no peace. They offer no coins, but superior mounts and fresh supplies for their services. One or two will even serve as guides and companions in the fight.

MAKING RUINS

But it was a startling experience to come upon a walled city here so many long weeks' march from the nearest outposts of any sort of civilization.

— “Red Nails”

The civilizations of the Hyborian Age are built upon the dust and bones of their predecessors. Though Nemedian scholarly knowledge of the history of the world barely extends back to the utmost latter days of the pre-Cataclysmic era, it is accepted that unwritten ages existed eons past. Before the kingdoms of Kamelia, Valusia, Verulia, Grondar, Thule, and Commoria came countless others, some pre-dating the appearance of humanity upon the globe. All, in time, fell.

These kingdoms of dream and nightmare, of the height of civilization or inhuman barbarity, nonetheless left their marks upon the world; strange ruins and haunted cities that can be found — by luck, consulting moldering tomes, rumor, visions, or misfortune. Some contain untold wealth, others occult knowledge, and many simply stand as hollow monuments to their mysterious architects, mute testament to the passage of the ages.

All are dangerous in some form — haunted by unquiet shades, home to horrifying creatures, laden with hidden traps that still retain their lethality, accursed by some forgotten sorcerer, or inhabited by the degenerate descendants of old races. To dare such places demands utmost courage (or foolishness), skill, and, perhaps, a touch of madness.

There is a saying among the explorers, heroes, fools, scholars, and madmen that dare to penetrate the secrets of these ruins: “If should one return alive and whole with

some treasure in hand, it's a miracle. If one returns at all, it's a success. If you avoid some fatal misfortune, it's a stroke of luck. Anything else is fate.”

GENERATING RUINS

“Ruin” is an all-inclusive term for abandoned locales that would reward the player characters' exploration. It can be an actual ruin, the temple of a nameless and forgotten chthonic god, the fortified stronghold of a gang of bandits, the byways and avenues of a pre-Cataclysmic city, or the tunnels connecting a living city to something buried deep within the earth and stone. Foremost, ruins must be *interesting*. They form the backdrop of a session or adventure, and their lifeblood is challenging situations, perils, and rewards that make sense.

What follows is a method for procedurally generating ruins for Conan, providing the gamemaster with the broad details necessary to keep ruins-based adventures bold and lively alongside a logical framework. This chapter provides a map of the overall story rather than a detailed, room-by-room accounting. During each step, you'll also create the **Ruin Pool** for the ruin itself, a resource used to keep exploration exciting for the player characters and move things along when needed.

PROCEDURAL GENERATION STEPS

Begin with the **Era** of the ruin. The older a ruin is, the more likely it is to have been repurposed over time. Civilizations change through the centuries, and so do the things they leave behind.

After determining the ruin's age, identify its **Original Purpose** by randomly-rolling or picking from the table in this chapter. Identifying the original role of a ruin makes it easier to flesh out internal locations, choose interesting features for the player characters to encounter, and determine what sort of inhabitants would make the most sense for the place. Particularly large ruins might be composed of several sub-ruins that each have their own identity. Knowing the original purpose of the ruin leads naturally into the next steps — its **History** and final **Downfall**.

While little enough is likely to be known of the ruin's circumstances in the Hyborian Age, having a few quick details is important for giving the players a sense of place, establishing the proper air of menace, and providing bits of lore. It gives the gamemaster a jumping-off point to add further embellishments. Make notes during this step about what kind of lore can be discovered beforehand, keeping it handy for the player characters to 'remember' by making the appropriate skill challenges, spending Fortune, or adding to the Doom pool (see *Doom* in *Chapter 9: Gamemastering* in the *Conan* corebook).

Likewise, determine the reason for its downfall to explain why the ruin is still a ruin and hasn't already been looted bare. It could be a plague, a long-forgotten war, or sinister eldritch forces at work. Whatever happened, it should be unique and somewhat bizarre, as is appropriate for the weird menace style that comes naturally to exploring a ruin.

Flesh things out by choosing or rolling for the number of **Areas** in the ruin. Repeat this step for the number of **Zones**. This also determines the maximum amount of points that can exist in the Ruin Pool (see *The Ruin Pool* sidebar, page 89, for details).

Add the **Details** for each Area of the ruin, again picking or rolling on the provided tables. Note any special effects the **Types** or **Descriptors** might have, as per the rules for Hazards and Hindrances in the *Conan* corebook. Once the Areas, their Zones, and details are in place, determine the **Obstacles** preventing the player characters' progression or threatening them in some fashion. Hostile creatures, bizarre events, traps, even the mundane hazards that an ancient site represents as the sands of time wear away at its integrity can all be leveraged to provide excitement for the exploration.

Every area has a **Cliffhanger** — a turn in the exploration that can either threaten or aid the player characters, activated by the Ruin Pool. Unlike obstacles in an Area, Cliffhangers are purely environmental and can potentially aid the player characters during their expedition.

THE RUIN POOL

The Ruin Pool determined at the end of ruin generation functions much like the Dread Creature (X) Special Ability of page 308 of the *CONAN* corebook, with one notable exception — the Ruin Pool begins at 1 point per player character, and its maximum is the amount determined during generation.

The Ruin Pool serves as a 'timer' — as the player characters explore the Areas and zones of a ruin, its Ruin Pool acts as both a resource and a countdown on the scene! The gamemaster may add Doom to the Ruin Pool on a 1-for-1 basis, and the Pool also rises for every zone explored. If the number of points in the Ruin Pool rises to double its starting amount or empties entirely, the gamemaster should trigger the Cliffhanger that moves the scene to the next area of the ruin.

In the case of the Ruin Pool emptying, the gamemaster can create a new Ruin Pool by spending 4 Doom.

RUIN PROCEDURAL GENERATION SUMMARY

- Determine ruin ERA.
- Determine ruin's ORIGINAL PURPOSE.
- Determine WHAT REMAINS.
- Create ruin HISTORY and determine the cause of its DOWNFALL.
- Determine ruin SIZE, number of AREAS, then determine ZONES for each Area.
- Note RUIN POOL.
- Add Area TYPES AND DESCRIPTORS.
- Add OBSTACLES.
- Determine CLIFFHANGERS.

Using the Generator with the Conan Gamemaster's Toolkit

The Ruins Generator stands on its own, but the *Conan Gamemaster's Toolkit* can be used alongside it, combining the two can produce truly epic, memorable adventures for the player characters. The tables from either product can largely be used interchangeably as suits the gamemaster. Doing so will provide finer detail and scope for ruins-based adventures.



Table 1: Ruin Era

Civilizations are built upon the bones and remnants of their forebears, only to fall again and again throughout the march of time. Not all those eras are known... or human. Roll 1d20 on this table to determine the ruin's era. Depending on the era rolled, there will also be additional rolls made on the Original Purpose of Ruin table. Finally, each era's ruins have a set of likely foes and obstacles to assist the Gamemaster in populating the ruin with appropriate opposition. This is *in addition* to those generated during the Cliffhangers! portion of creating the ruin.

Time of the Great Old Ones: As the Earth formed out of primal chaos and stellar matter, the unknowable Great Old Ones descended upon it like locusts from the Outer Dark. Some of their incomprehensible constructions still exist in far-flung places.

The Age of the Serpent Men: The first empire to call itself Valusia was dominated by the inhuman serpent-men, servants of the god Yig, known in the Hyborian Age as Set. Though their civilization fell, their architecture remains, hidden beneath the skin of the world.

RUIN ERA			
Roll	Era	Additional Rolls on Table 2	Likely Obstacles and Foes
1	Time of the Great Old Ones	1	The Unnatural Thing, Foulness in the Air, Ancient and Deadly Mechanism, Foul Sorcery, The Weight of Ages
2-3	The Age of the Serpent Men	2	The Unnatural Thing, Foulness in the Air, Ancient and Deadly Mechanism, The Weight of Ages
4-5	The Great Ice Age	3	Foulness in the Air, Ancient and Deadly Mechanism, Precarious Locale, Feral Fiends, Natural Disaster
6-7	The First Age of Humanity	4	Foemen, The Unnatural Thing, Ancient and Deadly Mechanism, Feral Fiends, Precarious Locale
8-11	The Thurian Age	5	Foemen, Ancient and Deadly Mechanism, Feral Fiends, Deadly Dog-brothers, The Unnatural Thing
12-14	The Cataclysm	—	Foulness in the Air, Ancient and Deadly Mechanism, Precarious Locale, Foul Sorcery, The Weight of Ages
15-20	The Hyborian Age	6	Foemen, Feral Fiends, Foul Sorcery, Deadly Dog-brothers



The Great Ice Age: Some unknown event caused the great glaciers to march forth from their realms in the far-flung extremes of the world. As the planet cooled, entire civilizations rose and fell, their names long-lost to human history, for those civilizations were quite inhuman.

The First Age of Humanity: As the primitive anthropoids of earlier ages evolved into the form of modern man, the first of the pre-historic civilizations flourished. Some of them, it is rumored, were educated and encouraged by creatures that plunged to Earth from the Outer Dark, and the remains of those civilizations are surprisingly advanced.

The Thurian Age: Known history begins at the ragged end of the pre-Cataclysmic Thurian Age. This is the time of the great kingdoms of Kamelia, Valusia, Verulia, Grondar, Thule, Atlantis, and Commoria. Though the names are familiar to Hyborian Age scholars, many times the ruins left behind are strange and wondrous in unexpected ways.

The Cataclysm: The great cataclysm sank Atlantis and Lemuria, raised new continents out of the ocean, and destroyed all the great civilizations of that time. Here and there, mankind struggled to rebuild, but the changes wrought prevented any kind of true civilization from taking root. A few civilizations survived, such as ancient Lemuria or the Zhemri, but were marginalized by the disaster and receded dramatically.

The Hyborian Age: After a few millennia in which mankind had been plunged back into savagery, new cultures and kingdoms rose, laying the foundations of the contemporary Hyborian Age, named for the rise of the tribe of Bori, father of the Hyborians. Early in the age saw the flourishing of Acheron and the older incarnations of the Stygian and Kosalan empires. Many civilizations from the earliest part of this epoch are barely remembered, such as builders of the green stone cities and other remote and vanished cultures.



Table 2: Original Purpose of Ruin

It is rare indeed to find a ruin that does not serve more than a single purpose. As the sands of time flow, so do the uses of places. Roll 1d20 on this table to determine the original purpose(s) of the ruin. Multiple purposes may be chosen if the gamemaster wishes or if the appropriate result was rolled on the *Ruin Era* table.

ORIGINAL PURPOSE OF RUIN	
Roll	Long Ago, This Place Was Once...
1	...a home to the aristocracy.
2	...a port for ships.
3	...an outpost.
4	...a center for scholarship and learning.
5	...a haven for criminals.
6	...a wondrous monument.
7	...cultivated land, with long-disused irrigation and farms.
8	...the capital of a forgotten nation.
9	...one or more temples to the gods of the era.
10	...a military base of operations.
11	...a place where goods were crafted or manufactured.
12	...a crossroads for travel.
13	...a marketplace and center of trade.
14	...a vault where valuables or relics were stored.
15	...a necropolis where the culture placed their dead.
16	...a vast mine, extracting mineral wealth from the depths.
17	...a fell site of occult power.
18	...a frontier settlement at the edges of a lost nation.
19	...an enormous vessel (but not necessarily seagoing).
20	...a hidden camp or stronghold for spies or a forgotten rebellion.

A Home to the Aristocracy: Once, this ruin served as the decadent playground for the elite of its society. Now it stands as a testament to its decadence and fall.

A Port for Ships: This ruin was a place where ships (not necessarily of the sea-going variety, depending on the age of the ruin) were constructed, arrived, and departed. Their hulks, whole or in part, remain.

An Outpost: Whatever its size, this ruin was beyond a neighboring region's borders. Its existence may be the cause of some great war, a source of plague, or overrun with horrors.

A Center for Scholarship and Learning: A great library, a gathering place for the wise, a forum for philosophers. All their knowledge and wisdom availed them naught. Scraps of their lost knowledge remain.

A Haven for Criminals: Like the city of Shadizar or the Baracha Islands, this ruin served as a hive of smugglers, slavers, ne'er-do-wells, and other shady sorts. Perhaps the army or law enforcement of its era wiped it away.

A Wondrous Monument: A stunning architectural achievement, likely decades in the making and requiring the labors of hundreds, if not thousands of slaves, craftsmen, and artisans. Once it proudly displayed the very pinnacle of architectural achievement; now it lies broken.

Cultivated Land, With Long-disused Irrigation and Farms: For whatever reason, this land was once arable, providing food for the region or a nation. The nature of that food ranges widely, and only remnants of the means of producing it remain intact.

The Capital of a Forgotten Nation: This ruin once served as the center of governance for a region or nation. The name of those it served may be lost to the sands of time, but scraps of laws and other civil artifacts remain.

One or More Temples to the Gods of the Era: Unfamiliar gods have the rubble of their temples here... or the ruin may have been inhabited by terrible god-things, depending on the era.

A Military Base of Operations: The arming point, training grounds, and barracks for a mighty army. Its relics might survive into the current era.

A Place Where Goods Were Crafted: In the past, this ruin served as a mecca for artisans and craftsmen creating their wares. Depending on the nature of those goods, some may be plundered.

A Crossroads for Travel to Distant Lands: As a nexus for travelers, this ruin was once a bustling, cosmopolitan locale. It may have been an oasis, an inn, or grandiose city-state.

A Marketplace and Center of Trade: While the ruins for artisans and craftsmen made goods, this is where those goods were sold. Even more so than its close cousin, this ruin is likely to contain treasures.

A Vault Where Valuables or Relics Were Stored: The wealth of nations lies not only in gold and jewels, but in information, in the secret knowledge they retain. Sealed for ages or cracked wide by cataclysm, above ground or buried beneath, ruins such as this present an irresistible lure to treasure seekers.

A Necropolis Where the Culture Placed Their Dead: All things die, or at least slumber akin to death. This ruin served as the place for the honored (or dishonored) dead. For those willing to tomb-rob, the rewards are vast, as is the danger.

A Vast Mine, Extracting Mineral Wealth from the Depths: With even a small amount of knowledge, a people need not limit themselves to the surface. Gold, silver, gems, and stranger things buried by prior ages lurk beneath the thin skin of the world. Those seeking that wealth must inevitably navigate narrow tunnels, mazes, and hazards to retrieve it.

A Fell Site of Occult Power: Shunned in later ages or sought out by sorcerous cabals, these ruins are where

confluences of supernatural energy collide. Great power can be gathered here, and the lost knowledge of ages as well, if one is willing to risk curses, foul horrors, or worse.

A Frontier Settlement at the Edges of a Lost Nation: Even the greatest of nations has borders, and this ruin lies along some forgotten, lost boundary serving as such. It may hold the key to uncovering why the nation fell or simply be a small fortress that ceased to be when its mother country fell.

An Enormous Vessel, Not Necessarily Seagoing: Much like the port, this ruined vessel may not necessarily ply the seas, depending on the era. Regardless, it is massive, beyond even the pinnacle of current shipbuilding of any sort and could still hold the loot of ages past.

A Hidden Stronghold for Spies or a Forgotten Rebellion: There is something wrong about it, something sly. It is well-hidden, certainly, and could be found anywhere, from the heart of the ruler's palace to the barest wasteland at the farthest reaches of a fallen kingdom. What secrets does it hold?

Table 3: Ruin History Part 1 – What Remains

Few civilizations vanish without any trace; the existence of their ruins speaks to that truth. While the complete history of a ruin is rarely found, the artifacts, architecture, and other traces left behind hint at a past lost in the mists of time... for those who wish to see. This history informs description for the gamemaster and can suggest further details that add to the proper atmosphere for explorations.

WHAT REMAINS	
Roll	Historical Event or Era
1-2	Founding
3-4	Classical Antiquity
5	Great Man or Woman
6-9	Decadent Nobility
10-12	Disaster!
13	Great Leap Forward
14-16	Conquered or Enslaved
17-18	Religion
19	War!
20	Revival

Classical Antiquity: Trade routes, expansionism, and a period of plenty help define this period in the culture. The developments of prior eras are examined and expanded, and this era is often considered the height of the culture.

Decadent Nobility: The noble classes become independent from the crown and the culture disintegrates into rival factions. After a period of wars, a legendary figure reunites the culture, or a conquering nation takes its place on the site. This can alternatively be the expansion of any class of

people in the city. Perhaps the soldier class has expanded and gained new power, or the priestly class, or the merchant class, or the craftsman class, or the scholarly class.

Disaster: A natural disaster rocks the culture or settlement. It does not destroy the culture, but it does bring about changes in the culture.

Conquered or Enslaved: A group or culture is conquered or enslaved by another people but later returns after winning freedom. Alternatively, another group defeats it and lives in the site, either replacing the old culture or mingling the two cultures into one.

Founding: The ruin is founded, the capital city is founded, or some other well-known relic or location related to the site and/or culture is founded. This can also include the founding of a dynasty. Societal forms are developing. Some cultures have more than one founding era, such as an early, middle, and late pre-classic era, each with its own events.

Great Leap Forward: Development of calendar, alphabet, or recorded events for the culture, along with other technological developments such as the use of metals.

Great Man or Woman: A legendary figure plays an important role in some aspect of the culture due to their personal charisma, intelligence, wisdom, military, or political skill. Whoever they were, they had a profound impact on the culture and some trace referring to them remains in the ruin itself.

Religion: A religion develops or is further refined. The power of the cult (or cults) overshadows the power of the crown, or the reverse happens, and the throne oppresses the religion. A demon-god may be summoned to live among the people at this point in history and given a home in the temple.

Revival: The culture has entered a period of cultural revolution as they explore new ways of doing old things and going about the process of reinventing themselves. Arts and humanities have the center stage during this period—and the culture may be at odds with its traditional religion and/or rulers. The culture may have become hedonistic or even more puritan in its style.

War: Some important city or ruler fell, creating a period of unremitting war as the culture attempts to fill the vacuum of power. It could be a war of conquest, a defense of the culture, or even more bizarre, such as demons of the Outer Dark descending.

Table 4: Ruin History Part 2: Downfall

Nothing lasts forever, least of all the works of men, or other things that walk like men. Whether by their own hand, by some terrible disaster, sorcery, or other causes, the world is littered with the bones of those who came before. Those that dare to explore the ruins of the past can often uncover some clue as to what brought the once-mighty to their knees.

RUIN HISTORY	
Roll	Event
1	Authority's Greed
2	Barbaric Banditry
3	Climatic Shift
4	Conspiracy of Shadows
5	Consuming Horde
6	Decadent Decline
7	Eldritch Event
8	Falling Star
9	Final War
10	Forbidden Knowledge
11	Ghosts of the Past
12	Infertility
13	Madness
14	Mass Suicide
15	Natural Disaster
16	Plague
17	Religious Mania
18	Signs and Portents
19	Torments of the Damned
20	Unknown

Authority's Greed: Corrupt officials caused the collapse of the region, either deliberately or by inevitable incompetence.

Barbaric Banditry: Unable to protect their lifeline of trade from attackers, the inhabitants found themselves deprived of the resources to sustain themselves.

Climatic Shift: Some catastrophic shift in the environment around the ruin forced its residents to leave before it became too hostile to sustain them. Their descendants may have been absorbed into another culture or vanished entirely.

Conspiracy of Shadows: A group of foreign spies, dissidents, or wicked sorcerers succeeded in plotting the downfall of the region. In time, they too were swept away.

Consuming Horde: A swarm of locusts, a blight, or horrors, consumed the entirety of a resource needed by the inhabitants once living in the ruin.

Decadent Decline: The society that built the ruin reached a point where they did not need or wish to perform the necessary work to sustain it.

Eldritch Event: Some great horror arrived in the region, first dominating it then consuming the inhabitants. Likely, it yet sleeps within the ruin.

Falling Star: Some terrible body from the Outer Dark plunged forth, either striking the city or a nearby region, slaying any who failed to escape the resulting minor cataclysm.

Final War: A rival nation, region, or city-state prosecuted a genocidal war against the ruin's former inhabitants, wiping them out utterly.

Forbidden Knowledge: An occult discovery, usually dealing with demons of the Outer Dark, swept away all human life within the region. Whatever was unleashed may yet lurk within the ruin.

Ghosts of the Past: A promise unfulfilled, a forgotten curse, or literal spirits of the dead rose and drove the inhabitants away.

Infertility: The inhabitants on the ruin ceased reproducing for some reason, leading to the eventual decline and destruction of their population.

Madness: Mass insanity seized the populace, turning their society upon itself in destructive rage.

Mass Suicide: The inhabitants of this ruin never left, electing to kill themselves in the face of some event or at the urging of others.

Natural Disaster: A sudden volcanic eruption, sea-level rise, drought, or other disaster destroyed the region's ability to sustain itself. Unlike a climatic shift, the event was unforeseen and sudden, allowing no time to escape its wrath.

Plague: A pandemic in the region swept it clean, or nearly so, of human and possibly animal life. The disease may still be present in the ruin itself.

Religious Mania: The rise of one cult choked the location's ability to sustain itself, leading to the demise or escape of the inhabitants. Any competing theologies' temples and iconography have been long-since vandalized and defaced.

Signs and Portents: The ruin's fall was fated by the gods, the stars, or simply foretold by some oracle. Whatever the cause, the inhabitants evacuated or died within its borders.

Torments of the Damned: Those who once inhabited the ruin were possessed, cursed, or otherwise supernaturally-affected, leading to their downfall.

Unknown: The reason for the ruin's abandonment is a mystery that is lost to the ages, with no evidence or clues to the truth.

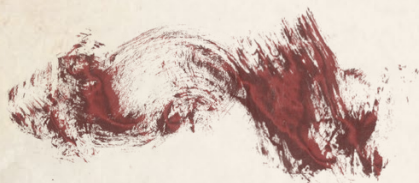


Table 5: Ruin Size

To determine the overall size of the ruin, roll twice on the table below, once for the number of Areas, then for the number of zones within each area.

RUIN SIZE			
Roll	Number of Areas/Zones	Ruin Pool	Ruin Size Example
1-4	1	1	Outpost or Village
5-9	2	2	Small Town or Temple
10-15	3	4	Temple Complex or Average City
16-17	4	8	Regional City or Center of Worship
18-19	5	10	Capital City
20	6	12	Vast Metropolis or Cyclopean Complex

Table 6: Area Types and Descriptors

Ruins are never homogenous: there are always specific buildings even within necropoli or temple complexes, not all of them created by the original builders. To fill out specific Areas within your ruin, consult this table, making a note not only of the Type and Descriptors but also the number rolled. This plays an important part in assembling the ruin. Roll for Type and again for Descriptor.

AREA TYPES AND DESCRIPTORS		
Roll	Type	Descriptor
1	Temple	Peaceful
2	Militia Compound	Abandoned/Derelict
3	Courtyard	Windswept
4	Hovel	Dreadful
5	Merchant's Villa	Overgrown
6	Noble's Mansion	Submerged
7	Civil Structure	Ancient
8	Marketplace	Impossible
9	Storehouse	Perched
10	Aqueduct	Elevated
11	Prison	Near-Collapse
12	Palace	Subterranean
13	Graveyard/Tombs	Silent
14	Brothel	Dripping
15	Sewer	Chilly/Cold
16	Animal Pens/Stables	Infested
17	Thieves' Den	Filthy
18	Tavern/Inn	Cramped

AREA TYPES AND DESCRIPTORS		
Roll	Type	Descriptor
19	Hostel	Vandalized/ Destroyed
20	Forum or Arena	Choking Odor

Table 7: Cliffhangers!

Cliffhangers provide the gamemaster with both a sort of timer and a way to keep the action moving during ruin exploration. As such, no Cliffhanger should halt play: if the player characters are overwhelmed, allow them to fail forward, as described on page 267 of the *Conan* corebook.

The basic Difficulty for a Cliffhanger should equal 1 + the number of Areas encountered during the session, with a minimum Difficulty of Challenging (D2) to a maximum of Epic (D5). The gamemaster is encouraged to use Cliffhangers generated here by their original meaning of the term: to end a session, picking up directly with the action later.

Many Cliffhangers have a cost associated with them which may be drawn from the Doom pool or the Ruin Pool. Additionally, the gamemaster may spend 2 points from the Ruin Pool to add a single element to an existing Cliffhanger, where appropriate.

CLIFFHANGERS	
Roll	Cliffhanger
1	Foes
2	The Unnatural Thing
3	Go the Other Way!
4	Outrageous Fortune
5	It's Personal
6	Foulness in the Air
7	Ancient and Deadly Mechanism
8	Precarious locale
9	Feral Fiends
10	No Escape!
11	Natural Disaster
12	Betrayal
13	Time to Run
14	Bad Information
15	Foul Sorcery
16	Deadly Dog-Brothers
17	Didn't We Come This Way Already?
18	Pandora's Box
19	The Sands of Time Run Short
20	The Weight of Ages

Foes: A group of enemies lies in wait to bedevil the player characters. They are classed as Minions, numerous enough to provide a substantial challenge. See *Mortal Foes*, page 311 of the *Conan* corebook for examples.

The Unnatural Thing: A Horror related to the history of the ruin makes an appearance, likely having stalked the player characters for some time. The Horror is a Minion by default, but the gamemaster may spend Doom or a point from the Ruin Pool to make the abomination Toughened. For examples, see *Otherworldly Horrors* or *Monstrous Foes*, on pages 345 and 333 of the *Conan* corebook.

Go the Other Way!: Some hazard prevents progress via the player characters' original route, forcing them to spend time doubling back and retracing their steps. Whatever the cause, the gamemaster should ensure that staying in the area is dangerous, if not downright deadly. The base Difficulty for the obstacle or Hazard should be Challenging (D2), and the gamemaster may increase that by one step for every 2 Doom or 1 point from the Ruin Pool spent, to a maximum of Epic (D5) Difficulty.

Outrageous Fortune: An earlier Complication generated by the player characters comes back to haunt them in the worst possible way. This Complication costs one less Doom or Ruin Pool to bring into play.

It's Personal: Some event from a player character's past is reflected in the Cliffhanger, forcing them to confront their history. This is a Complication in function, and its form is entirely dependent on the player character's background.

A Foulness in the Air: A miasma, plague, or some other illness-causing hazard must be overcome if the player characters are to proceed. Given its status as a Cliffhanger, the gamemaster is encouraged to make the threat both obvious and as gruesome as group preferences allow. See *Diseases* on page 127 of the *Conan* corebook for examples.

Ancient and Deadly Mechanism: A vicious and deadly trap provides the final challenge for this area and must be disarmed, bypassed, or simply survived to move forward. Some examples can be found on page 279 of the *Conan* corebook in the *Hazards* tables.

Precarious Locale: Ruins are dangerous places for the unwary. Debris falls, rotten floors, weather-eaten structures, alien devices, insane twists of logic, all can make an area hazardous to the player characters' health. In this case, whatever form the Cliffhanger takes, it must be overcome lest the player characters fall victim to its effects. See *Movement and Terrain* on page 111 of the *Conan* corebook for details.

Feral Fiends: A pack of vicious wild animals has made their home in this area of the ruin, forcing the player characters to confront them. By default, these animals are Minions, but may be upgraded by spending Doom or from the Ruin Pool. For samples of such creatures, see *Wild Beasts* on page 322 in the *Conan* corebook.

No Escape!: The player characters' escape is seemingly cut off, requiring a challenge against their physical or mental prowess to leave. This can take the form of strange twists of space, sudden debris falling, puzzle mechanisms, whatever might suit the area in question.

Natural Disaster: A rising river, vicious storm, searing heat, earthquake, or other widespread catastrophe takes place, forcing the player characters to take shelter elsewhere. For an additional Doom or Ruin Pool point, the disaster may have lingering Complications for the player characters. This counts as Poor Weather (page 97 of the *Conan* corebook) and a Hazard.

Betrayal!: Someone with the player characters turns on them, requiring quick thinking, a glib tongue, or deadly combat to resolve. If the player characters have ventured into the ruin without such a person, the gamemaster should have a past rival or foe appear dramatically to provide the appropriate drama.

Time to Run: The player characters are mighty, but some challenges are too great even for them. Floods of flesh-eating scarab beetles, lethal lava flows, and worse are all things that simply must be fled rather than fought. This Cliffhanger should award a Fortune point if the player characters are wise enough to flee. If they are not, this Cliffhanger will leave them stinging, if not perished entirely.

Bad Information: Whoever gave them information, whatever rumor they overheard, the old map they have in hand... the player characters have received exactly the wrong information. With this Cliffhanger, there are several options: present a Complication at -1 cost, introduce a new Complication to use later, or if there is another Cliffhanger in the area, increase its Difficulty by one step without cost.

Foul Sorcery: The ruins of old often seethe with occult energies and the power of the Outer Dark. With this Cliffhanger, the player characters are the victims of some ancient and vile magic. It might be some seeming

trinket or simply a lingering effect. The gamemaster should select a spell that hinders or harms the player characters in some fashion and inflict it upon them. The sorcerous effect has a Sorcery Expertise 12, Focus 3 for the purposes of the Sorcery test. Such vile magics can be found in *The Book of Skelos* and in *Chapter 7: Sorcery* of the *Conan* corebook.

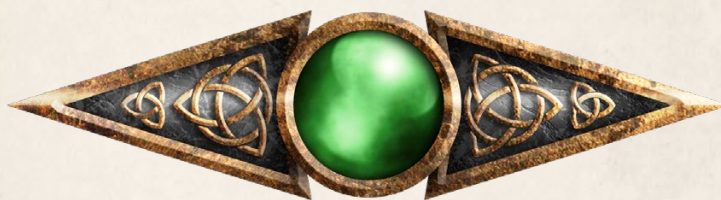
Deadly Dog-Brothers: A hardened band of enemies confronts the player characters, bloody-handed and with murder in mind. Though the foes are human, they are Toughened and well-equipped, presenting a serious threat. These villains can be found in the *Mortal Foes* section in *Chapter 10: Encounters* of the *Conan* corebook.

Didn't We Come This Way Already?: Through some trickery or simple mistake, the player characters find themselves lost and in an utterly unexpected part of the ruin. They can choose to proceed along this new path (and its attendant, unknown dangers) or make the appropriate tests to find their way onto more familiar ground.

Pandora's Box: Much like the *Natural Disaster* and *Foul Sorcery* Cliffhangers, this is an environmental effect with long-reaching consequences for the player characters, created by unleashing some sort of triggering event. The means should be made eminently clear to the player characters and likewise endanger the immediate area they are in.

The Sands of Time Run Short: This Cliffhanger works best when combined with another that is a more direct threat. It can be used by itself to represent time running out in the area for whatever reason: the approach of some foe, the area crumbling, or another effect of the gamemaster's devising.

The Weight of Ages: A strange melancholy afflicts this area, the inexplicable sense of loss and loneliness pressing down upon the player characters like a physical weight. The player characters must face this dread with a Challenging (D2) Discipline test or suffer 3 mental damage, and possibly Despair if a Complication is rolled.



LIFE IN THE RUINS

Broken columns glimmered among the trees, the straggling lines of crumbling walls meandered off into the shadows, and under his feet were broad paves, cracked and bowed by roots growing beneath.”

— “The Devil in Iron”

The ancient vistas of the Hyborian Age have been opened. The contents of impenetrable jungles are disgorged; impassable planes of ice have withdrawn and left behind the vestiges of civilizations long since struck from the history books. Crumbled temples, dilapidated palaces, wrecked ships — all is revealed and is ripe for plunder, should any possess the daring to do so.

So what is the gamemaster to do with such a bounty?

Obviously, the answer is to make things hellish for the player characters but leave them wanting more. That’s what being a gamemaster and, most importantly, a Conan gamemaster, is all about — finding the most creative means of allowing the player characters to be brutal, brilliant heroes. This chapter is designed to give the gamemaster ideas about how to do just that, making the places in this book more than simply individual locations which player characters might visit, explore, and then forget. With these suggestions, the gamemaster can make the Hyborian world portrayed in the Conan game feel more and more like the seething, vivid landscape of Robert E. Howard’s imagination.



DARK CORNERS IN THE EARTH

Everyone loves the visceral thrill of a submerged complex filled with deadly foes and lethal traps. Conan has plenty of room for such explorative and straightforward approaches to gaming — occasionally deploying an ancient ruin or lost city in this fashion is a way of ensuring that things remain exciting, fresh, and unpredictable. But that’s not, and shouldn’t be, the only way in which these ruins make their presence felt.

Perhaps the first thing to think about is why these ruins? When the player characters stumble across a ruined temple, it might be just that, but if it’s the temple which one of their mothers used to worship at and where she was murdered, when raiders razed the place seeking a famed icon of the god’s cult, then things become more personal and more immediately affecting. Howard himself used a variation of this: while locations rarely had any personal meaning for Conan himself, they were steeped in Hyborian Age history. Whether it was the mountain where the jewels of Gwahlur could be found, or the house of the infamous Red Priest, his locations were carefully woven into the local geography.



The nature of the short story meant that Howard was able to provide his readers with background lore about these places, taking them through the topography in surprising detail. This won't always be an option for the gamemaster. Roleplaying games are a very different medium, so one good way of achieving that same feeling of a real world revealed is to involve the player characters in the history of the places directly.

This is made easier, in Conan at least, by the presence of War Stories, Education, and the other character generation sections that focus on a character's past. These are ripe with potential means of tying one or more potential locales from this volume to the player characters, from the very outset of an adventure.

Perhaps a character whose background emphasizes that they have always lived on the streets can have discovered the vestiges of an alien citadel, somewhere in the sewers below them. Young, scared, and poor, the player character ran, and has never been able to find those bizarrely constructed remains again. Until now, of course. A priest might find that an ancient ruin contains a temple to their god, known by a far older name and worshiped in a much crueler aspect. A family heirloom may have come from one of these sites, either a cherished hand-me-down or pilfered by an ancestor.

Through binding the overarching story of the game and the player characters' pasts — so clearly spelled out on the character sheet — together in this way, whole adventures

present themselves. Was there another street-rat alongside the player character when they stumbled into this subterranean ruin? And did they return to the strange place prior to the adventurer's showing up, only to be hideously twisted by what they found there? Or is this erstwhile friend, now grown, leading a small band of vicious mercenaries into the bowels of the city in search of the ruin too? Does a former mentor of the player characters, now grizzled and senile, hold the key to finding the place once more?

All these plot details can be extracted from the connection drawn between a location and a player character's past. It also helps motivate player engagement and action. Pulp adventure heroes such as the player characters are driven by simple urges, not the subtle psychological imperatives of literary fiction. Greed, lust, vengeance, guilt — these are the primal, elemental forces that power games of sword and sorcery. Let these ruins, in combination with the player characters themselves, energize Conan adventures, and make it easier to devise them in the first place!

USING ZONES

Most locations in this book are broken up and subdivided into zones. This is mainly a matter of convenience for gamemasters when trying to keep track of who can kill what and where, once combat begins in earnest. While it is a useful, abstract shorthand for knowing how far an arrow can reach when fired from a bow — without having to reach

for the measuring stick — it can also make locations feel a touch artificial, as though what was once a real place has become broken up into conveniently discrete locations for the purposes of the game. It has, of course, but that doesn't mean it should feel like it!

So, how does the gamemaster get around issues like this when swords are drawn and the blood starts flying — how does one make sure that the feeling of chaotic pulp combat isn't lost when keeping track of which zone is which? Following are some suggestions.

Doom

The Doom spends each location suggests are a great way of making sure that one part of the terrain blends into the next. After all, should the floor give way beneath a player character in one zone, why does it stop there? Surely the ground quakes beneath all the player characters in each zone, or half of them, say, spread through Zones 1 and 2. As the stone starts to slip away beneath their feet, the player characters must make it to Zone 3. Such things are a great way of ensuring that there is no risk of the individual combats beginning to feel disparate or dissociated from one another.

Zones exist to make things convenient for the gamemaster, but they shouldn't be a barrier from breaching those arbitrary boundaries to deliver something dramatic and exciting for the player characters to deal with. At the same time, of course, the gamemaster should be fair to those player characters — if they are bound by geographical limitations, the gamemaster must also normally abide by them. That's why Doom is perfect for making things a tiny bit more madcap and frantic, without creating a sense of the gamemaster being unfair or opposing the player characters.

Forgetting the Past

The past is behind. Think solely of what is ahead. If all the player characters are within a single zone, the gamemaster shouldn't bother continuing to keep track of zones. If the gamemaster likes to keep things fast, furious, and blood-soaked, they shouldn't bother with any demarcation of zones until the player characters splinter. Even then, this isn't essential unless the battle becomes especially wide-ranging. After all, if the player characters have an archer among their number, it isn't necessary to know that the archer is in Zone 3 and is firing into Zone 2 — a skilled killer isn't going to wander out of range and then be surprised when the arrows they are trying to kill enemies with keep landing short.

The gamemaster should keep the thematic integrity of a location intact by keeping the location intact until it really must be broken into zones. If three additional city guards suddenly turn up some distance away, with one running towards the archer, one running towards the melee, and one summoning additional reinforcements, then splitting

locations into Zones 1, 2, and 3 suddenly becomes much more appealing. The gamemaster should play it as desired, and not to be worried about keeping track of zones, deliberately or not. They are there to help, not to force the gamemaster to submit to their might!

Opening New Paths

A great way the gamemaster can use zones to their advantage is not just using them to keep the topography of a battle handily divided, but also a way of incentivizing the players to more fully engage with the style of game the gamemaster wants to run. Page 111 of the **Conan** corebook states that a full Action or a terrain test might be required for a player character to move from one zone to the next while still being able to attack. However, to encourage greater movement, the gamemaster may also permit such a combination of movement and action with a Momentum spend, rather than requiring a test.

The environments within this sourcebook have been described to include architecture and environmental elements specially designed to encourage acts of bold athleticism, and if the player characters think of something wildly original to do with a rock formation, a collapsed altar, or a giant lizard egg... the gamemaster should let them utilize that aspect to its fullest extent!

Too quickly for the sight to follow, Conan caught up a stool and hurled it. Nabonidus instinctively threw up his arm with a cry, but not in time. The missile crunched against his head, and the Red Priest swayed and fell face down in a slowly widening pool of dark crimson.

"His blood was red, after all," grunted Conan.

— "Rogues in the House"

USING THE ENVIRONMENT

Conan rarely lets things like furniture and upholstery get in his way. After all, the Cimmerian is a barbarian unaccustomed to niceties and comforts, so soft velvet curtains and gold-inlaid chairs are good for either ripping down and selling or hurling at the foe. The infamous Red Priest Nabonidus is not killed by the sword of Murilo or the cruel, furred hands of Thak: no, he is struck in the head by one of his own stools after Conan threw it at him.

It is something of an ignominious end for an enemy of such cunning and calculation, but it also points an intriguing path for how player characters can make use of objects and

what they can do with them. Many players have told the gamemaster at some point that they want to break open the door in a hail of splinters and sundered iron — rather than, more prosaically, picking the lock — but there are many other things one can do with common furnishings or debris. Realistically, the only limit on *what* can be done with the various items of haberdashery and carpentry is the imagination of the players, the physical capacities of the player characters, the tolerance of the gamemaster, and the roll of the dice.

Using elements of the world in an impromptu but useful fashion brings the game environment to life and presents ample means of recovering from a setback. Did a warrior's sword just break on the iron helm of an enemy soldier? Fortunately, the player characters are fighting in an abandoned catacomb, surrounded by the bones of the dead. If a rusting blade in a moldering scabbard can't be wrenched from the hands of a skeletal king of old, a savage blow to the jugular with a broken thigh bone will quickly convert the gloating smirk of victory on a foe's face to the puzzled gasp of the dying.

The *Using Scenery* table provides players and gamemaster alike with ideas for what that rotting wooden table might be


used for. Take your pick and be as creative as possible. All it can cost is a few points of Momentum... and potentially the gamemaster's goodwill. A small price to pay!

USING TRAPS

In Howard, traps present a very different challenge than Conan's usual encounters. The Cimmerian is routinely confronted by human adversaries and by natural obstacles but all-too-rarely is he forced to overcome traps. The reason for this is because traps are impersonal, and lack dramatic urgency. Conan's encounters with traps are primarily to allow a villain to taunt him, or to create dramatic tension while he is trapped, held in place. Traps, in and of themselves, are of less interest to Howard as an author.

Traps are a man-made threat, but they work by assuming the appearance of the scenery — they are *naturalesque*. So, how does the gamemaster best use them? Firstly, be fair; player characters won't be anticipating traps as a routine element of their adventuring, so, when traps are going to appear, make sure they are either a) not fatal, or b) detectable before they are set off. For example, the player characters encounter three corpses killed in the same way but

USING SCENERY

Item of Furniture or Scenery	Potential Uses
Wooden Doors	Improvised shields and bludgeoning weapons, for a start (if ripped from its hinges). Can also be used as an improvised raft in areas in which architecture is replaced by natural terrain.
Wooden Tables	Overtured and placed on its side, one can make an effective barricade for two to six people, depending on the size of the table. Can also be used to conceal player characters, if they are prepared to be quiet enough. Provides 3  Cover Soak.
Collapsed Stone Columns	Depending on the size and weight of the column — and its state of dilapidation — picking up a collapsed column or similar architectural feature can provide player characters with a formidable weapon or battering ram. Particularly cunning adventurers might consider rigging such a column as part of a trap; a cascade of carved marble will cause damage to even the most resilient of foes.
Wooden Treasure Chests, Crates, and Mysterious Boxes	Aside from being an excellent place to conceal wealth purloined by murky means, chests and crates are an excellent way of capturing and hiding prisoners (provided one doesn't object to prisoners being discomfited). Rigging these as booby-traps is almost too easy — particularly for any well-trained thief with a <i>sutli</i> bomb (see <i>Conan The Thief</i> , page 19).
Smashed Vases, Broken Glass, and Pottery Shards	As any Hyborian-era scholar will verify, venture far enough into any abandoned tomb, temple, or tavern and there will be potsherds of one sort or another. The resourceful player character knows this too — but for different reasons. The larger of these remnants make excellent improvised stabbing weapons, and those smaller, finer shards are ideal for flinging into the face of a foe who is gaining the upper hand in a fight.
Skeletons and Other Assorted Bones	Bones, scattered around an ancient ruin or a cursed city are to be expected. But they can be put to many uses — as any reckless player character will tell you, a twirl of cloth and a leg-bone can become an improvised torch very easily. Break a femur in half for a serviceable dagger. Rib-cages make useful improvised traps for small creatures and fish, if stranded without food.

with no clear indication of what caused their demise. If they don't suspect a trap might be concealed somewhere nearby, then what happens next is as much their own fault as anything else.

Designing A Trap

When designing a trap, the gamemaster should be imaginative, but also conscious of the situation and the story. Traps should be escapable but dangerous. They should force the player characters to engage with the world, and the specific location, around them differently but for a limited time. A trap shouldn't irrevocably alter their approach to perusing a desolate throne room in an ancient palace, but it should occasionally make them pause when staring down an apparently peaceful corridor. The gamemaster should utilize traps as a means of making player characters think like Conan most of the time — a tigerish awareness of everything going on around them, constantly alert and suspicious and poised for action — and, very occasionally, use it to remind them to be less like Conan and a little more like the ever-cautious master thief, Taurus of Nemedi.




The jaws of an iron trap had closed on his leg, with teeth that sank deep and held. Only the ridged muscles of his calf saved the bone from being splintered. The accursed thing had sprung out of the smoldering floor without warning. He saw the slots now, in the floor where the jaws had lain, perfectly camouflaged.

"Fool!" laughed Tascela. "Did you think I would not guard against your possible return? Every door in this chamber is guarded by such traps."



— "Red Nails"

Traps should try to keep player characters conscious of the situation they are in — Howard used them to increase the sense of danger and despair, but he also used them to reveal character and to reinforce thematic elements of his stories: Conan is uncivilized and doesn't expect traps and duplicity from his enemies. In "Red Nails", the diabolical ruler Tascela is too civilized: she's decadent and warped. She uses traps everywhere. Traps make nature unnatural; they are the uncivilized tools of the civilized. They are a great element for any Conan game... but the gamemaster should use them sparingly.

Trap Door



- **Doom Cost:** 6 or 3
- **Description:** A hinged doorway, cunningly disguised as a section of the floor, giving way to whatever the gamemaster wants, or what the player characters dread. Sharpened stakes? Flames? Snakes?
- **Effects:** Causes 3  of damage from the fall. This can be increased, depending on what lurks at the bottom. For example, 6  for impaling stakes lining the pit, or 3  fall damage + four snakes (see page 330 of the *Conan* corebook).
- **Avoiding and Escaping the Trap:** A successful Dire (D4) Athletics test should be sufficient to allow a player character to leap to safety. The gamemaster might like to reduce this Difficulty by a step, should the player character have been on the alert for such a trap. Climbing back out of a pit should require a Dire (D4) Athletics test, with reductions for the use of rope or assistance from companions.

Sprung Jaws



- **Doom Cost:** 5
- **Description:** This trap, when set off, flings vicious, spiked jaws up and into the body part of the victim which activated the trigger. Usually, and most fortunately, this is a leg.
- **Effects:** Causes 2  damage from the initial shock of impact, and a further 1  bleeding damage for every 2 turns spent trapped. Any attacks from an enemy positioned behind the trapped player character ignore all Soak.
- **Avoiding and Escaping the Trap:** Escaping from this trap requires a successful Dire (D4) Brawn test, to prize apart the glistening steel teeth and force the trap back to its original starting position. This difficulty can be reduced via the assistance of companions.



Falling Axes




- **Doom Cost:** 2+
- **Description:** Two or more axes or other vicious bladed weapons, are held suspended in the ceiling above. The tripping of a wire, or the depression of a trick stone, results in the axes being unleashed. Swinging down in dreadful unison, mulching flesh and bone in a spray of gore, the poor victim gets a moment to see their death hurtling toward them.
- **Effects:** Each axe causes 5  damage, on the first swing, 4  on the second, and so on, until the pendulum effect finally dissipates, and the axes come to a halt.
- **Avoiding and Escaping the Trap:** Upon springing the trap, the player character who has done so may generate 1 Doom and make a Daunting (D3) Athletics test to attempt to leap to safety. If the player character fails this first test, to avoid the axes on the backswing costs 2 Doom and requires a Daunting (D3) Athletics test. By the time of the third swing, if the player character is still in the way, they may escape by generating 2 Doom and making a Challenging (D2) Athletics test.

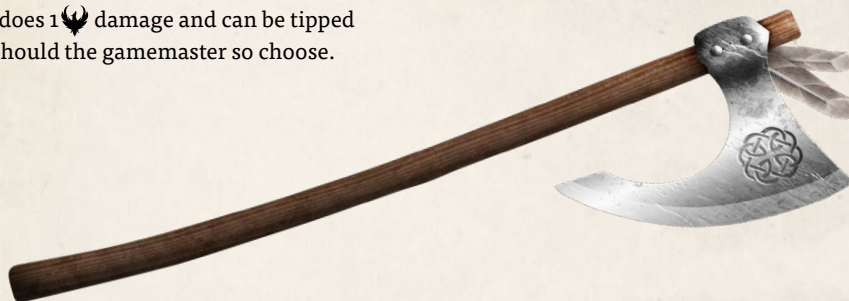
Shooting Darts

- **Doom Cost:** 4
- **Description:** From apertures in the walls, perhaps disguised as part of an elaborate fresco, or crudely cut into the stone, vicious darts are suddenly hurled with lethal velocity. Are they poisoned, or do they merely intend to pinion their target to the other wall where they'll bleed to death?
- **Effects:** Crossing a zone through which darts are being fired exposes the player characters to 4  darts. The player character may make a Simple (D0) Athletics test and reduce the number of darts they are struck by according to the number of successes generated.
Each dart does 1  damage and can be tipped with poison should the gamemaster so choose.

- **Avoiding and Escaping the Trap:** Upon springing the trap, the player character who has done so may generate 1 Doom and make a Daunting (D3) Athletics test to attempt to leap to safety. If the player character fails this first test, to avoid the axes on the backswing costs 2 Doom and requires a Daunting (D3) Athletics test. By the time of the third swing, if the player character is still in the way, they may escape by generating 2 Doom and making a Challenging (D2) Athletics test.

Rolling Boulder

- **Doom Cost:** 6
- **Description:** A vast, roughly spherical rock plunges down upon the player characters; it had been restrained (barely) with rope and the careful positioning of supports, which a careless footstep has dislodged. It rolls forwards, an unstoppable orb, as though the world itself had fallen from its axis.
- **Effects:** Being hit by the rolling boulder during its forward impetus inflicts 6  damage with the Intense Quality. The boulder will roll through three consecutive zones before slowing down and gradually coming to a halt.
- **Avoiding and Escaping the Trap:** Avoiding the boulder requires an Average (D1) Athletics test, with each point of Momentum reducing damage by 2 . Alternatively, if a player character can find a place within the path of the rolling boulder they might conceivably hide in, then they may attempt to do so with a Daunting (D3) Acrobatics test. Each point of Momentum so generated will reduce damage by 1 . Stopping the boulder will require access to something strong enough to resist, or divert, the boulder's relentless force — a thick slab of rock or wood — and a successful Epic (D5) Brawn test. This can be reduced with the assistance of fellow player characters.



Crushing Wall

- **Doom Cost:** 10+
- **Description:** The walls either side of the player characters begin to close, inexorably, in on themselves. They are trapped between them, their fates increasingly clear and the chances of escape narrowing as quickly as the once-broad corridor they stumbled into.
- **Effects:** It can take as many, or as few, rounds as the gamemaster chooses to have these walls finally, fully close in upon the player characters. Once they have done, though, death is instant. It is suggested that it takes between 10 and 15 play rounds before the walls finally close together. Until then, the player characters take only superficial damage. Once those rounds have elapsed, however, it is all over.
- **Avoiding and Escaping the Trap:** Bracing the walls with strong boughs or using spears or something similar will buy player characters between two and five extra rounds before death. The player characters can also attempt to jam the mechanism which moves the walls inwards. This requires a Dire (D4) Observation test to locate and then a Daunting (D3) Brawn test to wedge something into the mechanism with sufficient force to prevent it being quickly dislodged. This may buy the player characters an additional ten rounds or stop the crushing trap altogether. Alternatively, the player characters can simply escape from the other side of the corridor... again, this depends on how cruel the gamemaster is feeling. It may be an enclosed room after all.

This is far from an exhaustive list of traps, hidden threats, and mechanical monstrosities which can be used to inflict grievous bodily harm on player characters, but it offers some ideas of how to make locations that little bit more lethal, that little bit more alien, that little bit less safe.

BEFORE YOU FLEE...

The locations in this book are drawn directly from or inspired by Howard's tales of Conan the Cimmerian, as well as some of Howard's other stories. They were created to be dangerous, fantastical, and faintly familiar. They are designed to hold terror, trauma, and triumph in roughly even measures. When making your own areas for player characters to explore, or when using those contained in these pages, remember that the purpose of every location — whether lovingly detailed and scrupulously mapped out or invented two minutes before the player characters arrive in it (because, really, that wasn't the route they were meant to take) — is to give the player characters a chance to act as boldly and effectively as Conan, not to stymie their actions with physical barriers.

Conan himself might have been challenged and occasionally thwarted by the terrain and the locations he visited, but never permanently. The player characters likely have greater destinies to confront; even grimy, occasionally morally-suspect characters. That's what these temples, cities, seraglios, and sanctuaries are designed to provide: opportunities for the player characters themselves to become legends of the Hyborian Age.

She scrambled up to the summit of the spire and looked toward the horizons. The forest roof — which looked like a floor from her vantage point — was just as impenetrable as from below. She could not even see the pool by which she had left her horse. She glanced northward, in the direction from which she had come. She saw only the rolling green ocean stretching away and away, with just a vague blue line in the distance to hint of the hill range she had crossed days before, to plunge into this leafy waste.

— “Red Nails”

LOST TREASURES

His fingers itched to plunge among the gems he had heard described by story-tellers in the market squares of Keshia, who repeated tales handed down from mouth to mouth through the centuries — jewels not to be duplicated in the world, rubies, emeralds, diamonds, bloodstones, opals, sapphires, the loot of the ancient world.

— “The Servants of Bit-Yakin”

TREASURE HOARDS

The lure of sparkling gems and the luster of gold is one of the most common reasons to explore an abandoned ruin. Many are the tales of great wealth left hidden and forgotten as cataclysm and brutality claimed its owners. In Conan terms, a **treasure hoard** is any accumulation of wealth that contains Gold equal to 10 times the number of player characters investigating any site. At first this may seem paltry — after all, when the player characters can slay 10 minions and pile their mail and blades on a wagon, they can easily make Gold equal to this number — but it's important to note that while finding buyers for armor and weapons can be time-consuming, Gold is universal.

Creating new and interesting treasure hoards can be a challenge for the gamemaster. The following inspiration tables assume that there will be coins of some sort present and ignores them to focus on more interesting items. This doesn't stop the gamemaster from using the tables to create memorable currency, but as an element to a treasure hoard, currency is a common standard that can be assumed to fill in the gaps and is less interesting than other pieces.

Each hoard should possess at least one interesting element to focus the discovery and could include as many as one interesting element for each player character. If

multiple elements are present, they do not have to be of equal value. These elements serve more as a way of adding to an adventure's story than they do to mark actual wealth.

All interesting elements of a hoard have four main qualities: **element**, **dominant substance**, **provenance**, and **legend**. **Element** tells us what the item is in general terms, whether it's a ring, a cup, a statue, or something else entirely. **Dominant substance** gives us an impression of what the item looks like, its color, and the material components that indicate why it's considered a treasure. **Provenance** gives us a quick glance at the item's history. It tells us who might have made the item and where it might have been made. **Legend** is the rich story that takes the other descriptive elements and gives them life.

By combining these four elements, a treasure begins to become a three-dimensional character in the story, rather than a simple value on a piece of paper.

ELEMENTS OF A HOARD

Jewelry

Jewelry covers any item used to adorn the human form and is as varied as its wearers. It fits into roughly three categories: common, unusual, and royal. Common jewelry includes all basic rings, bracelets, necklaces, chains, and charms. Unusual jewelry includes both larger and more

intricate versions of common jewelry, as well as forms of jewelry not found in day-to-day wear. Royal jewelry tends to be both more intricate and larger than common jewelry, often incorporating dozens of sizable jewels.

Decorations

This includes any artifact that has little practical purpose except to adorn a property or palace. Decorations can vary in size tremendously depending on the place they were to adorn. Their nature depends a lot on the culture that was using them. Savage cultures tend to prefer stark reminders of might, where civilized cultures prefer more effete adornment. When a hoard is being transported between homes it will often include decorations that will be used in the new dwelling. Valuable decorations are often a part of dowries or other bride-price agreements, in which a purely commercial price paid in Gold might cause offense.

Dishes and Utensils

Often a hoard will include semi-practical goods engraved or bejeweled as a way of showing status. Like decorations, these are seldom used for commerce but exist to express personal wealth. In some cases, these items have a religious element, but often they are purely secular displays of power.

Religious Artifacts

Religious treasures are often jealously guarded, mixing material and religious values to make unparalleled treasures. They are more likely to be protected from the elements and wrapped in sturdy cloths, leather cases, or padded wooden cases full of clay and straw.

DOMINANT SUBSTANCES

Treasures can come in a multitude of shapes but also in a variety of materials. They might be made of metals, carved stones, exotic woods, gemstones, or even human bones. Sometimes they may combine these substances, and sometimes legends even hint that they were made of one substance, now transformed into a more valuable one. While for the most part the culture of the maker determines the substance used, exotic treasures could be made of very different substances, especially if the maker was involved in a diaspora or had resettled after an evacuation.

Metals

There are vast amounts of precious and base metals used in the making of treasures. Cultural preferences may laud one material over another, debase materials for economic



reasons, or alloy and pattern precious metals to create new and interesting colors of metal. In some cases, metals may have been chosen for their durability or some other alchemical property, such as being able to conduct electricity.

Carved Stone

Often used to make barbaric or savage trinkets, carved stone can be as varied as simple beach stones taken and engraved, to gilded marble beads. Often, geographic availability will determine the nature of the stone used, but sometimes an uncommon substance is used. For the gamemaster this is a great way to show the size and scope of an empire or a way to show migration or past trade links.

Gems

Whether ornamental shells, mother-of-pearl, sea glass, or the richest diamonds, gems are seldom found alone. Where an item is composed of stones there is often a metal setting or string that holds them together. Occasionally gemstones will be set within other gemstones to grant them additional luster, but even these arrangements are usually attended by a setting in gold or some other precious metal. Gemstones are a great way to speak about the values of the culture that has mounted them.

Exotic Woods, Horn, and Bone

Depending on the environmental conditions surrounding the hoard, there may only be scant remnants of these materials. The rate of decay might leave a rotting mass, or it could leave a remarkably preserved remnant of creatures long since extinct. If enough time has passed, it may leave behind strange curved spider webs of precious metal marking where the adjoining material once was, such as the metal ornamentation adorning a now-rotted turban or scabbard.

PROVENANCE AND LEGEND

The history and location where each treasure is fashioned is perhaps the most important and varied part of describing any treasure. Without a sense of how the treasure fits into the world, it is little more than a number. Treasures of value — those that player characters have heard about and might seek out — inevitably have a tale to tell. This tale consists of details such as when and why the item was constructed, as well as by whom, and ultimately what these factors mean to the local population. It might detail how the treasure was lost, whether it has been found and lost again, or whether there is a powerful guardian preventing its retrieval.

Ultimately, the richer the story of the treasure, the more interesting its involvement into the surrounding area, and the more dangerous its recovery is likely to be.

NEW QUALITIES

The new Qualities listed below can be assigned to certain items in a treasure hoard; artifacts or other magic items and items of note; or even to structures.

Blessed X

Blessed items have been enchanted by a god. They contain magic beyond that of mortal sorcery and can bestow special abilities, described in each item's description. These abilities have the Malediction Quality (see below) equal to X which can be activated as a Minor Action. Unless otherwise stated, they are active for only one turn, and can be used once per scene.

Brilliant

Brilliant items reflect light in a dazzling fashion. If held to the light, they can often dazzle the unprepared and prevent an attack. To use the Brilliant Quality, the player character must make a Challenging (D2) Thievery test, which can be resisted with either Insight, Parry, or Thievery. If the test is successful, the target is momentarily blinded, suffering the Blind condition for one turn plus one turn for every 2 Momentum spent.

Cursed X

Cursed items, for good or ill, bear contagious magic. When first held by a player character, that character must make a Discipline test equal to X or the spell housed within the item will be immediately cast upon the wielder. Attempting to avoid contact with such an item requires a Sorcery test with a Difficulty equal to one step lower than that Discipline test.

Enchanted X (Spell)

Enchanted items have had a spell placed within them. Suggested guidelines for using and creating enchanted items can be found in the **Conan** corebook on page 143. Where the Enchanted Quality has a value, this indicates the amount of Doom that the player character must pay to activate the item's spell. Enchanted items do not allow player characters to change the Momentum spends listed into their construction, but a sorcerer possessing an enchanted item can spend a Fortune point to cast its spell as if they had learnt the spell themselves. If a sorcerer chooses to do this, the item confers no additional benefit beyond allowing for the spell to be cast

Ensorcelled X

Ensorcelled items are items that have the capability of harming Horrors and other magical entities. So long as the wielder pays X Doom at the start of combat, Ensorcelled items gain the Piercing X Quality against any creature

TREASURE HOARD INSPIRATION, TABLE 1

Roll	Element	Dominant metal or substance	Provenance	Legend
1-5	Common jewelry (see <i>Treasure Hoard Inspiration, Table 2</i>)	Common gold or silver	Ancestral civilization (base on ruins location or roll on <i>Homelands</i> table in Conan corebook, page 14)	Item was owned by a powerful ruler.
6-7	Unusual jewelry (see <i>Treasure Hoard Inspiration, Table 2</i>)	Colored or debased gold (black, blue, green, purple, red rose, white, etc.)	Ancestral diaspora (base on ruins location or roll on <i>Homelands</i> table in Conan corebook, page 14 to determine the diaspora)	Item was used by a nefarious sorcerer.
8-9	Decorations (see <i>Treasure Hoard Inspiration, Table 2</i>)	Copper or copper alloys (brass, bronze etc.)	Tributary goods (base on ruins location or roll on <i>Homelands</i> table in Conan corebook, page 14 for strange details)	Item was owned by a warlord slain by their own lieutenant(s).
10-11	Cups, utensils, and dinnerware (see <i>Treasure Hoard Inspiration, Table 2</i>)	Nickel silver or palladium	Weathered beyond recognition	Item is believed to be powerful and cursed.
12-13	Religious artifacts (see <i>Treasure Hoard Inspiration, Table 2</i>)	Base metal such as iron or tin	Acheronian	Item is believed to bestow good fortune.
14-15	Talents or ingots	Patterned bimetals, such as Akbitanian steel	Lemurian	Item is believed to be haunted.
16-17	Royal jewelry (see <i>Treasure Hoard Inspiration, Table 2</i>)	Carved stone or wood inlaid with precious metals or stones	Kosalan	Item has a legacy of stories and folklore.
18-19	Unrecognisable item	Ornamental shells, mother-of-pearl, pearl, or sea glass	Atlantean	Item is known as a common element in historical accounts.
20	Ornate armor	Horn or bone decorated with precious stones	Alien or pre-Lemurian	Item is known of by even the most ignorant.

TREASURE HOARD INSPIRATION, TABLE 2

Roll	Common Jewelry	Unusual or Royal Jewelry	Decorations	Cups and Utensils	Religious Artifacts
1-4	Necklace, chain	Torc	Figurines or poppet	Knives or cutlery	Painted icons
5-8	Ring	Harem or puzzle ring	Bust or statue	Bowl or quaich (cup)	Tablets
9-12	Armlet, bracelet	Amulet or pectoral	Mosaic or bas-relief	Amphorae or jugs	Figurine or statue
13-14	Belly chain	Cloth-of-gold veils or clothing	Decorative weapons or helmets	Cauldrons, kettles, or pots	Symbolic sacrifice or grave goods
15-16	Barrette (hair clasp)	Crown, headdress, tiara, or wreath	Decorative tools	Chalice, goblet, or ladle	Chalice or other utensil
17-18	Brooch, pin	Scepter or orb	Furniture	Platters	Human remains
19-20	Headband, fillet	Prayer beads	Human remains	Serving dishes	Engraved or inscribed prayer

gaining Soak from being a Horror, and bypass any Soak gained from the *Incorporeal* special ability.

Intriguing X

Intriguing items draw much attention from the great and the good. If an Intriguing item is possessed by a single player character, that player character gains X Gold every Carousing phase, after they've paid their Upkeep.

Malediction X

Some items refuse to impart their powers without some form of compensation, and in this case, the price is ill luck in the immediate future. When an item has the Malediction Quality, it can't be used for any skill test without paying X Doom first.

Purpose (Type)

An item with this type is an armor, weapon, or another piece of equipment of the type stipulated. It has all the abilities and effects of such an item.

Regal X

A regal item is any item which is accepted as a symbol of authority. Using it in a social setting binds the parties that recognize its historical importance but forces the wielder to live up to the importance and legend of the object. Wielders who are deemed unworthy of holding the item will find that allies begin to turn away from them and that they are despised. When used as a part of a Command or Persuade test to create or enforce peace, govern a region, or control an army, the item provides +1d20 to relevant skill tests and bonus Momentum equal to X. If a player character ever fails a test where they have called upon the item's power, they must pay Doom equal to two times the rating of the Regal Quality.

Sanguine X

Some items act as mystical powerhouses, capable of storing life energy in the form of a **charm**. When the item inflicts a Wound on a player character or is held by a player character while inflicting a Wound, the user can spend 2 Doom and must perform 1 Minor Action to create a charm which is housed indefinitely within the item. The item can only hold as many charms as it has ranks in Sanguine. Each charm can be exchanged for 1 bonus Momentum to Sorcery tests attempted while in the possession of the item, once per attempt.

Trapped X (Difficulty and Effect)

Items with the Trapped Quality are trapped in some strange and unusual way. When a player character attempts to steal the item, they immediately generate X Doom for the gamemaster to use in springing a trap. This trap can be

avoided if the player character makes a Thievery test with a Difficulty equal to that stated in the trap's description.

Other Qualities of Note

Magic items also can include familiars or patrons, though such items invariably have the Malediction or Cursed Quality. Weapons might have additional weapon Qualities or, in rare cases, special abilities.



TREASURES OF THE HYBORIAN AGE

These items — priceless and varied in their degree of fame or infamy — are provided for the gamemaster's use, for adding to treasure hoards, placement within an appropriate environment from this or another sourcebook, or as focal points by which new adventures might be crafted. Possession of any one of these is more than enough for a player character party, as they will inevitably draw unwanted attention and shape future encounters to a significant degree.


THE STYGIAN BOOK OF THE DEAD

Considered by scholars to rival the legendary *Book of Skelos* or scrolls of Vathelos in occult importance, this tome of collected papyrus and parchment is often found bound in embossed sycamore wood, decorated with spirals of powdered sapphire and sharp lines of solid gold. Some copies are reputed to have intricate locking mechanisms with vicious alchemical traps.

Despite the magnificent effort put into preserving these tomes, these books are either fakes, truncated copies, or sanitized editions used by the priesthood of Set to curry favor and buy influence. The real *Book of the Dead* is twice the size of its imitators, with pages written in a range of exotic inks rumored to include snake venom, human blood, and powdered gold.

Whether real or falsified, the *Book of the Dead* outlines the funerary customs of the Stygian people, including the rites of the cult of Set, the cult of Isis, and several other minor Stygian cults. For this alone the tome is invaluable, as no body interred using the book's wisdom correctly will ever rise from its grave.

The real book contains much more than mere funerary customs. By reading the full extent of the work, a player character can teach themselves the sorcerous arts of conjuration and placation, though the instruction is a nightmarish affair of experimentation.

- **Mundane Value:** 30 Gold as a religious artifact covered in gold and gem dust (fake books are worth 6 Gold).
- **Qualities (real copies only):** Intriguing 1, *Patron* (demands 5  Resolve in nightmares and fell experimentation; can teach *Placate the Dead*, *Raise the Dead*, and *Summon a Horror*), Sanguine 1, Trapped 5, requiring a Challenging (D2) Thievery test to avoid.
- **Plot Hook:** A copy of the *Book of the Dead* has been sighted in the home of a wealthy collector. Sorcerers and ambitious Set worshipers are all being courted as potential buyers. While some are concerned that the book might be a fake and seek to verify its power, others plot to steal it. Meanwhile, the merchant hires the best mercenaries available to guard this incredible find.

THE QUAICH OF BORI

Buried in an unknown tomb with one of Bori's many successors, the Quaich of Bori is a silver two-handed drinking bowl bearing the tribal symbols of the Bori. This silver has been added to the original horn cup that served Bori when he united the tribes that swept over what are now the Hyborian kingdoms. The silver is an unknown alchemical alloy that resists all manner of stains and tarnishing, leading the superstitious to believe that it is blessed by ancient unknown gods.

Whether there is any truth to the rumors or not, the alloy makes the Quaich easily recognizable. Any Hyborian that swears a pact by the drinking of the Quaich will feel bound to follow that pact, if not because of the honor that is drinking from Bori's own Quaich, then from the potential social ramifications of ignoring ancestral traditions.

- **Mundane Value:** 30 Gold to any ruler of a Hyborian kingdom.
- **Qualities:** Brilliant, Intriguing 1, Regal 1 (Hyborian kingdoms), Regal 3 (Cult of Bori).
- **Qualities (optional):** Blessed (inured to poison, 1-day duration after drinking from the Quaich).
- **Plot Hook:** With the discovery of the Quaich of Bori, a petty barony in the Border Kingdoms begins to take on new importance. Even the most corrupt of kings dare not steal the cup, though all would use its power

to improve their positions. How will the barony survive the ambitions of these treacherous monarchs? Will a kingdom from the south seek to take the Quaich for purposes of their own?

THE DAGGER OF DERKETA

With a blade rippling with gold, silver, and steel, the Dagger of Derketa is a powerful magical tool and a powerful weapon. Legend tells that the Dagger of Derketa was forged by the death-goddess Derketa herself, granted to her followers so that any who left her service could be slain.

Whether or not this is true there is something about the dagger that stirs up revulsion in any who set eyes upon it. Craftsmen who have examined the Dagger say that the wavy lines of the blade bend at angles which confuse the eye and distract the mind. The superstitious who flinch from its presence say that the eye-like ruby set in the pommel always seems to be looking directly at them, and that a viewer can feel the weight of the lives the Dagger has feasted upon.

Even when the dagger is returned to Derketa's greatest temple, it is held chained within a great brass box. The box has the symbols and prayers of the Derketa cult etched on every surface and even then, the presence of the Dagger can be felt by any who stand too close.

- **Mundane Value:** 20 Gold to any collector of weapons, or 30 Gold to a sorcerer aware of its powers or a member of the Derketa cult.
- **Qualities:** Blessed (Fear 1), Familiar, Fear 2, Sanguine 3, Purpose (Dagger).
- **Plot Hook:** The Dagger has gone missing, stolen from the temple at Luxor. Who has stolen it and who is marked by death herself?



THE JEWELS OF BALKIS

The great Queen Balkis was favored above all the wives of the great Sultan Solamehmet. Though her family gratefully offered the sultan vast wealth to take her as his bride, he refused to take more than was proper, and bestowed many gifts and treasures back to her family in return. The most famous of these many treasures was a pair of earrings each of which was worth a full quarter of Balkis' dowry. Solamehmet gave these fantastic pieces of jewelry to Balkis as a promise that he loved her more than wealth.

His other wives were mortified at this action, and as days turned to weeks, they grew to hate Balkis and the favor

Solamehmet showered upon her family. Hatred turned to conspiracy. Conspiracy turned to the murder of Balkis on the road to her family's estate. In the bloody aftermath, the bandit lord who performed the act kept one earring for his pay and sent the other to be broken up and shared amongst the wives.

Solamehmet mourned Balkis and buried her with replacement earrings. Maddened by grief, he set about seeking revenge. After many years, he discovered the bandit who had kept the left earring as his prize. After crushing the bandit and burning his encampment, Solamehmet returned to the palace with the bandit's admission of guilt and of the harem's part in Balkis' death. The sultan stormed his own harem, putting all to the sword, and taking back the emeralds they had stolen from his beloved and concealed since her death. With his wives slain, Solamehmet stole away with the body of his beloved Balkis and the emeralds that had cost her life.

Legend says that deep in the sand of the southern desert, the body of Balkis has been secretly entombed, adorned with the stolen emeralds, along with grisly trophies taken from those who plotted her death.

- **Mundane Value:** 50 Gold in emeralds of every color, consisting of two earrings worth 15 Gold each and one necklace of teeth and emeralds worth 20 Gold.
- **Qualities (optional):** Enchanted X (contains the spell *Raise the Dead*, see sidebar below).
- **Plot Hook:** The wives of the necklace constantly conspire to bring ruin to the living. While spying on a sorcerer, they have learnt of a place where the dead can take the bodies of the living. Even now they lure their hapless master to this secret place so that they can shed their cursed existence.

THE GHOSTLY HAREM

The necklace can summon the ghosts of the sultan's jealous wives and command them to do service. The apparitions are hideous to behold (Fear 2) but any who holds the necklace and can stand their presence can command them. The ghosts are willing spies, skilled in intrigue, and will grant +2d20 to Insight and Society tests. At any time one of the ghosts can be sent out to spy for their master. They can be very effective, though sorcerers using *Astral Wanderings* will immediately see the ghosts, as they rely solely on their invisibility to hide. If discovered, the ghosts are disloyal to even the kindest master and will tell all their secrets with capricious glee.

THE EYE OF THE SERPENT

The Eye of the Serpent is a 500-carat diamond reputed to be the last remaining stone from the great serpent throne of Old Karnath. While the throne's many other gems have long since been recut, this dazzling monster of a stone invites opportunistic thieves and covetous nobles alike. It is a well-known gem, perhaps too much so, as multiple fakirs and alchemists have come forward with gemstones purported to be the great Eye, only for master jewelers to discover well-hidden flaws or ingenious forgeries.

Rumors about the gem abound, with curses and powers as varied as the teller's imagination, but perhaps the truth in these tales comes down to the fact that so long as avaricious eyes look upon easily carried wealth, there will always be one willing to take it. For the owner there will be many lords and nobles wishing to see the fabled diamond, bringing presents, and even trying to add the stone to their collection.

- **Mundane Value:** 30 Gold.
- **Qualities:** Intriguing 1.
- **Qualities (optional):** Trapped 4. The Eye of the Serpent is cursed and blessed with a powerful protection. Until it finds the one who will seat it once more in the serpent throne, it enslaves the weak of will by making them wish to have the Eye for themselves. This uses all 4 Doom gained by Trapped 4, and anyone touching the Eye must make a Challenging (D2) Discipline test or be affected by the *Enslave* spell with the Fortune Favors the Bold Momentum spend, as the Eye compels the player character to steal it for their own.
- **Plot Hook:** The temple of Set in Punt is seeking to recreate the serpent throne to gain influence with the wider cult in Stygia. To this end they have hired thieves to reclaim the gems known to have been cut from the stones of the original throne. Are the players thieves, guards, or even nobles unwilling to part with their treasures? What will the Stygian priests make of this effort to usurp their authority?

THE TRIDENT DAGGER OF PAIKA DASHA

Known as the Trident, this rare kris-bladed katar was forged by an Odai metalsmith from the eastern lands of Vendhya and was presented to the famed general Paika Dasha in gratitude for his successfully negotiating peace between the Odai and the king of Vendhya. In less-flattering portrayals of Dasha, it is written that he was a poisoner and that the Trident was later decorated with a fabulous oily black stone that dripped venom onto the blade. Regardless of whether this is true, the blade accompanied the general

on many adventures. It was finally buried with him after he died mysteriously on the open road. Only when the royal dead were moved after an earthquake was the Trident discovered missing.

Due to the Trident's unique spring-loaded blades, a wielder can choose to use the blade defensively or offensively. When used offensively, the blade is kept in a collapsed form and triggered once plunged deeply into a foe. This robs the blade of its Parrying Quality but grants it the Intense Quality for the very first strike made with the blade. When used defensively or after the first strike, the blades are extended and Intense is replaced with Parrying.

- **Mundane Value:** 20 Gold to any collector of weapons or member of the Vendhyan royal family.
- **Qualities:** Purpose (Katar), Special (see description).
- **Qualities (optional):** Blessed (Fear 1), Blessed (Persistent 4).
- **Plot Hook:** Long missing, the return of this relic to the court of Vendhya brings great celebration, until a soothsayer predicts that disaster will be visited upon the royal family unless the Trident is reinterred. Will the court listen to the warning, and if not, what horrors await?

TEARS OF THE MERMAID

Though the ground has been tilled and there are few places in the civilized world that haven't known human hands, the sea remains the domain of unknowable secrets and undreamed beasts. The tides carry many legends of strange uncovered treasures, but none stranger than the Tears of the Mermaid.

The Tears were uncovered by an Aquilonian known only as Zorian. Legend says that Zorian came across a wreck listing in the waters off Zingara. Going to investigate, his crew witnessed a mighty kraken crushing the mermaids that had also gone to investigate the wreckage. Try as he might to rescue the mermaids, their fate was sealed, and as their bodies were pulled aboard their tears turned to diamonds and their bodies to ash. Zorian saved a handful of these treasures. He is a common figure in Barachan tales, and it is said that the Tears are what ensured that his luck held, despite his many misadventures.

Though the story of the Mermaids' Tears is likely to contain no truth, diamonds with a strange green tinge have shown up time and again, their owners claiming that each gem grants its owner a measure of fortune — both good and bad! This is, in fact, true. Each Tear grants its owner a Fortune point, but when this Fortune point is used, it automatically triggers a Complication on any associated roll, above and beyond any result rolled.

- **Mundane Value:** The Tears consist of ten diamonds of varying sizes and value (1–3 Gold per diamond).
- **Qualities:** Blessed (1 Fortune point, 1 Complication).
- **Plot Hook:** Prior owners of the Tears have been found murdered. Someone is collecting the stones for some unknown purpose. Sailors say that the shade of Zorian has returned and is looking to regain his long-lost treasure.

The altar did not come off the ground, but it revolved suddenly on its side. And simultaneously there was a grinding rumble above and the tower came crashing down, covering the four black men with broken masonry.

A cry of horror rose from their comrades. Bêlit's slim fingers dug into Conan's arm muscles. "There was no serpent," she whispered. "It was but a ruse to call you away. I feared; the old ones guarded their treasure well. Let us clear away the stones."

— "Queen of the Black Coast"

THE STAFF OF EPEMITREUS

Lost centuries ago, when the Mitran cult was still young, the Staff of Epemitreus is a fragile husk of the mighty weapon it once was. The wooden core of the staff has long rotted away, leaving only the decorations that were placed upon it by later members of the faithful to immortalize this once-simple rod. To look at the staff is to see a spiderweb of fragile golden swirls and patterns, with a simple steel tube holding the pattern in place. Only one part of the original staff remains and on this is burnt the symbol of the Phoenix.

- **Mundane Value:** 30 Gold to any Mitran cult or collector.
- **Qualities:** Intriguing 1, Blessed 2 (all attacks against Horrors gain Vicious 2).
- **Qualities (optional):** Delicate 3.
- **Plot Hook:** Aquilonia's ruler has long desired the staff so that it might be placed within the tomb of Epemitreus. With the staff being unearthed in Brythunia, rivalries are inflamed. The Mitran cult is thrown into panic when rumors spread that the staff is to be melted down and forged into a wedding ring for one of the royal sons.

THE SONGBIRDS OF KHITAI

The songbird is a miraculous bejeweled statue of a bird. Standing a foot in height, at its base is a small furnace where scented oils can be burnt. It is only when the furnace is alight that the bird reveals its true purpose. It is a fantastical music box which mimics the call of a songbird in much the same way as a brazen bull turns the screams of agony into bellowing. It is said that five of these birds have been fabricated and when they are combined they perform a unique harmony that can bring tears of joy to the most callous heart.

- **Mundane Value:** 30 Gold for all five together, or 5 gold apiece.
- **Qualities:** Intriguing 1 (2 if all five songbirds are together).
- **Plot Hook:** A sixth songbird in pristine condition, almost as if new, was recently discovered, suggesting that somewhere they may still be manufactured. Particularly ambitious alchemists and craftsmen will be very keen to learn the secrets of making such a bird. Can the source be discovered? What other wonders will this lead to?

THE TREASURE OF SELEUCUS

Of all the treasures of the world the treasure of the famed Argossean sea-trader and pirate Seleucus has been sought the most. Its location is unknown, though maps claiming to mark its secret can be found in abundance. Seleucus was the greediest miser ever to set sail. He robbed simply because he wouldn't part with a copper more than he had to, and while many a crew mutinied under his command, his ruthlessness and cunning ensured that few such mutineers survived the attempt.

It is claimed that Seleucus hid most of his wealth in a secret place where vast pipes of unknown origin were buried in the rock. He would take his gold and forge it into long thin rods before lowering the rods into these pipes. As the pipes were filled one by one he would bury them. Many consider this tale too strange to be true, but as there is no other detailed account of how Seleucus disposed of his wealth treasure hunters scour the world looking for tales of these mysterious pipes.

- **Mundane Value:** Rumors place the value between 50 and 500 Gold.
- **Qualities:** None.
- **Plot Hook:** The strange tale of Seleucus suggests that an alien intelligence of some sort was guiding his actions. Players might hear tales of a regional bandit that has become a gold-obsessed miser, forging his share into golden rods. What strange purpose do these rods serve? What has driven the miser to hoard their wealth in such a fashion?