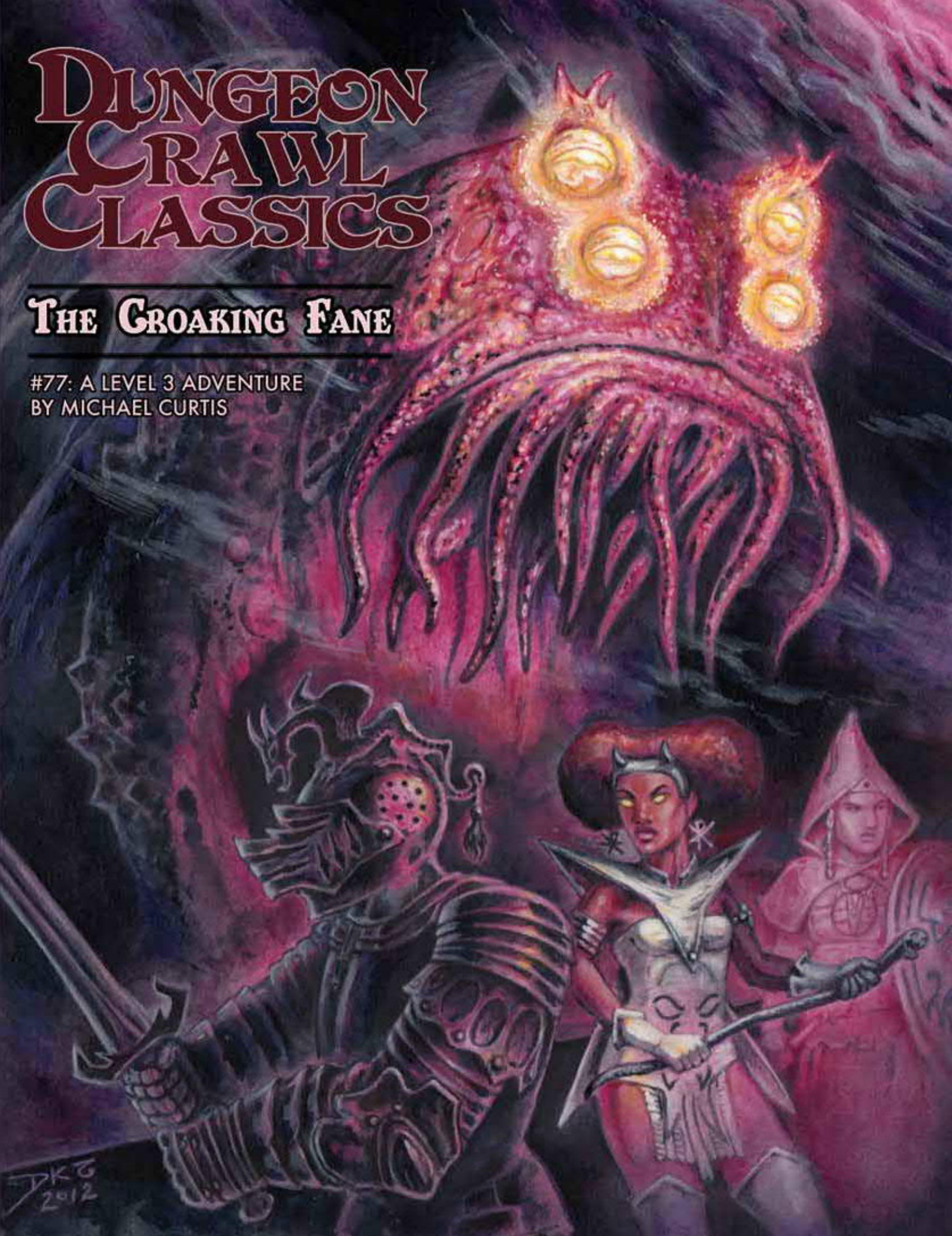


DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS

THE GROAKING FANE

#77: A LEVEL 3 ADVENTURE
BY MICHAEL CURTIS



Handout A



THE GROAKING FANE

A LEVEL 3 ADVENTURE

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For as long as men remember, the cult of Schaphigroadaz carried out unspeakable rites in its squatting temples situated far from civilization. Tales of human sacrifice, squirming servants, and rich but loathsome treasures were whispered of the cult. Now, unexpectedly, the cult has seemingly vanished, leaving behind their fanes to molder in the marshes. A brave band of adventurers gathers to explore one such tabernacle, eager to discover what riches – and terrors – the cult has left behind...

The Croaking Fane is designed for 6-8 3rd level characters, although larger parties can be accommodated by increasing the number and power of the creatures encountered within the fane. The adventure can be set in any marshy area off the beaten path in the Judge's campaign.

BACKGROUND



Few know of the Toad War, a dark crusade that occurred eons ago in the primordial swamps of the world. In the dim days of history, Man bowed knee to myriad supernatural forces in hopes of fecundity, prosperity, and to assuage their seemingly insatiable desire to sow discord among mortals. Of the many entities honored, few were more loathsome than Schaphigroadaz, the Croaking Despot.

Schaphigroadaz was Lord of Evil Amphibians in those archaic days, and his church thrived in dank bogs and backwaters. His followers, the Salientian Knot as they dubbed themselves but feared as the Brotherhood of Warts by their foes, strove fervently to appease the Croaking Despot by feeding their captured enemies to Schaphigroadaz's children and glutting their treasuries with captured riches. Ironically, it would be the Salientian Knot's success that led to its undoing.

The clergy of Schaphigroadaz grew fat on the riches obtained from their vanquished foes and reveled in the power the Croaking Despot gifted them in return for their living offerings, all the while turning deaf ears to the pleas of the Croaking Despot's congregation. In this fetid atmosphere of indifference, rebellion blossomed and a schism wracked the Knot. Disgusted, the former worshippers of Schaphigroadaz directed their invocations to one of the Croaking Despot's innumerable spawn, the toadfiend known as Bobugbubilz.

As more and more followers of Schaphigroadaz paid homage to Bobugbubilz, the toadfiend's power grew while the Croaking Despot's crumbled. Schaphigroadaz, roused from his satiated sleep in the primeval mud of the cosmos by the ensuing calamity, was alarmed to see one of his own spawn usurping his power. Schaphigroadaz struck down his slothful clerics, but his ire came too late. In the mortal realms, the servants of Bobugbubilz marched against their former brothers and sisters, drowning those who refused to renounce the Croaking Despot in the Knot's own spawning pools and drenching Bobugbubilz altars with their blood. In less than a year, the Salientian Knot was broken, seemingly eradicated in what a few eccentric scholars still recall as the Toad War.

Unbeknownst to the children of Bobugbubilz, the Salientian Knot was not destroyed, and like the toad they venerated, it merely burrowed underground until the danger passed. In the passing centuries, Bobugbubilz assumed his progenitor's position as lord of evil amphibians and his church rose in power.

Proving that the sins of the father are repeated by his children, the followers of Bobugbubilz grew complacent, certain of their rival's defeat. Thanks to this atmosphere of indifference, the church of Schaphigroadaz never utterly died out and with each passing generation, a handful of new converts joined its ranks.

For several centuries, the Salientian Knot has grown slowly but steadily, working whenever possible to reassert the original position of their deity in the cosmic scheme. Recently, certain astronomical events, interpreted by the sect as a sign that Schaphigroadaz's ascendancy is nigh, caused the Salientian Knot to step up their efforts against the followers of Bobugbubilz. As the final strategy in their campaign, the Salientian Knot underwent immersion in their Spawning Pools, sacred baths bearing the waning vestiges of Schaphigroadaz's power. When their month-long baptism is complete, the Salientian Knot will emerge from those transmutative waters, horrifically altered and bearing power beyond the ken of other mortals.

In the weeks since the Knot entered the Spawning Pools *en masse*, rumors have spread of the sect's apparent disappearance. Urged on by these rumors, adventuring bands and devotees of Bobugbubilz are seeking out the Salientian Knot's remote temples in hopes of either looting them of whatever riches the followers may have left behind or to make certain that their arch-rivals are destroyed for certain. It is here where *The Croaking Fane* begins.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE



The Croaking Fane can be introduced as a side adventure in the course of an ongoing campaign, its events playing out when the party is enjoying "downtime" after a major success or is seeking an opportunity to replenish their depleted purses. A cunning judge can slip obscure mentions of the Salientian Knot in plundered religious tomes, stolen scrolls, or as tavern gossip earlier in the campaign, cultivating those planted seeds until the players take notice or he is ready to challenge them with this adventure.

Once circumstances are right for running this adventure, the judge should allow the PCs to hear word of the mysterious disappearance of the Salientian Knot and the seeming abandonment of its fanes. This can be done through tavern tales, one of the party's NPC allies (such as a mentor or a former adventuring companion), or from the muttering of a half-crazed beggar who haunts the local marketplace.

Parties investigating the rumors swiftly learn a little about the Salientian Knot (but not all the details of the Toad War and the Knot's immersion in the Spawning Pools) and that the entire congregation of this obscure sect has apparently vanished from the world. Gossip holds that the Knot's fanes were left intact and are ripe for the plundering by anyone who can locate these temples and is brave enough to venture within. A little more investigation by the party allows them to ferret out a local who once stumbled upon a fane in a nearby swamp while gathering exotic flora in the marsh. Although this NPC has no idea what lies inside the stony temple, he is willing to provide directions and a map to the fane in exchange for a few coins.

If the party consists of one of more PCs that have Bobugbubilz as a patron, the adventurers learn of the Croaking Fane in another manner. The Lord of Evil Amphibians, now aware of

the resurgence of the Salientian Knot through their campaign against his followers, decides to stamp out the Brotherhood of Warts once and for all. To this end, Bobugbubilz calls in a debt owed to him by his servant(s), contacting them through whatever means the Lord of Evil Amphibians uses in the judge's campaign.

Bobugbubilz charges any PC owing him a favor to seek out the closest Salientian Knot fane and to eradicate any living creature found within its walls. Failure to do so will have grave consequences, certainly ending the patronage pact between Bobugbubilz and the sworn PC(s) at the very least and possibly earning them the life-long enmity of the Lord of Evil Amphibians unless they do his bidding. Patronage, after all, is a two-way street and this is the perfect opportunity for the judge to remind the players of that fact. Bobugbubilz provides the party with the location of the nearby fane, but due to the longstanding feud between himself and Schaphigroadaz, even the Lord of Evil Amphibians is barred from viewing beyond the walls of the Croaking Despot's temples and cannot provide much information of what the party can expect inside the fane.

THE CROAKING FANE



Armed with either a purchased map or Bobugbubilz's instructions, the party ventures out into the swamp, bound for the Croaking Fane. The judge can make this journey a complex one, throwing random encounters with hostile swamp-dwelling creatures, the perils of quicksand, and other marshy dangers at the party if he desires, or simply allow the party to locate the Croaking Fane after several days travel through the morass. If the judge decides to complicate the party's journey, he should provide the PCs an opportunity to rest briefly and regain strength before entering into

the Croaking Fane. A depleted party will have an extremely difficult time overcoming all the hazards the temple contains, making for a very short adventure. Players unwise enough to take advantage of this respite have no one to blame but themselves if the PCs perish within the Croaking Fane.

After their potentially arduous journey through the sucking mud, fetid waters, and moss-shrouded trees of the swamp, the party emerges from the bog into a waterlogged clearing some 75 yards in diameter. Before them stands an outcropping of mottled gray rock that protrudes from the muddy ground like a wart. Rising 50' high and measuring 150' wide by 200' deep, the outcrop has obviously been molded by mortal hands into the shape of a titanic, squatting toad of crude appearance. Lacking windows, the only means of entrance appears to be the pair of 10' tall, 8' wide stone valves set into the toad's breast and flanked by its broad, flat forelegs. A pathway of hexagonal shaped stone tiles leads from the swamp water's edge, ending at the doors. Close inspection of the tiles reveals each bears a small carving of a fly, worn near-unrecognizable by the tread of generations of sandaled feet.

Upon reaching the doors, the party notices that each is decorated with a bas-relief carving of a toad that seems to watch them with mute interest. On the lintel above the portals is inscribed the words, "Abode of the Toad" in the Common tongue. The doors are unlocked and swing open with a push. Their rusty hinges creak loudly, sounding almost like the croaking of a great, prehistoric batrachian. The interior of the Fane is fashioned from hewn stone that has been smoothed flat. Ceilings on the upper level are typically 15' with the exception being the main nave's 40' tall, cathedral-like roof. The interior is unlit and the south-facing doors only allow a modicum of sunlight into the Fane if left open.



ENCOUNTER TABLE

Area	Type	Encounter
1-2	T	Flesh-eating Tadpoles
1-5	C	Toad-goyles
1-7	C/T	Stone Toad Idol/ Alms Toad
1-8	C	Primeval Slime
1-9	C	Croaking Doom swarm
2-1	T	Fey Rune
2-2	T	Toad Poison Needle Trap
2-8	C	Mummified Toads
2-9	T	Spear trap/Infectious tablet
2-10	C	Giant Toads
2-12	C	Vampiric Spawn of the Great Winged Toad
2-12	C	Mutated Cultists
2-14	C	The Toad Thing



LEVEL 1: THE MAIN TEMPLE

Area 1-1—Vestibule: *Beyond the croaking doors is a vestibule. Peeling frescoes, victims of the swamp's damp, cover the eastern, western and southern walls. To the north, beyond the vestibule, the temple stretches off into the gloom. The air here is moist, stinking of mildew and the ghosts of strange, pungent incense. The sound of trickling water is faintly heard.*

The paintings depict various toad species engaged in innocuous activities such as catching flies, perching atop mushrooms, and hiding amongst foliage. Others portray the amphibians amidst the passing feet of crowds on busy streets or sunning themselves in well-maintained gardens. The images are simple, almost charming, depictions.

Area 1-2 – First Transept: *Just past the vestibule, the interior of the temple widens into a transept, crossing the main space of the Fane. Semi-transepts, small open areas attached to the temple's central space, extend to the east and west. In the middle of the transept is a trickling fountain. From a basin of scummy water rises a carving of a toad seated atop a rock. Water issues from the amphibian's mouth. The flagstones around the fountain are slimy and discolored by algae. The temple continues past the transept and a number of benches or pews can be seen.*

Any PC who observes the fountain's basin for a few moments notices the scum covering its waters ripple as something stirs beneath the surface. The fountain is a breeding ground for a unique species of toad and is swarming with ravenous flesh-eating tadpoles. Anyone placing a living appendage into the fountain must make a DC 10 Reflex check as he feels countless, toothy maws begin to devour his flesh. On a successful save, he suffers 1 point of damage, but no permanent damage. On a failed roll, the tadpoles strip some or all of his flesh before he can extract the limb from the waters. Roll a d5 on table 1-1 (modified by Luck) to determine the severity of the injury.

The fountain's basin is 2' deep and its bottom is flush with the floor. PCs examining the slimy, discolored flagstones notice the fountain is leaking from behind a single stone in its base. This stone hides a rusty (and faulty) valve that can be turned to drain the pool. It takes 20 minutes for the fountain to empty, but doing so kills the flesh-eating tadpoles (which flop about gasping for air before expiring) and allows the bottom of the basin to be explored without danger.

Buried in the muck at the bottom of the basin (requires a DC 10 Intelligence check or painstaking searching to find) is a tarnished brass ring depicting a toad with its tongue serving as the ring's band. Anyone wearing the ring gains some protection against the toads in area 2-10. Any toad in that location must make a DC 15 Will save in order to attack the ring's wearer.

Area 1-3 – Southwest Semi-Transept: *The frescoes from the vestibule continue along the walls of this space. The toads in the paintings are joined by a ferocious-looking human male with matted hair and dressed in crude furs. He bears a grizzly totemic rod adorned with a malformed skull that bears the traits of both man and amphibian.*

Near the western wall is a stone sarcophagus bearing the life-sized effigy of a human figure resting atop its lid. The sides of the coffin are decorated with bas-relief carvings of toads of alternating sizes.

Inspecting the frescoes reveals that there are toads hidden in the hair of the savage human and other amphibian faces peer from the folds of his primitive clothing. One even stares from an eye socket of the skull-headed rod. Like their counterparts in the vestibule, the frescoes are mildewed and flaking from exposure to the damp air.

This area is a cenotaph dedicated to the first patriarch of Schaphigroadaz, whose name and final resting place are forgotten by time.

The effigy atop the sarcophagus is a human male depicted in plate armor decorated with intricately carved toad images. An open-faced helm, crafted into the visage of a toad, covers the effigy's head. The stone face within the helm is identical to that of the man in the frescoes.

The sarcophagus lid is very heavy and requires a DC 15 Strength Check to slide open. Up to six human-sized PCs can assist in the effort, adding +1 or their Strength modifier (whichever is greater) to the die roll. On the underside of the lid, carved with great care in scrolling letters is the phrase, "Yea shall I dwell in the bowels of the Great Winged Toad and I shall be happy." This is the password necessary to bypass the rune on the door from area 2-1 to area 2-2. Inside the sarcophagus are a half-score of dead toads the size of large dogs. Each toad is wrapped in tattered silk bandages and very desiccated. They pose no threat and possess no strange properties, but are sacred to the Salientian Knot. Should it become known that a PC defiled the sacred toads' resting place, the Knot targets them for destruction, enjoying a +2 morale bonus to attack, damage, and spell check rolls against the offending PC(s).

Area 1-4 – Southeast Semi-Transept: The far end of this semi-transept bears an iron framework holding wooden shelves set one above the other in staggered procession. Each shelf is covered with stubby, unlit candles and melted wax. There are more frescoes painted upon the walls here, depicting tadpoles spawning, maturing, and then departing their murky pools.

The candles are all votary tapers dedicated to Schaphigroadaz. Some are unburned, but many are mere stubs. All are made from a grayish-green wax and are somewhat dusty as if they have not been used in several weeks. If lit, they burn slowly, producing miasmic smoke that stinks of the swamp. Unfortunately, lighting one of the candles is considered an act of veneration to Schaphigroadaz (intended or otherwise). A cleric lighting one of the tapers automatically suffers disfavor from his deity and must roll 1d4 on Table 5-7: Disapproval (see DCC RPG p. 122). Clerics who worship Bobugbubilz invoke great disfavor and roll 3d4 to determine their deity's disapproval. If the candles are removed and treated with respect, they can be used in conjunction with the *patron bond* spell to entreat Schaphigroadaz to become the caster's patron. Use of the candles in this manner grants a +2 bonus to the caster's spell check roll.

As in the rest of the Fane, the frescoes here are in poor condition. Despite the damage, PCs taking their time to view the paintings in their entirety notice that in two places the toads are shown eating other, smaller toads. These two depictions are small, subtle, and easy to overlook amongst the more benign images.

Area 1-5– The Nave: Two rows of 25' long, rough-hewn and mildewing pews, numbering sixteen in all, run north down the nave of the temple. They are separated by a 10' wide center aisle and 10' wide aisles along the walls. The walls here bear yet more peeling frescoes. Set high up on the east and west walls are eight 3' tall niches, four on each wall. These depressions each hold a statue in the shape of a squatting, winged toad that stares balefully down at you.

The niches are each 3' tall by 2' wide and are set 15' above the floor. The winged toads in the niches are toad-goyles, animated guardians tasked with defending the Fane from interlopers. They sit motionless until at least half the party has reached the center of the nave before swooping down to attack.

Toad-goyles (8): Init +3; Atk bite +2 melee (dmg 1d4) or swamp water vomit +3 ranged (dmg choking); AC 14; HD 1d8+2; HP 10, 8, 8, 7, 6, 5, 3, 3; MV 20' or fly 40'; Act 1d20; SP vomit swamp water up to 20'; non-bludgeoning attacks suffer

TABLE 1-1: FLESH-EATING TADPOLE INJURIES

1 or less	Limb stripped to the bone in a flash. PC suffers 1d8 points of damage and cannot use the limb until the damage is healed. If a hand or arm is afflicted, weapons cannot be wielded in that hand and spell-casters suffer a -4 penalty to all spell checks. If a foot or leg is injured, the PC's movement rate suffers a -10' penalty.
2	Hunks of flesh devoured. The PC suffers 1d6 points of damage and loses 1d3 fingers or toes (modified by Luck with negative modifiers adding to the number lost and positive modifiers reducing it) if a hand or foot was immersed. If 4 or more digits are devoured, the PC suffers the effects of the above result in regards to weapon-use, spell-casting, or movement. Otherwise, movement is unaffected if toes are lost. If fingers are devoured, PC suffers a -1 cumulative penalty for each finger missing to attack and/or spell-check rolls.
3	"I needed that!" The PC suffers 1d4 damage and loses a finger or toe if a hand or foot is immersed in the water. Determine what digit is lost randomly. The loss has no in-game effect, but is sure to make the PC memorable.
4	Nibbled upon. The PC suffers 1d3 points of damage. The wounds leave unsightly, lingering scars if not magically healed.
5 or better	Minor cosmetic damage (tip of a finger or toe is lost, etc.). PC suffers 1 point of damage.



depicting a massive batrachian. A simple stone altar dressed in faded green altar cloth rests before the gigantic toad's form. Before the offering block is a 10' diameter, circular depression set into the floor for an uncertain purpose.

PCs approaching the railing, or anyone specifically stating they are attempting to detect any noise in the area, can make a Luck check to hear the sounds of low, painful moans coming from area 1-9. These are the dying groans of Irrek the infected plunderer.

The metal toad served as an alms plate for the Fane and the glint is that of the coins remaining from the last contributions left here. An examination of the toad combined with a DC 5 Intelligence check reveals a small keyhole in the back of the toad near the base. Inserting the proper key (found in area 2-2) – or a thief making a successful DC 15 Disable Traps roll – circumvents the trap protecting the monies offered to the Croaking Despot. If not disarmed, reaching into the toad's mouth causes the jaws to snap shut, inflicting 1d6 points of damage and requiring a DC 10 Reflex save to avoid losing the offending hand. The offering bowl contains 50 sp and 10 platinum disks. The disks bear the image of the statue in area 1-7 and are each worth 5 pp each.

The altar is a simple stone block covered by a green wool cloth. Resting atop it is a bronze triptych, discolored by verdigris. The icon depicts the three earthly aspects of Schaphigroadaz. One is its avatar as the Great Winged Toad (replicated in the idol beyond). The second is that of a titanic toad with fangs and claws, its mouth choked with the masticated bodies of humanoids. This is Schaphigroadaz's avatar as K'Tehe, the Destroyer. The last image is that of a fat, ebony-hued toad whose entire body is covered by nauseating tadpoles in mimicry of newborns nursing. Black, viscous slime oozes from the toad's mouth in mucous-like ropes. This is Schaphigroadaz in the aspect of Kroagguah, the Mother of Multitudes.

The depression is in actuality a covered pit used to sacrifice victims in honor of Schaphigroadaz. An inspection of the area around the pit will reveal that the flagstones have been discolored by faint rust-colored stains. A secret lever concealed behind the altar (requiring a DC 12 Intelligence check to discover) causes the stone cover of the pit to dilate, revealing a 20' deep shaft that terminates 30' above the cavern floor in area 2-10 below. When opened, the harsh croaking of toads can be heard emanating from the pit and a fetid odor of moist air and slime wafts up from the depths.

Area 1-7 – Idol: Here is a 5' high, 20' diameter raised dais. Atop the dais squats a great stone idol in the form of a 20' tall, warty toad. The toad bears vestigial, bat-like wings upon its back and a series of dangling barbels, like those of a catfish, hang from its lower lip. The idol has four eyes, a pair of each residing on either side of its head. The eyes glint dimly in the gloom, hinting that they are fashioned of crystalline substance.

The statue is of no threat to the adventurers under most conditions. The gems (glittering, pallid yellow toadstones worth 50 gp apiece) can even be pried from their sockets without consequence. However, if the party breaches the High Priest's quarters (area 2-2), meddles with the tablet in area 2-9, battles the mutated servants of Schaphigroadaz in area 2-13, or loots the toadstone heart (area 2-15), they are in for a surprise when

a 1 step reduction on damage die; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will -2; AL N.

Toad-goyles are 2' high animated stone statues carved in the likeness of winged toads. In addition to their bite attack, each can vomit forth a gout of thick, mucous-like swamp water at targets up to 20' away. Those struck by the watery torrent must make a DC 8 Fort save or begin choking on the mucky fluid. Choking victims take 1d4 points of damage each round and can perform no action other than attempt to clear their lungs. They also suffer a -2 penalty to AC. Choking targets are allowed another DC 8 Fort save each round to clear their airways of the water, with a successful save indicating they are no longer choking and take no further damage. Due to their stony construction, non-bludgeoning damage inflicted on toad-goyles is reduced by one die on the dice chain.

The pews are in fair condition with only those closest to the northern apse showing signs of regular usage, hinting at a small congregation of worshipers.

The wall frescoes show identical images repeated on both sides of the nave. Each depicts bands of sub-human-looking men dressed in crude furs locked in combat. One side is led by the same figure depicted in effigy in area 1-3. Each faction of the warring bands bears frog-like totems, but the ones borne by the side opposing the Salientian Knot are depicted as exceptionally poor in manufacture, suggesting a bias on the part of the frescoes' painter.

There is a wooden door bound with iron set into the western wall of the nave. It leads to a spiral stone staircase that winds 50' down to Level 2: The Undercroft.

Area 1-6 – Second Transept and Apsse: A railing separates the nave of the Fane from the apse. A gap situated at the center of the railing allows passage beyond to the altar. On the left-hand side of this opening stands a 2' tall metal toad perched atop a 3' high basalt column. The toad's mouth is open and the glint of treasure can be seen in the darkness within. Beyond the railing is a hulking idol

they attempt to exit the Fane. As the party makes its way towards the Fane's exit, those doors suddenly swing shut as if by unseen hands. The doors become magically secured (treat as a *ward portal* spell with a spell check result of 19) and remain so until either 2d6x10 hours pass, all looted treasure is discarded, a living sacrifice is offered up to Schaphigroadaz, or the guardian (see below) is destroyed.

Once the doors slam shut, a horrible grinding noise arises from this statue, as the 20' tall icon comes to life. Hopping after the thieves, it leaves shattered pews and broken railings in its wake, as well as dislodging chunks of stone that fall from the ceiling (2 in 6 chance of striking a random member of the party for 1d6 damage; Luck check to avoid). The guardian will not cease its attack until either it or the party is destroyed.

Stone Toad Idol (1): Init -1; Atk club +6 melee (dmg 2d8); AC 16; HD 6d12+6; HP 52; MV 20' or swim 40'; Act 2d20; SP leap 50' as an action, suffers half damage from normal weapons, cold, fire and electrical attacks, normal missiles have no effect, can be destroyed by *transmute earth*; SV Fort +10, Ref -6, Will -8; AL N.

Area 1-8 – Northwest Semi-transept: *Gloom cloaks this section of the temple and it is difficult to make out details of what lies within. Your light sources seem to struggle against the blackness, glowing dim in the effort. A squat wide object, perhaps a small altar, appears to sit against the far wall with some manner of font or brazier standing before it.*

Any light source spending more than a few moments in the vicinity of the altar has a 50% chance of failing; it extinguishes without cause or warning, but may be relit once away from the idol that sits atop the altar.

There is indeed a small altar at the far end of the space, one crafted from jagged, mottled gray stone. Placed atop it is a weird idol. The image depicted by the idol is that of Kro-aguah the Mother of Multitudes. It is cold and slimy—but strangely dry—to the touch. The object before the altar is a 4' bronze basin the size of a small shield supported by three 4' tall legs. The basin contains a thick, soot-colored liquid, like black quicksilver. A marsh-like odor wafts from the liquid.

If the altar or basin is tampered with, the liquid in the basin begins to bubble and churn. Two rounds later, a primeval slime bearing vaguely tadpole-like features amongst its amorphous form oozes up from the receptacle, eyes blazing an unseemly yellow. It attacks all creatures in the semi-transept, focusing its attentions first on those who dared to lay unclean hands upon the altar or basin.

If it is slain, both the idol and basin can be looted as treasure. The idol is worth 50 gp to certain collectors and the basin is worth 25 gp in materials. Unfortunately, unless cleansed with holy water or similar measures, each produces a primeval slime after nightfall. These guardians seek to kill the robbers and return the objects back to the Fane.

Primeval Slime (1): Init (always last); Atk pseudopod +4 melee (dmg 1d4); AC 10; HD 2d8 (10' square slime); HP 15; MV 10' or climb 5'; Act 2d20; SP half damage from slashing or piercing weapons, sensitive to light (suffers 1 point of damage per round of exposure), metal digestive (any metal weapon stuck or striking the slime is rendered useless after 1 touch and metal armor loses 1 "plus" of AC every round of contact;

magic weapons receive a DC 12 save, adding bonus equal to their "plus"); SV Fort +6, Ref -8, Will +6; AL N.

Area 1-9 – Northeast Semi-transept: *The air in this place is dank and colder than in the rest of the temple. The transept ends in a small altar, atop which sits an idol depicting a grotesque frog with razor-sharp teeth and talons. Its mouth is full of the mangled bodies of sentient races – humans, elves, dwarves, orcs, and even ogres hang askew in its maw; limbs dangling between the giant's teeth. At the monstrosity's feet stand more members of these races, each groveling in supplication or gazing upon its visage in horror. Yet more peeling and faded frescoes adorn the walls around the altar.*

Slumped against the north wall of the semi-transept at a point 15' away from the altar is a humanoid shape dressed in homespun clothes and a rope belt. Dirty, unkempt hair veils the figure's face. Low, agonized moans emanate from the motionless form.

The humanoid figure is Irrek, a poor crofter who heard rumors of the Croaking Fane and the supposedly abandoned riches contained within. Three days ago, Irrek summoned up the courage to enter the Fane in hopes of acquiring enough wealth to pay his debts and provide for his future. Attacked by the toad-goyle, he fled through the doorway leading to the Undercroft, seeking safety. There, he encountered the tablet in area 2-9 and, enticed by its value, laid hands upon it. The tablet infected him with its magical sickness which is now about to come to gruesome fruition. Weakened and feverish, Irrek attempted to escape the Fane, but lost his way in the dark (now infected, the toad-goyle paid him no notice) and collapsed here. Even as the PCs discover him, his body is being devoured from within by *Schaphigroadaz's Spoilation*.

If the PCs approach Irrek, they notice his flesh roils and squirms as bulbous protrusions push upward from beneath his flesh. Two rounds after this phenomenon is observed, blood pours from his eyes and mouth as the first flesh-eating toads chew their way out of his still-living body. The following round, his body busts, spilling the horde of toads onto the floor where they begin advancing to the closest source of food – the PCs!

Croaking Doom (1 swarm): Init +4; Atk swarming bite +2 melee (dmg 1d3); AC 14; HD 3d8; HP 13; MV 30'; Act special; SP bite all targets within 20' x 20' space, half-damage from non-area attacks; SV Fort +0, Ref +5, Will -2; AL N.

The croaking doom is a carpet of numerous, gore-smeared 3" long toads occupying a 20' square area. The mass attacks every living creature within the space it occupies. It swiftly devours the flesh of its prey, leaving nothing but bones in its wake. The croaking doom takes half damage from any attack that is not an area effect.

This shrine is dedicated to Schaphigroadaz's aspect as K'Tehe, the Destroyer. The chilly atmosphere is a natural effect caused by a quirk in the Fane's construction, one taken advantage of by the Salientian Knot. The paintings depict K'Tehe before a crowd of supplicating beings. The members of the crowd are humanoid but more frog than man. In other scenes, these frog-like beings are depicted tearing humans apart with their talons and fangs. Still other depictions show the frog-like creatures being impaled on long spikes by their fellows – the price paid for worshipping Bobugbubilz over Schaphigroadaz.



LEVEL 2: THE UNDERCROFT

The lower level of the Fane is fashioned from damp, hewn stone. In the southern section of the Undercroft, the stone is worked smooth, but the northern area is all natural caves untouched by labor. Scaling the natural cavern walls requires a DC 10 Strength check or a DC 5 Climb sheer surfaces check. Ceilings are 10' high in the southern section and vary from 12' to 30' in the caverns. Like the level above, the Undercroft is unlit.

Area 2-1 – Un-Sacristy: *Odd, alien odors that hint at unseemly spices cultivated in the dark places beneath the earth drift in the air of this 20' square room. Two mildew-stain wardrobes stand against the east and west walls, and a trio of shelves bearing an eclectic variety of objects hangs on the southern wall. Another closed door is located on the far side of the room. A shimmering rune of liquid yellow-green fire drifts in the air before the door, bathing the entire room in a nauseating glow.*

The wardrobes contain grey and white robes and assorted other religious accoutrements. There are enough here to dress up to five people in the priestly garb of Schaphigroadaz, should the party desire. Doing so provides them some protection against the toads in area 2-9, as those creatures have been conditioned to avoid harming those dressed in these garments (see area 2-9 for more details). However, any cleric who dons the robes of a foreign deity automatically has his or her disapproval range increased by 1.

One shelf holds a collection of water-damaged hymnals and texts dedicated to Schaphigroadaz. On another shelf lie strange

horns and clarinet-like instruments that produce croaking music when played.

Sticks and cones of exotic-smelling incense fill five boxes on the third shelf. The incense affects those lacking amphibian blood bizarrely and, if lit, any human or demi-human who smells its smoke must make a DC 12 Fort save. If failed, the creature is afflicted with nightmarish visions of a swampy, primordial world where batrachians rule over humanity as cruel despots. This horrific vision haunts their dreams for 1d7 nights, resulting in fitful sleep. The exhausted PCs suffer a -2 penalty to all rolls until a restful evening's sleep is achieved. Each box of incense is worth 10 gp if sold to sorcerers, alchemists, or assassins.

In a covered bowl, beside the incense, are crumbly and pitted wafers exuding a dank smell. If consumed, the eater must make a DC 10 Fort save or break out in horrible warts over their entire body. This outbreak results in a temporary loss of 1 Personality point, but the warts fade after a day (unless additional wafers are consumed). A mottled green bottle sits here as well. It is filled with sweet-smelling syrup that is a *potion of human control*.

The rune before the southern door is a magical defense (as per the spell *runic alphabet, Fey*). Speaking the proper pass phrase ("Yea shall I dwell in the bowels of the Great Winged Toad and I shall be happy") causes it to dissipate. An attempt to bypass requires a DC 24 Will save; otherwise it detonates, creating a fi-



ery blast that inflicts 3d6 damage to all within 10' and destroying the contents of the shelves unless they've been removed from the blast area.

Area 2-2 – High Priest's Quarters: *The 30' wide, 20' deep chamber beyond the door is decorated in a color scheme of grays, whites, and browns. A canopied bed with gauzy curtains stands in one corner. Beside it is a small table, topped by a curious glass object. Against another wall is a low table covered with a green cloth and bearing a statuette, incense burner, chalice, a scrap of cloth, and a book. A simple writing desk and stool crouches in another corner of the room.*

The bed is soft, but strangely damp. The glass object on the table next to it is a water pipe, its bowl stuffed with dried, blue-green vegetable matter. This substance is a rare narcotic found only in the blackest swamps unsullied by the presence of Man. When smoked, it induces wondrous and frightening insights into the nature of the cosmos and the workings of the gods. Those sampling the stuff must make a DC 12 Fort save or permanently lose 1 point of Intelligence as their minds are seared by visions mortals were not meant to know. A character who makes his save gains a permanent point of Intelligence and, if a Wizard, automatically learns the spell of his choice upon achieving his or her next level of experience. The substance is worth 100 gp in the witch markets of certain decadent cities.

The low table serves as an altar, with a 1' tall statuette of Schaphigroadaz in his aspect of the K'Tehe, the Destroyer, displayed prominently. The incense burner contains the same incense as in area 2-1. The chalice is a silver and gold goblet decorated with carvings of dancing toad-like creatures (worth

300 gp), and the scrap of cloth is a priestly stole embroidered with interlocking toads. The book is a chapbook containing devotional prayers to Schaphigroadaz. Most are blasphemous to the ears of other faiths, but a careful examination the book reveals a single, handwritten phrase on one page's margins near the end of the book. It reads, "The ascension of Herax in the southern climes is upon us, harbingering the reclamation of our Lord's dominance over the False Believers and their impure faith. It is time to go below for the transmutation. Let the word spread far and wide amongst those who hop the true path." The passage refers to the rise of the constellation of Herax (DC 10 Intelligence check or appropriate occupation recognizes the constellation) in the southern skies and the decision by the Knot to undergo their transitional immersion in the Spawning Pool (area 2-13).

The writing desk is empty, but if the desk is moved, a loose flagstone, one that shows signs of being shifted before, is noticed. In the dusty space beneath it lies a rusty iron box. The lock is trapped with a poison needle (DC 12 to find and disable) coated with the venom of a poisonous toad (DC 20 Fortitude save; lose 1d3 temporary Agility points on a successful save, 1d6 on a failed save). Inside the box are 300 gp, 20 of the platinum discs, a large key that unlocks the door and gate to area 2-10 and 2-12, and a small key that disables the trap on the alms toad in area 1-6.

Area 2-3 – Monk's Cell: *This small, 10' square space holds only a simple cot, a washing bowl and a meditation mat. A medallion dangles from a cord hung upon a peg on the wall. The cot is covered with a coarse blanket that is disheveled as if having been used.*

Occupied by one of the more slovenly novices of the Fane, this room has not been used since the Salientian Knot went to the Spawning Pools. The medallion is iron and bears the image of the Great Winged Toad. It is an unholy symbol.

Area 2-4 – Clean Monk’s Cell:

This room is similar to area 2-3, but the blanket is folded and there is no unholy symbol here.

Area 2-5 – Armory: A stout lock seals this door shut, requiring either a DC 10 Open Locks check or a DC 15 Strength check to bypass.

Two wood and iron racks hang on the north and south walls of this 10’ square room. Each bears a handful of weapons – wicked-looking scourges, dual-headed flails, barbed spears, and wavy-bladed short swords. An unlit torch is in an iron sconce on the far wall.

The weapons are all of average make and include 2 scourges (1d4 dmg), 3 flails (1d6 dmg), 10 spears (1d8 dmg), and 5 short swords (1d6 dmg).

Area 2-6 – Ritualistic Chapel: *The walls of this 30’ deep by 40’ wide chamber are decorated with peeling frescoes depicting humans and toads engaged in perverse, unnatural acts. The room contains a collection of divans, couches, mats, and heaps of pillows. A foul, obscene stench hangs in the air. The chamber tapers at the southern end and contains a statue of grey stone, flecked with white, placed on a platform. It depicts a human male and female toad locked in an unwholesome embrace.*

This chapel is used for the church’s more degenerate rites. The frescoes are all obscene and sickening. In one gruesome scene, a woman is depicted giving birth to a strange hybrid creature that bears the features of both parents.

A protrusion on the statue unlocks a secret cubby behind the sculpture. It can also be found by tapping on the southernmost section of wall and a successful Luck check. Inside this space are 5 small vials and philters containing powerful aphrodisiacs. The substances are relatively innocuous to humans and demi-humans (DC 5 Fortitude save to avoid the effects), but highly effective against those with amphibian blood (DC 15 Fortitude save to resist). Those overcome by the substances fall victim to their base urges, incapacitating them for 2d6 turns as they indulge in earthly pleasures. After the effect wears off, another DC 10 Fortitude save must be made to avoid falling asleep for an additional 2d6 turns. The aphrodisiac effect occurs when the substances are exposed to air, requiring anyone smelling the substance to make a saving throw. If a bottle is broken, all within 5’ of the aphrodisiac must make a saving throw. A DC 13 Intelligence check or the appropriate background will identify the substance for what it is, but requires the PC sniffing the aphrodisiac to make a Fortitude save to resist its effects. This substance can be used to good effect against the toads in area 2-10 if identified.

Area 2-7 – Mausoleum Entrance: *The 30’ wide, 20’ deep chamber at the end of the corridor is largely empty. The walls bear relief carvings of toad-like humans engaged in ceremonial funeral*



rites. Four empty torch sconces hang on the walls at the room’s corners. A large, barred wooden door stands in the far wall opposite the room’s entrance, surrounded by a frame, step, and lintel carved with additional reliefs.

The relief carvings are depictions of batrachian humans wrapping the corpses of similar beings with linens and performing obscure rites over the bodies. A processionary then bears these macabre burdens through a portal bearing the carving of a mass of entangled tadpoles, to inter them for eternal sleep. The carvings on the jam, step, and lintel of the far door are identical to the knot of tadpoles depicted elsewhere in the room. The door to area 2-8 is barred from this side but is otherwise unlocked.

Area 2-8 – Mausoleum: *The air here is damp and holds the smell of faint spices and mildew. The walls of this 30’ square room hold rows of 2’ square stone doors, numbering more than a score in total. The floor is tiled in fired clay and each tile inscribed with the image of a toad and tadpole in a circular form, similar to a yin-yang symbol. The chamber is dusty and dank.*

Originally intended to house the elite faithful of the cult’s adherents, its limited numbers and their proclivity in slothfulness meant that only two were ever interred here. This is good news for the adventurers, as the unholy power of Schaphigroadaz has reanimated their remains in strange forms. Two rounds after the party enters this chamber, two of the niches’ doors crash to the floor and mummified toads spring out. The PCs have one round to act before the mummies recover and attack.

The mummies’ niches hold only rags and dust. The Salientian Knot is too miserly to bury their dead with items of value. The rest are completely bare.

The toad and tadpole symbol on the tiles represent the followers of Schaphigroadaz’s belief in reincarnation and that all life returns to the cosmic pond to spawn anew. A DC 12 Intelligence check by a cleric or a DC 15 Intelligence check by any other class deciphers the meaning of the images, possibly giving the party an inkling to what they may yet face in the Undercroft of Schaphigroadaz.

Mummified Toads (2): Init +1; Atk bite +3 (dmg 1d6+2) or tongue choke +5 ranged (1d4/2d4/3d4/etc., 15’ range); AC 13; HD 8d12+8; HP 60 each; MV 20’ or hop 30’; Act 1d20; SP damage reduction 5, toad mummy rot (DC 12 Fort save or take 1 Personality damage each day), vulnerable to fire, un-dead traits; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +10; AL C.

Agile yet un-dead things, mummified toads are 5’ long batrachians swathed in decaying bandages. They bite with fearsome jaws or use their desiccated tongues to strangle opponents from up to 15’ away. A successful attack roll is required each round to maintain their strangling attack. A failed attack indicates the victim has broken free. Strangling opponents can also attempt to sever the mummified toad’s tongue with a successful attack inflicting 10 or more points of damage.

Area 2-9 – Infectious Instructional: An open archway connects this chamber with the corridor. The archway bears more relief carvings of hideous toad-human hybrids performing horrible acts on subjugated humans. The archway is trapped with three spring-loaded spears that skewer the first person to cross the threshold (melee +3; 1d6 damage). Pressing one of the carvings deactivates the trap. Both finding and disabling the trap is DC 10; noticing the carving that deactivates it is a DC 12 Intelligence check.

This dank, vaulted ceilinged room contains a score of prayer mats woven from swamp plants arranged before a stone lectern that faces the entrances of the chamber. An unsettling silence pervades the room.

Atop the lectern and visible only from the stand's far side is a tarnished silver tablet inscribed with squiggling script. A *comprehend languages* spell with a spellcheck of 20+ reveals that the writing is instructional scripture detailing the proper veneration of Schaphigroadaz and prophesizing the day of his ascension back to his proper title of Lord of Evil Amphibians. Although ancient and discolored, the tablet is fashioned from solid silver, estimated at 150 gp in value. Unfortunately, the tablet bears a potent woe.

Any non-amphibian blooded, living creature that touches the tablet must make a DC 15 Will save or become infected with *Schaphigroadaz's Spoilation*, a supernatural virus that turns the afflicted into a host for the croaking doom (see area 1-9 above).

One hour after infection, the victim becomes feverish, resulting in a -1 penalty to all rolls, loses 1 point of Strength and his skin begins to pucker and bulge slightly. After 24 hours, the subject suffers 1d3 points of damage, loses an additional point of Strength as well as a point of both Intelligence and Personality, and the die roll penalty grows by -1. Each successive day the infection remains uncured, the penalty increases by another -1, another point of Strength, Intelligence, and Personality is lost, and the victim suffers another 1d3 points of damage. Unless remove, the infection lasts for d7+1 days before killing the subject when the croaking doom erupts from his body.

Due to its preternatural origins, *Schaphigroadaz's Spoilation* is difficult to cure. A *neutralize poison or disease* spell with a spellcheck of 30+ will remove the infection. The other option to cure the disease is to call upon Bobugbubilz using the *patron bond* or *invoke patron* (if currently a servant of the Lord of Evil Amphibians) to intervene on the afflicted individual's behalf. Bobugbubilz can easily remove *Schaphigroadaz's Spoilation*, but requires a boon from the victim or the one invoking him in return. This favor is likely to be a difficult one, an unwholesome task, or both.

A careful inspection of the tablet combined with a DC 10 Intelligence check notices that the tarnished silver is rubbed slightly away on the tablet's lower right corner as if handled recently. This is evidence of Irrek's handling of the tablet which led to his demise.

Area 2-10 – Toad Cavern: The corridor leading to area 2-10 terminates in a pair of great verdigris-covered bronze doors. They are locked, requiring the key from area 2-2, a DC 17 Strength check, or a DC 10 Open locks check to spring. Despite their massive construction, the faint sounds of croaking can be heard from beyond them (no check necessary).

Inside the great valves is a 15' long, empty antechamber. Several

iron bars segregate this area from the space beyond. Past the rusting barrier is a nauseating sight: Squatting in a grand cavern are more than a score of grayish-white, mottled toads, their pale bodies sitting atop decades of filth and bones. A scummy pool fills the center of the cavern, with a rocky islet rising above the surface at the center of it. The water's surface ripples with masses of black tadpoles that swim and slither through its depths. And the croaking – yea gods, the croaking! A hellish chorus resounds in the echoing cavern, with each guttural voice crying out a noise that sounds unsettling like “MUR-der, MUR-der, MUR-der...”

The iron bars are heavily corroded, requiring only 25 points of damage to break free of their moorings. The gate is latched and barred on the entrance's side, but is without a lock.

Those taking a moment to observe the cavern can determine its size (roughly 65' wide by 60' deep with 30' high ceiling) if illumination is sufficient. They also notice oily black beetles and other small bugs scurrying through the waste on the floor, only to be gobbled up by hungry toads as they pass. Other toads are not nearly as fickle in their dietary habits, snapping at their smaller kind to devour them in a single gulp. Mixed amongst the filth and debris that covers the floor is the occasional glint of platinum. Three passages exit the cavern.

Not long after the party enters the area, the PC with the highest Luck score faintly hears pleas of help coming from one of the passageways leading out of the cavern. This is Llulch (see area 2-11 below) who sees the party's light sources and hear their voices. The croaking chorus, however, makes understandable communication impossible between the two areas.

The toads are hungry and anxious to supplement their diet of insects with meat of a new flavor. The creatures keep a watchful eye on the party, leaping to attack if they leave the safety of the bar-protected antechamber. The toads attack in waves of d10 toads each every two rounds until all 30 are engaged or slain. Although the toads attempt to attack the entire party, some or all of the PCs may be protected against their assault. Any toad attempting to attack a PC wearing the ring from area 1-2 must make a DC 15 Will save to do so. Likewise, due to their conditioning, a toad must make a DC 10 Will save to attack a PC dressed in the clerical robes found in area 2-1. A toad failing its save cannot attempt to attack that PC again unless circumstances dramatically change (judge's discretion).

If the characters decide to engage the toads using the rusty bars as protection, the toads attack the barrier in force, hoping (and hopping) to get at the party. The bars collapse under the toads' assault after 25 points of damage have been inflicted on the rusty obstacle.

If the toads are dispatched and the party has a chance to explore this room unimpeded, they find numerous loose disks of platinum are scattered throughout the area. For each full turn spent sifting through the filth, they uncover 1d10 platinum disks. There are a total of 40 in here.

Giant Toads (30): Init +1; Atk bite +3 melee (dmg 1d6+1) or tongue +2 ranged (15' range; those struck must make a DC 10 Strength check or be dragged to the toad's mouth; the following round, the toad receives a +6 bonus to its bite attack); AC 13; HD 2d8; HP 9; MV 30' or swim 20'; Act 1d20; SP tongue; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0; AL N.



Area 2-11 – Prison: *A wall of stout iron bars, ones in much better repair than those previously seen, blocks this cave off from the toad horde. A locked gate stands in the center of the bars. Cries of help and despairing wails are heard echoing from beyond the bars.*

The prison contains a single occupant: Llulch, a disgraced member of the Salientian Knot.

Llulch the Loathsome Lackey: Init +1; Atk club +0 melee (dmg 1d3); AC 11; HD 1d8 +2; HP 6; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will -1; AL C

Llulch is of short stature and bears the batrachian features common amongst the sect. Dressed in filthy, torn robes, he pleads to be released, cursing his former brothers for locking him up. He entreats the party to allow him to venture with them so that he may avenge himself on the Knot for the ill-treatment he has suffered.

If questioned as to how he became imprisoned, Llulch claims that it was his punishment for suggesting to the High Priest that the time had come for a mending of fences between the worshippers of Schaphigroadaz and Bobugbubilz, believing that they ultimately worked towards the same ends. This is a lie. His fellows imprisoned Llulch because even they found him loathsome and undeserving of immersion in the Spawning Pool. Llulch desires nothing more than to enter those waters and receive the blessing of Schaphigroadaz. To achieve this end, he will guide the party to the Pool, abandoning them the moment he sees the waters. Should the party release him, but refuse to allow him to join them, Llulch will lurk behind and wait for them to enter into area 2-13 and then follow. Should the adventurers become stymied at the barrier in area 2-12, he will approach them in hopes they will allow him to join them and offer his knowledge of the key guarded by the Toad Thing.

Area 2-12 – Breeding Pool Entrance: *The steep natural stairs you've been descending end abruptly in a broad, high-roof cavern. At the far end stands another barrier of iron bars with a stout gate. The hum of rapidly-beating, leathery wings disturbs the air as winged toads, their mouths lined with razor-sharp fangs, swoop out of the darkness to attack!*

Vampiric Spawn of the Great Winged Toad (6): Init +4; Atk bite +3 melee (dmg 1d8+1 plus blood loss) and two claws +1 melee (dmg 1d4+1); AC 13; HD3d8+2; HP 15; MV 30' or fly 40'; Act 3d20; SP any creature bitten by the toad automatically loses 1 hit point per round as their wounds bleed (magical healing ends effect); SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +1; AL C.

The winged toads are the vampiric spawn of the Great Winged Toad, thirsty for the warm elixir that flows through the party's veins. They rake their victims with their sharp claws before latching onto them with their bleeding bite.

The bars and gate are of solid construction, requiring

a DC 20 Strength check to bend or break. The gate is locked (DC 12 Open Locks check to pick), and opens with the key found in area 2-2 or 2-15. If Llulch is with the party, he reveals that the steps lead down to the Spawning Pool and it is there that the party must venture if they wish to defeat the Salientian Knot. If their efforts to bypass the gate and bars fail, Llulch admits he knows the location of a key that will allow them to pass through: it has been placed in the lair of the Toad Thing (area 2-15) for safe keeping!

Area 2-13 – Spawning Pool: *The stone steps descend sharply into the darkness before terminating in another cavern. The stink of toad, slime, and less identifiable odors hangs heavy in the damp air. The majority of the cave is filled with a bubbling pool of scummy, black water. Noisome forms break the surface from time to time, granting you a brief glimpse at a nightmarish mixture of amphibian and man. These forms seem oddly quiescent, more akin to flotsam and jetsam adrift on the tide than energetic swimmers. Beyond the pool stands a misshapen bulk of stone fashioned into the obese form of a toad covered in swarming tadpoles. A trio of glittering stones decorate the statue's belly, each one shining with a pale luminescence.*

The pool is the Spawning Pool, a body of water that bears Schaphigroadaz's taint. At certain rare times, the pool has the power to transform those immersed in it into monstrous hybrids of human (or demi-human) and toad. Currently, the entire congregation of the Fane drifts in its waters in a dream-like state as their bodies mutate into their new forms.

Unless restrained, Llulch shouts in triumph upon seeing the Pool and then dashes towards it, throwing himself into its waters. Doing so sends unusually large ripples across the bubbling water's surface, rousing some of the dreaming worshippers from their reverie. Now alert to an unworthy in the cosmic pool, they rise from the waters, glistening and horrid to behold, and attack.

The statue is also imbued with Schaphigroadaz's power and his divine energy manifests to protect his followers. In the event that Llulch is not with the party, the three stones on its belly begin to glow with a yellow-green light and a deafening croaking emanates from the carved form. The noise rouses the dreaming hybrids from their slumber and they rise from the Spawning Pool to defend their sacred ground.

The stones in the statue also act as a "magic damper," reducing the effectiveness of magic—both wizard and clerical—

performed in its vicinity. Whenever a spell is cast by a non-worshiper of Schaphigroadaz, a stone flashes with gray-green light and invokes a -1d5 penalty to the caster's spellcheck. Each stone can produce this effect once per round (maximum of three spells dampened per round). The stones can be destroyed by either inflicting 15 points of damage to one (AC 16) or with a Mighty Deed of Arms that specifically targets the stone with a large or blunt weapon. If all three stones are destroyed, the statue begins coruscating with bolts of divine electricity. All within 20' of the stone must make a DC 10 Reflex save or suffer 1d10 points of damage. The good news, however, is that the electricity also strikes the Spawning Pool, boiling it and the remaining servants of Schaphigroadaz within its waters. The followers of the Croaking Despot are destroyed!

Unfortunately, doing so rouses the Toad Thing in area 2-15 (if the party has yet to deal with it), and it moves to area 2-10 to await who offended Schaphigroadaz.

Mutated Salientian Knot brethren (8): Init -1; Atk club +3 melee (dmg 1d6+3); AC 13; HD 2d8+2; HP 10 each; MV 20' or swim 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +3; AL C.

Mutated Underpriest (1): Init +2; Atk club +4 melee (dmg 1d6+3) or spell; AC 14; HD 3d8+2; HP 15; MV 20' or swim 30'; Act 1d20; SP spells (CL 2, spell check +3, spells: *blessing*, *darkness*, *paralysis*, *protection from good*); SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +4; AL C.

Mutated High Priest (1): Init +2; Atk club +4 melee (dmg 1d8+3) or spell; AC 16; HD 6d8+2; HP 30; MV 20' or swim 30'; Act 1d20; SP spells (CL 5, spell check +6, spells: *blessing*, *darkness*, *paralysis*, *protection from good*, *word of command*, *divine symbol*, *lotus stare*, *plague of toads* [see Appendix A below]); SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +5; AL C.

Area 2-14 – Ominous Passage: *A foul stench wafts from the mouth of this passageway. The rocky tunnel leads deeper into the cavernous dark, its stink detectable even over the odor of toad and decay. The floor of the passage is cleaner than in other parts of the cavern and is not as deeply coated with waste and bones. It is almost as if even the toads fear what lies in the dark beyond...*

The passage itself is free of danger. Listening attempts reveal nothing. If the party wishes to discover what lies down the passage, one or more of them must enter.

Area 2-15 – Toad Thing's Lair: *The ominous tunnel winds a short distance before opening into a large cavity roughly 50' square with a roof some 25' high. Water drips from the ceiling above, creating small pools throughout the cavern. In this cave sits a great beast, an embodiment of loathsome evil made flesh. Resembling the stone idol in the Fane above, but in pasty gray-white flesh, the monstrosity squats atop a pile of earth, gleaming bones, glittering treasure, and pools of smoking slime. Its eyes, each the size of a shield, are closed in the darkness. This toad thing seems equally oblivious to both your presence and the water that patters on its head.*

The Toad Thing is an ancient child of Schaphigroadaz gifted to the Fane and serving as a guardian and a living reminder of the Croaking Despot's might. Particularly savory or important sacrifices are given directly to the Toad Thing in honor of Schaphigroadaz. With the Salientian Knot gone to the Spawning Pool, it has been some time since it has tasted its preferred form of sustenance and the coming of light and men to its abode means but one thing to the beast: It is time to feed. Due

to its age and temperament, the Toad Thing is unaffected by the ring from area 1-2, the clerical garb from area 2-1, or aphrodisiacs from area 2-6.

The mound upon which the Toad Thing squats contains 500 gp, 50 platinum discs, a gold ring worth 50 gp, a large, rusted key that unlocks the door and gate in areas 2-10 and 2-12, and a large pallid yellow toadstone that has been carved into the shape of a heart. The size of a cantaloupe, this gem is worth 1,000 gp. Unfortunately, looting gem rouses the Stone Toad Idol in area 1-7 should the party try to leave with this item.

Toad Thing (1): Init +0; Atk bite +5 melee (dmg 4d4 + chance of being swallowed); AC 17; HD 8d10; HP 50; MV 20' or swim 10'; Act 2d20; SP crit on natural 19-20, hop up to 40' as an action, spit acidic mucus 3/day (DC 14 Ref save or suffer 2d6 damage plus dissolves metal as primeval slime), bitten victims must make a DC 11 Ref save or be swallowed whole (target can cut himself free with a successful attack vs. AC 18; if no success after 3 rounds, victim asphyxiates and is dissolved by stomach acid; a successful attack on the Toad Thing while a victim is swallowed has a 2 in 6 chance of inflicting half the damage done by the attack on the victim); SV Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +4; AL C.

ENDING THE ADVENTURE



If the party successfully explores the Croaking Fane and defeats the Salientian Knot, they have weakened the Brotherhood of Warts' plan to restore Schaphigroadaz to his former position in the cosmic pantheon and likely augmented their wealth in the process. Those parties tasked to foil the Salientian Knot by Bobugbubilz please the Lord of Evil Amphibians with their success and he continues serving as their patron with froggish glee.

Unfortunately, should word of their triumph spread, they also earn the enmity of the Salientian Knot. Any party selling the incense looted from area 2-2 or the toadstone heart found in area 2-15 is bound to attract the attention of Schaphigroadaz's followers, who call upon all the power at their disposal to avenge themselves. The details of this crusade against the PCs are left to the judge to create, but likely stratagems employed by the Knot might include assassination attempts aimed at the party or their being targeted for extermination by toadfiends. In addition, parties that looted either the idol or basin (or both) from area 1-8 are attacked by the primordial oozes those objects create if not properly de-consecrated.

Should one or more PCs be infected by Schaphigroadaz's *Spoilation* from touching the tablet in area 2-9 and the party calls upon Bobugbubilz's assistance to remove their death sentence, the Lord of Evil Amphibians will demand payment for his intervention. There are other fanes located about the land, each of which houses a congregation devoted to restoring Bobugbubilz's ancient foe to power. The party may well be charged with the further rooting out the Salientian Knot in their temples and putting down the threat to Bobugbubilz's power once and for all.

APPENDIX A: NEW SPELL



his new clerical spell is restricted to the servants of Schaphigroadaz. It is a modified version of *Schaphigroadaz's Spoilation* (see area 2-9) that produces more immediate results at the cost of some lethality.

Plague of Toads

Level: 2 Range: Sight Duration: 1 round Casting time: 1 round Save: Will vs. spell check DC

General The cleric calls upon the power of Schaphigroadaz to infest his enemies' bodies with small carnivorous toads that eat their way out of the targets' mortal forms.

Manifestation A swarm of ethereal tadpoles engulf their targets and quickly fade as they're absorbed into the victim's abdomen.

1-13 Failure.

14-15 The cleric causes 1d3+CL flesh-eating toads to erupt from the body of one target, causing 1d3+CL points of damage and inflicting a -5' penalty to movement until the damage is healed.

16-19 The cleric causes 1d4+CL flesh-eating toads to erupt from the body of one target, causing 1d4+CL points of damage, a -1 penalty to Strength, and inflicting a -5' penalty to movement. Strength damage and movement penalty remain until the damage is healed.

20-21 The cleric causes 1d6+CL flesh-eating toads to erupt from the body of two targets, causing 1d6+CL points of damage, a -2 penalty to Strength, and inflicting a -10' penalty to movement. Strength damage and movement penalty remain until the damage is healed.

22-25 The cleric causes 1d8+CL flesh-eating toads to erupt from the body of three targets, causing 1d8+CL points of damage, a -2 penalty to Strength, and inflicting a -10' penalty to movement. Strength damage and movement penalty remain until the damage is healed.

26-29 The cleric causes 1d10+CL flesh-eating toads to erupt from the body of four targets, causing 1d10+CL points of damage, a -3 penalty to Strength, and inflicting a -15' penalty to movement. Strength damage and movement penalty remain until the damage is healed.

30-31 The cleric causes 2d6+CL flesh-eating toads to erupt from the body of four targets, causing 2d6+CL points of damage, a -3 penalty to Strength, and inflicting a -15' penalty to movement. Strength damage and movement penalty remain until the damage is healed.

32-33 The cleric causes 2d10+CL flesh-eating toads to erupt from the body of five targets, causing 2d10+CL points of damage, a -4 penalty to Strength, and inflicting a -15' penalty to movement. Strength damage and movement penalty remain until the damage is healed.

34+ The cleric causes 3d10+CL flesh-eating toads to erupt from the body of all his enemies within his sight, causing 3d10+CL points of damage, a -5 penalty to Strength, and inflicting a -20' penalty to movement. Strength damage and movement penalty remain until the damage is healed.

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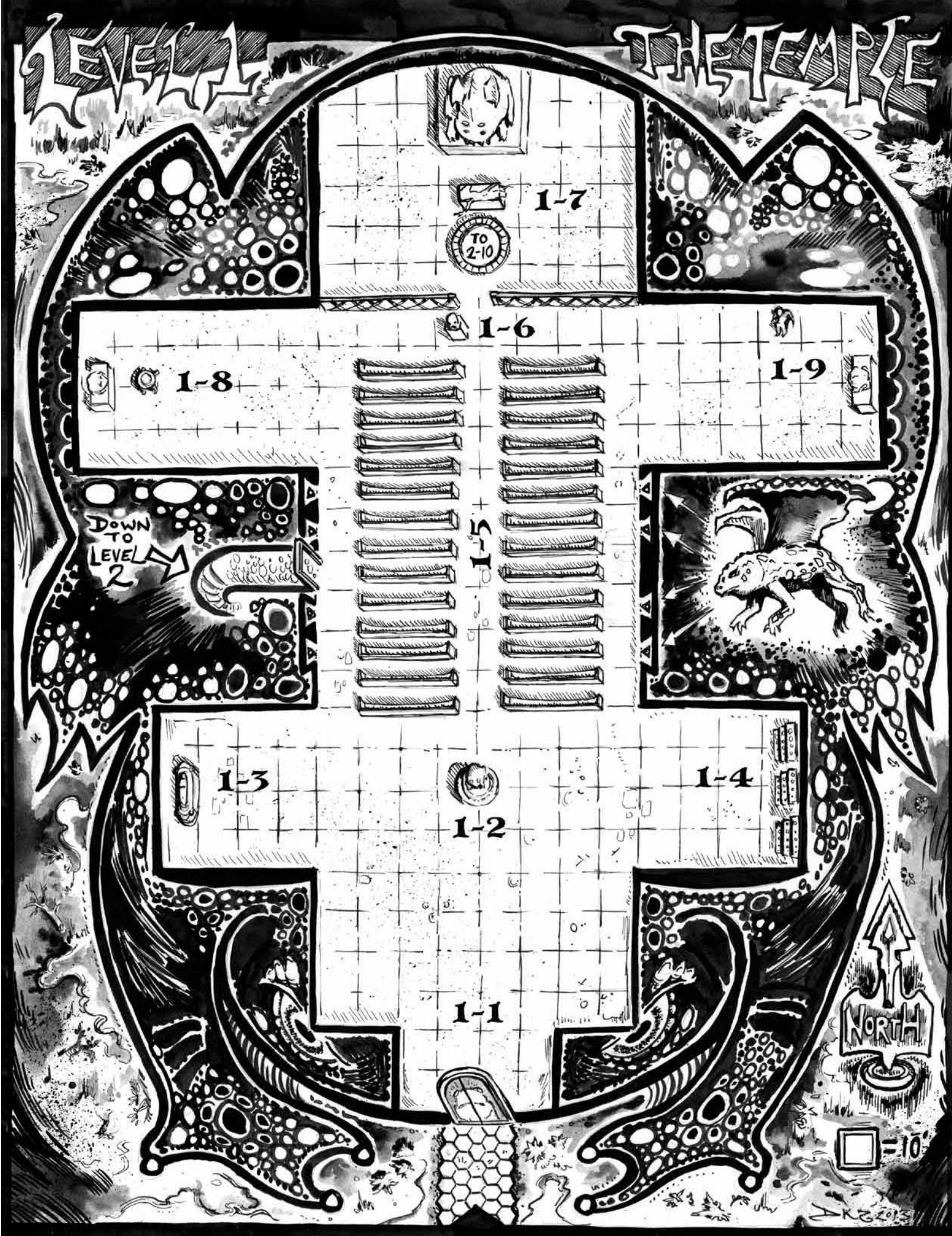
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