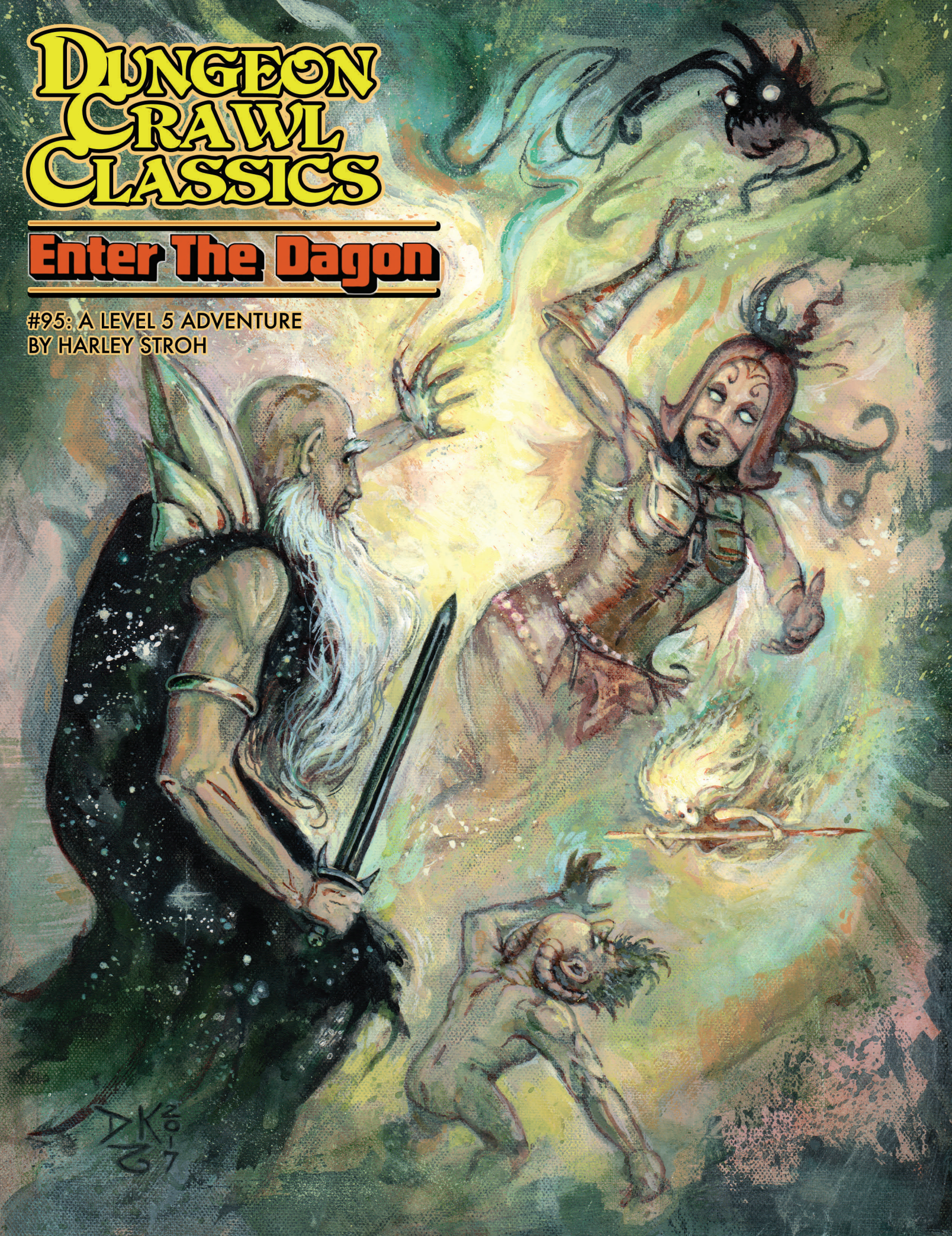


DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS

Enter The Dagon

#95: A LEVEL 5 ADVENTURE
BY HARLEY STROH



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Enter The Dragon



ENTER THE DAGON

A LEVEL 5 ADVENTURE

Written by Harley Stroh • Edited by: Jen Brinkman • Cover art and cartography by: Doug Kovacs • Interior art by: Chris Arneson, Friedrich Haas, Doug Kovacs, Jesse Mohn, Peter Mullen, Stefan Poag • Layout by: Joseph Goodman • Spell duel cards designed by: Matthias Weeks

Playtested at Gen Con 2015 and Gen Con 2016. Thanks to the hundreds of characters who died to bring this module into your hands!

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INTRODUCTION



Remember the good old days, when adventures were underground, NPCs were there to be killed, and the finale of every dungeon was the dragon on the 20th level? Those days are back. Dungeon Crawl Classics adventures don't waste your time with long-winded speeches, weird campaign settings, or NPCs who aren't meant to be killed. Each adventure is 100% good, solid dungeon crawl, with the monsters you know, the traps you remember, and the secret doors you know are there somewhere.

Welcome to *Enter the Dagon*, a level 5 adventure modeled after the spell duel tournaments run at Gen Con 2015 and 2016. As in the *Enter the Dagon* tournaments, PCs will be expected to spell duel a host of challengers. Judges prepping for the adventures could do little better than to watch the classic films *Enter the Dragon* and *Game of Death* before running their games.

While the heart of the adventure lies in the arcane death matches, the party's survival secretly rests on the shoulders of the other classes. The PC spell duelist (whether wizard, elf, cleric, or thief) is dangerously outclassed by the other contestants; obedient wizards expecting a fair challenge will be sorely disappointed.

Seasoned reavers will know better: in order to survive Dagon's machinations, they will have to fight.

Before the adventure is over, all the classes will be held to account. Stealth, trickery, and bloody violence can all be employed to help balance the scales. Warriors, halflings, and thieves, especially, will be called upon to be both cunning and courageous in the face of certain death on the Isle of Dagon.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Sorcerers and warlocks traffic in souls, the names of demons, and forbidden knowledge. As such, there are few places in the Known Realms that strike fear into the hearts of wizards or elves – but the Isle of Dagon is such a place.

The isle itself is a mystery. It appears and vanishes at will, emerging from a drifting fog bank one day only to disappear scant weeks later behind (beneath?) the waves of a crashing storm. The isle is never discovered by accident. Instead, it appears only when it wants to be found, and only by those whom the isle deems worthy.

To common folk, the island is a place of menace and foreboding; the merest sight of the island is an omen presaging bad fortune and tragedy. But to wizards, the island is principally known as the near-mythic location of an arcane death match – a series of spell duels to the death. The timing of these duels is always irregular: the contest might be held once a month, once a decade, or not for entire centuries. However, the memory of wizards is long, and the deadly occult affair holds a special allure to sorcerers hoping to prove their mettle.

An untold number of wizards have traveled to the island

to take part in these death matches, never to return. However, legends persist that the wizards that do survive go on to become the mightiest warlocks and sorcerers of their age, armed with fell knowledge and arcane secrets beyond peer.

What is certainly true is this: Many enter the contests, but only the most cunning and powerful can hope to survive.

THE SECRET MASTERS

While by some accounts the isle itself lays claim to a certain sentience, its first and final masters are the occult practitioners collectively known as the Order of Dagon. Ageless sorcerers, the order seems to exist beyond the reach of time or the turmoil of the world. (Or, as some sages aver, the secret masters *orchestrate* the turmoil of the world.)

For all its legendary might, the Order cannot survive without the regular replenishment of key magical components – components which can only be harvested from living spellcasters. The Order hosts death matches to secure those most precious of arcane resources: the organs of wizards and elves.

Contrary to the fabulous tales of arcane might, no champion has ever emerged triumphant from the bloody death matches, nor are there any sorcerers (living or dead) who can honestly lay claim to the title of Master of Dagon. (Foolhardy is the charlatan that dares to do so.)

THE DEATH MATCH

Only the most powerful spellcasters are invited to the Isle of Dagon.

While the death matches appear to occur at random, sages and other students of the heavens can confirm that they are always aligned to key celestial events. Powerful wizards are seldom surprised when Dagon's masked heralds deliver their invitations on starry, moonless nights, when the air is ripe with the stink of rotting seaweed.

Wizards and their retainers begin arriving several days before the duels, partaking of the hospitality of the Black Order and its insect servitors. Duelists are feted as regents; every request and desire (no matter how slight or decadent) is immediately met. Wizards are fed the finest meals, offered strange spirits and wines, and treated to whatever entertainments they desire (as best the insects can perform). In the days and hours before the death matches, any one of the duelists could be mistaken for an overlord or empress.

A wizard's retinue is far less fortunate. They are regarded as filthy animals, tolerated at best and violently punished at worst. Competing wizards have the unquestionable right to demand the punishment or death of any non-duelist for the slightest infraction (whether real or imagined), and only the word of another wizard can stay this punishment.

The death matches take place over a series of nights, high atop a pair of rocky outcroppings connected by a narrow stone bridge. At the appointed hour, the wizards are anointed with sacred oils, arrayed in rich, white robes, and proceed with their retinue along the streets of the isle to the high prominence.



Once the duelists ascend the worn steps, neither is permitted to leave until one is dead. The duels are attended by everyone on the island, and are typically solemn affairs, with each duelist's retinue donning black. Any interference by outsiders is swiftly punished by death, and all attendees are expected to aid in the capture and slaughter of offenders.

The death matches use a simplified form a spell dueling, as outlined in Appendix A (and identical to the rules used for the Gen Con tournament and published in the *Goodman Games Gen Con 2016 Program Guide*). Spells are favored, but wizards can also cross the bridge to engage in melee combat. Magic items, ranged weapons, and the use of poison are expressly prohibited and result in the immediate execution of the cheat – but only if the PCs are caught.

(Clever judges will note that these constraints can be exploited by the PCs. If they can somehow make it appear that an opposing duelist is cheating, the crowd will do the PCs' work for them.)

Following the match, the body of the loser is borne away by Dagon's masked servitors (ostensibly to be mourned and cremated, but see below). The loser's retinue is condemned to a violent end: a mob of the insect servitors cast aside their masks and hurl themselves upon the unfortunate souls, tearing them limb from limb before ravenously devouring the corpses.

The winner of the death match is borne away atop a grand palanquin at the head of a triumphal march. While the wiz-

ard's retinue is treated to overflowing horns of ale and spits of roasted meats, the triumphant wizard retires with the Black Order to a more dignified celebration as they survey fine wines and contemplate mastery of the universe.

DAGON'S SECRET

Powerful spellcasting warps both the universe *and* the caster. The organs of powerful wizards – imbued with latent arcane power – have always been sought and coveted by wicked sages and purveyors of woe.

The Black Order hosts its spell duels in order to harvest organs from powerful spellcasters. The defeated casters are borne in secret to the abattoir (area 1-3) and processed by the insect servitors. The flesh, heart's blood, and cranial fluid are rendered into the sweetmeats, pâtés, and fatty wines served to the duelists, while the more potent organs are used to sustain the Black Order's eternal youth, fuel their dread spells, and maintain their mastery over the island.

The most coveted of the organs are those of the tournament's winner: the Master of Dagon, who, following the tournament, veritably crackles with arcane energies. Led to a feast hall high atop the island, the newly crowned Master of Dagon is plied with drugged wine, placed atop the table, and slowly eaten alive. Paralyzed, yet fully awake, sorcerers live for hours as their organs are carefully removed – some to be eaten by the Order and others to be fed to the gaping black stone maw at the heart of the isle.

TIMELINE ENCOUNTERS

The mighty spell duels drive the adventure, but a great deal of action takes place in the days and hours leading up to the contests. The other wizards and their entourages do not sit passively by, waiting to meet their fate. Rather, each group does its best to ensure to that their own wizard is crowned Master of Dagon. The PCs' survival depends on them doing the same.

The following timeline summarizes events leading up to the various duels. The events are detailed in **Section 2: Timeline Encounters**. The spell duelists and their retinues are detailed in **Appendix B**.

Some encounters might easily transpire without the PCs' knowledge. However, once PCs become involved in the island's machinations, some events might have radically different outcomes or not come to pass at all. Judges should be sure to allow the PCs' actions to alter and transform the timeline, ensuring that the adventure is "alive" in the best sense.

SUMMARY OF DUELISTS AND THEIR RETINUES (SEE APPENDIX B)

Renox, the White Magister, is an aging warlock, with a slim, bony frame, a bald pate, and a gaping wound on his chest that steadily weeps blood – the result of an old corruption. Renox is served by six squat imps, each vying for the old man's soul.

Alred, the Harbinger of Fate, is a squat, bitter man, who sweats toads and salamanders from his pores, leaving a trail of tiny amphibians wherever he goes. The Harbinger is always accompanied by his salientian henchman – the Hopping Apprentice.

Kasaca the Corruptor inhabits a body broken from a lifetime spent in service of the dark arts. She is never without Jedorai, a powerfully-built warrioress, or her company of 5 female spear companions.

Illka the Fey is an elf, living in exile. She is served by a small retinue of human apprentices.

Xander the Magnificent is a barrel-chested man, with a flowing white beard that runs to his waist and a face pockmarked with corruption. He leans heavily on an ebony staff as he walks and is always accompanied by a towering clay golem.

Urzeth the Unbound exists solely as brilliant green flame, inhabiting the robes and cloak of the former mage. Urzeth is served by two faithful retainers: the demonic lamia named Amathies (most often taking the form of a strikingly lovely woman) and a scowling, broad-shouldered assassin, known as Indrigo.

TIMELINE SUMMARY (SEE SECTION 2: TIMELINE ENCOUNTERS)

Day 1

Morning & Afternoon – PCs arrive on Dagon and are led to their quarters (area 1-5). PCs that explore the isle away from their master are threatened by Illka and her retinue (encounter 2-1).

Dusk – The entire island is summoned to the Charnel Arch to witness the death match between Renox the White Magister and Kasaca the Corruptor (encounter 2-2).

Night – Indrigo the Assassin slips into the Crystalline Tower and poisons Illka the Fey (encounter 2-3).

Day 2

Afternoon – Illka's apprentices clash with Amathies and Indrigo, agents of Urzeth the Unbound. The apprentices are executed on the spot (encounter 2-4).

Dusk – The island is summoned to witness the death match between Urzeth the Unbound and Illka the Fey (encounter 2-5). Afterwards, the PCs are followed by both Adena the Wolf and the Hopping Apprentice.

Night – The Hopping Apprentice launches a midnight attack on the PCs (encounter 2-6).

Day 3

Dusk – The island is summoned to witness the death match between the PCs and Alred, the Harbinger of Fate (encounter 2-7).

Night – Adena the Wolf attempts to establish contact with the party (encounter 2-8).

Day 4

Afternoon – The spear companions of Kasaca the Corruptor clash in the streets with Amathies and Indrigo (encounter 2-9).

Dusk – The island is summoned to witness the death match between Urzeth the Unbound and Kasaca the Corruptor (encounter 2-10).

Night – Adena the Wolf attempts to flee the island (encounter 2-11).

Day 5

Predawn – Indrigo attempts to assassinate members of the PC's retinue (encounter 2-12).

Dusk – The island is summoned to witness the death match between Xander the Magnificent and the PCs (encounter 2-13).

Night – Amathies and Indrigo attempt to lure the PCs into an ambush (2-14).

Day 6

Dusk – The entire island is summoned to the Charnel Arch to witness the final death match: the bout between Urzeth the Unbound and the PC spell duelist (encounter 2-15).



ADVENTURE HOOK

The adventure begins with the PCs receiving a missive from the Order of Dagon. On a moonless evening, the party is approached by a group of five humanoid in robes and cloaks. Slender and over 6' in height, each moves with a slow, precise grace. And while each wears a white mask and presents as near-human, glimpses beneath the folds of their deep robes reveals the visitors to be tall, six-legged insects with glossy, chitinous exoskeletons and long antennae (worn folded back and hidden beneath their robes). They smell of seaweed and trail water wherever they go.

The messengers are insect servitors, agents of the Order of Dagon. The lead servitor offers the PC caster (either a wizard or an elf) a bone scroll case, capped in gold and set with precious jewels. (The scroll case, if sold to a sage or practitioner of the dark arts, fetches 250 gp or more.)

The airtight case contains a scroll inviting the champion to the Isle of Dagon to compete in a tournament of sorcerers and magicians, with the victor to be named Master of Dagon. A ship will carry the PCs to the fabled isle, at their pleasure.

INSECT SERVITORS



agents and guardians of the Black Order, the insect servitors are found throughout the island. The servitors stand over 6' in height, with slender, narrow exoskeletons composed of glossy black chitin. They possess six legs, long antennae, and unblinking, faceted eyes. At night and from a distance, the servitors might pass as human in their thick, hooded robes – though their slow, precise gate betrays an alien, inhuman quality.

On the island, there is no such pretense, though the servitors still wear white ceramic masks, formal wear (randomly gendered), and tie back their antennae. The masquerade is obvious, yet for some reason their alien, faux-human quality delights the Order of Dagon.

The servitors obey their masters without question, and with no regard for their own safety. Guardian servitors sometimes carry a pair of exotic glaives into battle, but most of the servitors encountered on the isle fight unarmed using their powerful pinchers. (Any weapons of note, and their damages, can be found in the encounter area text.)

Stats for the servitors are listed here, for reference throughout the adventure.

Insect Servitors (# varies): Init -1; Atk pincher +3 melee (1d4+3) or by weapon +3 melee or +0 missile fire; AC 15; HD 2d12; hp 15 each; MV 25'; Act 4d20; SV Fort +2, Ref -1, Will +4; AL L.

The scroll invites a single PC to compete in the tournament, but that character may, of course, bring along a retinue of aides, servants, and sycophants. The invitation is inked with arcane sigils and signs that seem to swim before the reader's eyes. While it cannot be duplicated, the invitation can be altered by a skilled thief succeeding on a DC 20 Forge Document check, allowing the thief to insert another's name in place of the wizard.

At dusk the following day, a black-sailed ship arrives for the party. Devoid of crew, the vessel sails itself, inciting terror in the locals, who beg the PCs to board their demon-ship and be gone. Characters are free to make whatever preparations they would like, prior to setting sail. Once boarded, the ship takes up its own anchor and turns its course to the heart of the ocean.

On the third day, the PCs spy the Isle of Dagon: an impossibly steep, craggy mountain, rising out of the briny depths. Strung with seaweed and stinking of the ocean floor, the island appears as if it could vanish beneath the waves at any moment. The pennants of six other sorcerers already hang above stone towers grown from the face of the isle; the legendary Tournament of Dagon is about to begin.



PLAYER START

As the PCs draw near the isle, read or paraphrase the following:

The Isle of Dagon slowly comes into sight: a looming mountain, seemingly thrust from the ocean floor. Sheer cliffs ring the isle on all sides, rising to a precipitous peak lost in mists above. Stone towers, battlements, and crenellated blockhouses cling to the craggy stone like desperate barnacles.

As the PCs sail closer, they spy six different pennants hanging above the docks – each marked with a wizard’s glyph or sign. And as their vessel arrives, a seventh pennant is hoisted into the air, matching the champion’s own sigil. Clever wizards and elves, and PCs with relevant occupations, can readily identify the casters by their glyphs; wizards and elves know that all of the spellcasters are legends in their own right, far more powerful than the PCs.

The docks swarm with strange insect-men wearing white masks and ill-fitting clothes. The mob parts for a trio of hooded figures. The trio walks to the end of the dock to await your vessel.

Insect servitors tie off the ship. As the PCs disembark, they are met by the three hooded figures – members of the Order of Dagon. The three bid the PC champion a warm welcome, ignoring the rest of the party as if they were nothing more than accessories or pets.

The PC champion is presented with a bright silver crown, a rod topped with the PC’s glyph or sign, and a single sweetmeat, served with slim fork on a silver platter. Baked from the rendered brains of former spell duelists, the sweet-tasting morsel is wrapped in a flaky crust brushed with honey. A character consuming the sweetmeat gains +1d to spell checks for 4 hours. (Similar sweetmeats, and their role in Order of Dagon’s sinister plot, are detailed in the abattoir, area 1-3.)

The other members of the party are given tabards sewn with the champion’s sign, marking them as property of the PC wizard. (While the PCs are not required to don the tabards immediately – pets can be so poorly behaved – PCs later encountered without the identifying tabards are easy targets by other spell duelists. See **Section 1: The Isle of Dagon**, below.)

Finally, the PCs are escorted by the servitor guardians to their residence: a squat, toad-like tower (area 1-5).

All about the isle, the banners for Renox, the White Magister, and Kasaca the Corruptor are raised and paraded, announcing that they are to duel the following night. The champion is bid to retire for the night, for the tournament begins upon the morrow.

SECTION 1: THE ISLE OF DAGON



he isle is like a rocky blade stabbing up out of the ocean. Ringed with craggy cliffs on all sides, the isle rises nearly a thousand feet into the misty air. The walkways, platforms, blockhouses, and towers are built from the stone cliffs, and all are hung with stinking seaweed and dripping muck, dredged up from the sea floor.

The causeways bustle with activity during the daylight hours – wizards and their entourages passing to and fro, insect servitors bent on unknowable tasks and errands, and the occasional wizard of the Black Order, accompanied by a troop of guardian servitors. The tournaments draw strange spectators from every dimension, and the judge is encouraged to seed the seething crowds with NPCs that might figure into later adventures.

At night the scenes are markedly different. Dripping fat lamps are lit, offering pools of flickering light amid the long stretches of deep shadow. All the servitors, save for the guardians, retire to their nests, and any spectators retire to their vessels, leaving the narrow causeways to the PCs and their rival wizard bands.

GENERAL FEATURES

The isle's craggy cliffs are easily scaled by thieves, with no check required unless the PC is attacked or otherwise distracted, forcing a DC 10 Climb Sheer Surfaces check.

Other classes can attempt to scale the cliffs with DC 10 Agility checks, which worsen to DC 15 if the PC is attacked. Judges should remember to apply armor penalties to these checks.

The buildings on Dagon are all constructed from rough blocks of crudely-worked stone, topped by steeply-peaked slate roofs. Thieves can climb the walls and slick roofs with DC 13 Climb checks, but other classes require DC 15 Agility checks or the aid of ropes anchored above.

Doors and windows are stoutly built to stand against the ocean storms, but not locked or barred unless otherwise noted. Doors and shutters can be burst with DC 13 Strength checks, and are destroyed after taking 15 points of damage.

WIZARDS ON DAGON

While on the island, wizards are celebrated like emperors and god-kings. Characters are right not to trust their hosts, but the performance is so complete and unflinching that even the most wary of PCs might find themselves second-guessing their suspicions.

For the duration of the tournament, each of the seven competing wizards is granted his or her own tower. Inside one's own demesne, a wizard's will is sacrosanct and absolute. Food and drink (excluding the island's arcane delicacies) are delivered without question, along with any other mundane, non-magical gear or equipment as demanded.

Throughout the adventure, the competing wizards might be offered a variety of magical sweetmeats, wines, and candies

(see areas 1-1, 1-3, 1-5 and 1-14). All provide some degree of benefit to a spellcaster, with no apparent downside.

All of these "treats" are baked, stewed, and distilled from the bodies of slain spell duelists. Following is a summary of the food and wine offered to the PCs:

- Sweetmeats: +1d to spell checks for 4 hours
- Blood wine: +1d to all saving throws for 4 hours
- Bone crackers, smeared with a liver pâté: +3HD to the PC's hit points for 1 hour

While identical effects cannot be stacked, characters can enjoy the benefits of different edibles at the same time.

Inspired judges are welcome to expand upon the offerings (and to share them with the broader DCC fan community). As a guideline, any bonuses should be temporary and fleeting, with few immediate drawbacks. The purpose of the treats is to lull the PCs into complacency and an acceptance that the Master of Dagon is a title and honor that might actually be won.

ORDER & MISRULE

The Order of Dagon maintains absolute tyranny over the isle, organized around two precepts: First, that wizards are inviolate; and secondly, that all others have no worth save that bestowed by their wizardly masters. To wit, wizards' entourages are free to assault one another in the streets, so long as they don't cross one of their masters.

Specifically:

- An assault on a wizard by a lesser (e.g., non-wizard) is immediately punishable by death.
- A wizard and his retinue may always take refuge in the wizard's tower; only the Order of Dagon may command wizards or their entourages from the tower. (The Order seldom intervenes, save when its own safety has been threatened.)
- At any time a wizard can demand the execution of any unaccompanied non-wizard. The punishment can only be stayed by the non-wizard's master. In the absence of a servant's master, the execution is carried out without question, usually within 1d10 turns.
- Disputes between wizards are settled by immediate battles between the spellcasters. (Though, more commonly, both sides back down rather than risk injury, spell loss, or corruption.)

The end result is an environment that seethes with barely-restrained violence, as opposing wizards seek to undermine their competitors by any means possible. The key is to not be caught, even as the shrinking pool of possible suspects makes any alibi less and less plausible. So long as any accusation is only the word of one wizard against another, the Order of Dagon is content to let the matter be sorted out by the inevitable spell duels.



In practice, this results in unaccompanied entourages trolling the narrow stone causeways, hunting for lone characters from rival bands. Meanwhile, wizards must decide whether or not they will risk sending their bands out alone, or go with them as protection – potentially weakening themselves prior to a death match.

Area 1-1 – The Docks: *The wooden piers jut out into the waters, emblazoned with pennants of seven wizards. Seven crewless caravels sit tied to the dock, their black sails furled.*

The docks are watched over at all times by six insect servitors armed with paired glaives (+3 melee, 1d10+3).

The magical vessels refuse to sail until the tournament is completed. However, nothing prevents the ships from being sailed by a crew of PCs with appropriate occupations. (Judges may need to remind PCs that navigating the open sea is no simple matter.) At any time, the ships' stores are loaded with 10 barrels of fresh water and 5 crates of smoked jerky packed in salt. (Closely inspected, the jerky is revealed to be strips of human flesh.)

Area 1-2 – Gatehouse: *A three-story gatehouse stands watch over the ramp that runs up the side of the island. Insect-men armed with glaives and crossbows loom from atop the crenellated parapet.*

There are 15 guardian servitors in the gatehouse at all times. The second floor houses a stout wooden portcullis that can be lowered in three rounds once an alarm is raised. The portcullis is destroyed after taking 50 points of damage, or can be lifted with a herculean Strength check (DC 20). The third level (the roof) is home to a scorched iron brazier that casts a hellish red light at night; pressed in battle, the servitors can tip the brazier over the lip of the parapet, raining blazing embers down on those below (2d24 fire damage, DC 15 Ref save for half; characters bearing shields receive +4 to their saving throw).

Each servitor is armed with a pair of glaives (+3 melee, 1d10+3) and a simple light crossbow (+0 missile fire, 1d6).

Area 1-3 – Abattoir: *The squat blockhouse has but a single low door, and a conspicuous absence of windows. A high chimney at the rear of the house gouts thick clouds of oily, black smoke. The air stinks of burnt flesh and hair.*

The abattoir is where the insect servitors harvest the bodies of slain spell duelists, distilling flesh, blood, organs, and bone into potent magic fare.

The sole entrance is barred from within, with a simple barred peephole.

A trio of guardian servitors watches over the door from inside, armed with paired glaives (+3 melee, 1d10+3). The door can be broken in with a DC 17 Strength check or destroyed from 25 points of damage.

Past the guardroom, PCs discover the slaughter hall, where seven insect servitors (cleavers and mallets: +3 melee, 1d4+3) toil day and night, cutting open corpses of slain wizards. A massive cauldron seethes atop coals, rendering fat from trimmings and bones. Skins are collected in one corner of the hall, to be reduced to gelatin. In another corner, the servitors slowly boil down a thick mixture of blood and brains.

On all sides are the rotting bodies of spellcasters, hung from meat hooks. Wizards and elves immediately recognize the iconic tattoos, brandings, and corruptions common to practitioners of the dark arts.

Grates run the length of the floor, draining into storm sewers that run down to the cliffs just below the building. Characters attempting to enter the abattoir from below must silently lift the grates from below – accomplished either with a clever plan from the PCs or, less interestingly, with a DC 20 Sneak Silently check.

The second floor is occupied by ovens and stoves, where another three servitors fashion the raw materials into a variety of pastries, candied morsels and wines. Several ovens and stoves feed a single vast chimney that rises through the slate roof.

Desperate characters can attempt passage through the chimney. The rough stones offer easy climbing (DC 10 Climb or Agility check). However, the scorching temperatures and choking smoke deal climbers 1d12 damage and 1d4 points of Stamina damage. (The Stamina damage is temporary, and regained at the rate of 1 point per day.)

At the top of the chimney is a heavy iron grate, mortared into the stone. The grate can be bent with a single DC 15 Strength check, or broken free with three rounds of work. However, characters trapped in the chimney suffer hit point and Stamina damage from the smoke for each of the three rounds.

Treasure: The abattoir is great magical cache for spellcasters. Stored on shelves on the second floor are:

- 60 sweetmeats
- 15 bottles of blood wine
- 30 bone meal crackers, smeared with a liver pâté

While identical effects cannot be stacked, characters can enjoy the benefits of different edibles at the same time.

Area 1-4 – Hive Entrance: *The low, stone building has the high, peaked roof common to the island, but a strange absence of windows or chimneys. A single tall wooden door pierces the gray facade.*

The dark, brooding blockhouses make up the majority of structures on the isle. Characters exploring these buildings discover each is a single vacuous room. The floors (and walls, when the building abuts a cliff wall) are riddled with holes bored into the rock. 2' to 3' in diameter, each hole opens into a tunnel that worms its way through the rock.

These are the homes of the insect servitors. Whether the Black Order hides the burrows behind facades for the benefit of the dueling wizards, or if the Masters of Dagon simply delight in demeaning their insect servitors by forcing them to appear human, is a question best left unasked.

Characters venturing down into the tunnels discover the hives (area 1-4a).

Area 1-4a – The Hives: *The tight, narrow tunnels wend and turn against each other at seemingly random intervals, forever diving further and further into the heart of the island.*

To plumb the tunnels is to forgo the sunlit realms and enter the world of the servitors. While they may defer to the wizards and their entourages everywhere else on the isle, here *they* are the masters.

The tunnels are 2' to 3' in diameter, forcing all but the smallest of PCs to crawl, eliminating any Agility bonus modifiers added to their AC, and limiting characters to stabbing weapons (e.g., spears, short swords, and daggers). With their multiple arms, the servitors' spear-like polearms function admirably in these tight quarters, permitting the insects to stab with both weapons from a distance. (PCs fighting with shorter weapons may even be subjected to an initial round of attacks before they can close to melee range.)

Any attempts to explore the stone tunnels result in noises that echo and resound through the hives, immediately drawing the ire of the servitors. For every 10 rounds the PCs spend in the tunnels, call for a Luck check by the explorer with the worst Luck. On a failed check, the PCs have been discovered by the insect servitors.

Once the PCs are discovered, the servitors attack from all sides, pressing from the front, back, and even attempting to bore new tunnels, allowing them to assault the party in its middle ranks. At first, this assault is small, with only 1d4+3 servitors (all armed with two glaives each: +3 melee, 1d8+3). Each round, another 1d4 appear, until the PCs are hopelessly outnumbered. Unless the PCs beat a retreat and cut their way through the ranks of insect servitors, they are surely doomed.

It is beyond the scope of this adventure to detail what lies at the heart of the isle, where all the servitor tunnels eventually end. Ambitious judges are encouraged to design their own alien dungeons, strange vaults, and forbidden gods – for whatever lurks below, powering the island and its strange inhabitants, is surely beyond the ken of mortal man.

Area 1-5 – The Lowly Tower: *The squat, circular tower stands on a far precipice overlooking the water hundreds of feet below. Narrow stone steps rise to the single great door, an ominous portal with the look of a gaping devil maw. The tower is topped by a ring of battlements set with gore-crusted spears.*

The grim, dour place must be home: your own pennant flaps in the stale, hot ocean breeze.

The lowly tower is the PCs' home for the duration of the adventure. It is the least impressive of all the wizardly towers on the isle, but what it lacks in drama it makes up for in practicality: the tower is ugly, yet defensible.

When the PCs first arrive (escorted from the docks by members of the Black Order and the chattering mob of insect servitors) they discover that the tower has been prepared for them. The champion's pennant flies from a spear atop the tower and hangs from the battlements. The Black Order presents the champion with a key to the great door, and bids the PCs welcome to their home on Dagon.

The tower is three stories high, including the roof level. The ground floor is a single chamber with a central fire pit, a rough wooden table set with stools, and simple straw pallets.

A broad wooden staircase rises to the second level, where a grand bed, elegant study, and wardrobe have been set for the champion. In the wardrobe the champion discovers white robes, stitched with the wizard's sign.

Waiting in the study is a simple silver tray with a bottle of blood red wine and a single silver goblet. A single quaff of the wine grants the imbiber +1d to all saving throws for 4 hours. The bottle allows for 4 quaffs. Resting on a silver platter are two sweetmeats and two bone crackers smeared with a liver pâté (each granting +1d to spell checks for 4 hours and +3HD to the PC's hit points for 1 hour, respectively). As always, while identical effects cannot be stacked, characters can enjoy the benefits of different edibles at the same time.

A second wooden staircase rises to a trap door that opens to the roof. A waist-high battlement runs the circumference of the roof.

The tower has three means of entrance and egress:

The Maw Door: Bound in iron and secured with a simple lock (DC 15 Pick Lock check), the door is nigh-impregnable. Bursting the door requires a DC 25 Strength check, and the door is destroyed only after suffering 50 points of damage.

Roof Trap Door: Like many of the other structures on the isle, the walls of the tower are readily scaled with a DC 10 Climb check. The roof offers access to the tower via a stout trap door. The door can be barred from below, and is destroyed after being dealt 25 points of damage.

Floor Grate: The ground floor gently slopes to an iron grate at the rear corner of the tower. Though not locked, the grate

is held in place by crusted gore and rust. (A casual inspection by a thief reveals that the rust is fake, and the gore, freshly applied. With a successful DC 10 Disable Trap check, a thief can accurately estimate that the grate was opened most recently within the last month.) The grate is readily opened, but if somehow barred, or locked, it requires a DC 25 Strength check to bend aside the stout bars.

Area 1-6 – The Demesne of Renox, the White Magister: *The square, blocky tower is composed entirely of black obsidian. A pair of wooden great doors wards the entrance, and several high windows look down from above. The tower is topped by a parapet that runs the circumference of the roof.*

When the master is away, the tower is watched over by three of Renox's imps, who alert their master at the first sign of trouble. When the Magister retires to his demesne, all six imps keep watch over their master's tower.

Sneaking about the tower without alerting the imps is no simple task. During the daytime, when their master is away, a thief must succeed on either a DC 10 Sneak Silently or Hide in Shadows check every three rounds or be discovered. At night, when all six of the imps are patrolling the tower, the DC worsens to 15.

The tower has four floors and three principle means of entrance and egress:

The Great Door: Bound in iron and secured with a complex lock (DC 25 Pick Lock check), the paired doors present daunting challenge to would-be reavers. Bursting the door requires a DC 25 Strength check, and the door is destroyed only after suffering 50 points of damage.

High Windows: The third and fourth floor sport high, narrow windows. The walls of the tower are readily scaled with a DC 10 Climb check. The windows are shuttered and barred during the night; opening a shutter from without requires an agile cat burglar to succeed on a DC 15 Pick Lock check (to slide back the bar), as well as a DC 15 Climb check (to cling to the wall while attempting to pick the shutter). Note that incautious burglars may also be spotted by the patrolling imps.

Roof Trap Door: The walls of the tower are readily scaled with a DC 10 Climb check. The roof offers access to the tower via a stout trap door. The door can be barred from below, and is destroyed after being dealt 25 points of damage.

The interior of the tower reflects the clarity of Renox's disciplined mind. The first and second floors are barren, without even a mote of dust to sully the obsidian's mirror-bright polish.

The entrance to the third floor is sealed by a stout door that can be bolted from within (DC 20 Strength check or 30 points of damage to sunder). In case of assault, Renox is quick to cast *ward portal* on the entrance.

The third floor resembles a monk's cell or study. There is a simple bed, a single chair and a table, where the Magister eats and conducts his studies, and an iron-bound strongbox.

The strongbox is locked (DC 20 Pick Lock check) and inscribed with a demonic sigil (DC 5 Find Trap and DC 25 Disable Trap checks). If any save Renox opens the strongbox, the sigil flares brightly, releasing a flaming demon:

Flame Demon: Init +4; Atk fire whip +10 melee (1d6+6 plus 1d4 against lawful creatures) or fist +10 melee (1d8+4); AC 20; HD 8d12; hp 48; MV 40' or fly 40'; Act 2d20; SP infravision 90', half damage from fire, acid, cold, electricity, gas; SV Fort +8, Ref +10, Will +8; AL C.

Inside the strongbox is Renox's grimoire containing: *enlarge, force manipulation, magic shield, read magic, runic alphabet (mortal), ward portal, ray of enfeeblement, shatter, haste, and lightning bolt*. The strongbox also holds two vials of bubbling green liquid – *potions of vitality* (each restores 1d3 points to any weakened stats except Luck); and a gleaming opal – *luck stone* (grants +3 Luck when carried, which cannot be burned).

For stats on the White Magister, see **Appendix B**.

Imp (up to 6): Init +0; Atk claw +4 melee (1d3) or bite +0 melee (1d7); AC 13; HD 3d12; hp 15 each; MV 20' or fly 35'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 100', half damage from non-magical weapons and fire, ESP with master; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +4; AL C.

Area 1-7 – The Crystalline Spire: *A brilliant spire of white crystal rises from the craggy stone, stabbing into the air like the tip of spear. A pair hooded figures stand watch before the crystalline gate.*

The spire houses Illka the Fey, an elven sorceress in exile, and her twelve apprentices. Two apprentices stand watch at all hours, and another pair waits just inside the tower, ready to come to their companions' aid. Cautious and wary by nature, Illka only leaves the tower when accompanied by the remaining eight of her apprentices.

The tower has two means of entry and egress, though only one is immediately obvious:

The Crystal Gate: The gate at the fore of the tower is composed entirely of crystal that seems to weld itself to the body of the tower. The gate will only open at the touch of Illka or one of her retainers. (A retainer need not be alive in order this to happen.)

Otherwise the gate must be battered down (100 points of damage), opened by magic (e.g., *knock* or *shatter*) or the skills of an incredibly talented thief (DC 30 Pick Lock check).

The Observatory: At the very peak of the tower is an observation widow, open to the sky. Lines of sight make it impossible to see this chamber from the ground, though flying characters will note it with ease. To reach the chamber, climbers must succeed on a total of three DC 15 Climb Sheer Surfaces checks – a task made even more difficult if the tower's guardians are still on watch. Reaching the peak of the tower, some 75' in the air, the characters discover a perfectly circular channel cut into the peak of the tower. Ten feet across, the channel descends down 30' to the heart of the spire: Illka's chambers.

Characters entering through the base of the spire discover a circular chamber set with dozens of sleeping nooks. During the day, the interior of the windowless spire is surprisingly well lit, with a soft light filtering in through translucent crystal. At night, the apprentices light small fires inside the spire, illuminating it from within like a beacon on the dark isle.

A spiral staircase rises through the heart of the crystal. The stairs are narrow, and the stone walls seem to press in, as if to crush the PCs from both side.

The stairs open into Illka's quarters, a wide chamber laden with pillows, rugs and heavy tapestries. The air is thick with incense – concealing the scent of great cats. A trio of massive tigers prowls the chamber, viciously attacking anyone that enters without Illka's blessing. At a spoken command, the tigers shrink to simple clay figurines. Only Illka knows the command word, and she is loath to share it with anyone.

The sorceress spends her days and night poring over ancient scrolls and rotting grimoires, hoping to glean an advantage in the death match. She holds conversations with the elven skull of her former master. If ever an intruder enters the chambers while the mistress is absent, the skull gives up a shout, calling for Illka's apprentices.

Illka's belongings are scattered about the chamber and lost beneath the seemingly endless sheaves of scrolls. However, a close search of the room (requiring 1d30+15 minutes) uncovers her grimoire: a beautiful tome bound in soft leather and inscribed with elven runes.

Within, the PCs discover the following spells: *comprehend languages*, *feather fall*, *flaming hands*, *magic shield*, *invoke patron*, *patron bond*, *scorching ray*, *strength*, and *turn to stone*.

For Illka the Fey's stats, see **Appendix B**.

Tigers (3): Init +2; Atk claw +5 melee (1d8+4) or bite +3 melee (2d5+3); AC 14; HD 5d8+10; hp 25 each; MV 60'; Act 2d20; SP if two claw attacks strike same target in one round rake for an additional 1d12 damage; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will -2; AL N.

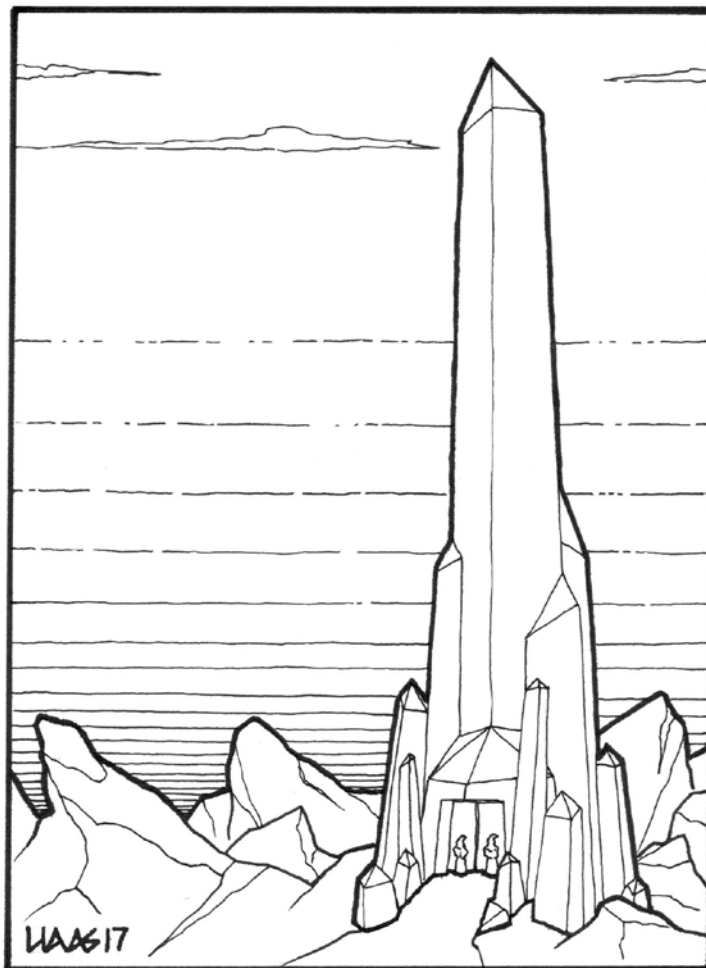
Apprentices (12): Init +1; Atk short sword +1 melee (1d7+1) or dagger +3 missile fire (1d4+1); AC 14; HD 4d6; hp 19 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP *cantrip* (1d16+1 spell check); SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +4; AL C.

Area 1-8 – Turret of the Corruptor: *The tower resembles a blackened claw, driven up through the heart of the island. Rising 70' or more, the jagged edifice stabs at the sky.*

The ominous curved tower is the demesne of Kasaca the Corruptor, a heartless sorceress desperate for the secrets of immortality. Kasaca is attended by Jedorai, a towering warrior, and five shield companions. Each of the band would willingly die for their mistress.

Kasaca seldom leaves her tower, save to attend the death matches. If there are missives to be delivered or furtive meetings to be held, she sends Jedorai and up to two of the shield companions. Kasaca is especially wary when Jedorai is absent, and refuses to let her guard down until the amazon returns.

The curling tower is largely hollow. Despite its height, there



are but two floors: the ground floor, where the shield companions make their home; and the top floor, where Kasaca lairs. In between, a stone stairs wends its way up along the inside walls of the claw, rising nearly 50' before arriving at a stone door.

There are two principle means of entering the tower:

The Iron Gate: The ground floor entrance to the tower is a wooden door, set before an iron gate. The door is barred from the inside any time that Kasaca is present. The door is readily burst with a DC 15 Strength check, or after suffering 25 points of damage.

Behind the door is a short 5' passage ending at an iron gate. The gate's stout bars are set far enough apart to allow two shield companions at once to defend against attackers.

The iron gate is locked (DC 15 Pick Lock check) and can suffer 50 points of damage before it is sundered. A herculean Strength check of DC 30 or better allows a PC to wrench the gate from its bolts.

Stair Windows: While there are no windows on the "second" floor, at the peak of the tower, there are several slim windows set into the walls of the tower, opposite the stone stairs. Climbing the tower walls is a simple task for skilled rogues (DC 15 Climb Sheer Surfaces check) but leaping across the gap – from the windowsill to the stairs – risks a fall of 30' or more. Characters attempting the leap must succeed on a DC 15 Agility check, or plummet to the tower's



base.

As noted, the first floor is home to the shield companions. When not escorting their mistress to and from the death matches, the women spend their hours sharpening their spears and polishing their armor. Amid the austere cloth mats there are 10 long spears and 40 javelins.

The stairs rise from the floor some 50' to the tower's peak. The entrance to Kasaca's chamber is secured by a large copper door, hammered into the likeness of a raging storm lord. The door has three locks – two false and one real. Attempting to pick a wrong lock triggers a blast of lightning, striking the would-be thief for 3d6 damage and hurling the thief off the steps for 5d6 falling damage. The blast can be avoided with a DC 15 Ref save, or disabled altogether with DC 20 Find/Disable Trap checks. (Each trapped, false lock must be discovered and disabled independently.)

The single true lock is not trapped, but requires a DC 20 Pick Lock check to open. Exceptionally astute rogues may note that only one of the keyholes is scratched from regular use, while the other two remain largely untouched. (It should be left to players to think of this solution.)

Kasaca's chamber is lit by a large oil brazier that casts flickering shadows throughout. The chamber is dominated by a large desk with dozens of tomes, scrolls and tablets. The Corruptor's grimoire is bound in metal and secured with a lock (DC 15 Pick Lock check). The cover is also trapped with an arcane sigil so that if the grimoire is ever opened by anyone other than Kasaca, Jedorai is immediately summoned to the location, directly behind the thief. If the warriorress succeeds on winning initiative, her first strike is a critical hit. The sigil can be noted and disarmed with DC 22 Find/Disable Trap checks.

The grimoire contains the following spells: *animal summoning*, *chill touch*, *enlarge*, *invoke patron*, *patron bond*, *sleep*, *invisible companion*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *lightning bolt*, and *slow*.

The stats for Kasaca the Corruptor are found in Appendix B.

Jedorai: Init +3; Atk long spear +4 melee (1d10+4) or javelin +4 missile fire (1d6+4); AC 15; HD 6d12; hp 66; MV 35'; Act 2d20; SP detect lie; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +3; AL C.

Spear Companions (5): Init +1; Atk spear +2 melee (1d6+2); AC 13; HD 3d12; hp 30 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +1; AL C.

Area 1-9 – The Far Tower: Set atop a rocky spur, the solitary tower stands apart from the rest of the isle's buildings. Capped with a high, peaked roof above a balcony, the ominous tower watches broodingly over the isle.

Xander the Magnificent resides in the brooding tower. However, the character of Xander is only a ruse kept up by Adena the Wolf – a female thief of great infamy. Adena had hoped to survive the tournament long enough to heist the fabled gemstones in area 1-14, not realizing the secrets the isle had in store.

With no magic at her disposal, the thief relies on extensive traps to deter intruders. Target numbers for detecting and removing the traps are listed in the descriptions, but as always judges should allow PCs to avoid or bypass the traps with creative and thoughtful actions.

There is only one way to assault the tower:

The Green Door: The heavy metal door is always locked (DC 15 Pick Lock check, or 75 points of damage to destroy). If the door is opened before the trap is disarmed (DC 15 Find Trap and DC 10 Disable Trap checks), a trio of crossbow bolts fire from within the tower (3d6 damage plus poison: DC 15 Fort save or +3d7 damage).

The heavy door opens into a single chamber, occupied by a fire pit and an unused straw pallet. When Adena is in the tower, her golem is stationed against the wall beside the entrance, attacking any incautious PCs that burst into the chamber.

A spiral staircase wends its way up the center of the tower to the second floor, some 30' above. The banister is coated with contact poison; the oily gel is immediately noticed by anyone examining the stairs for traps. Characters failing to note the oily gel before climbing the stairs must make DC 15 Fort saves or suffer 2d12 damage.

If Adena is present, she lurks at the top of the stairs, backstabbing the first PCs to gain the second floor. If the attack is successful, it also drives the target back down the stairs. The target – and any other PCs caught in the confusion on the stairs – must make DC 15 Ref saves or accidentally catch hold of the railing (poisoning themselves once more).

The second floor is occupied by a bed, a simple desk, a large iron coffer and two backpacks.

The coffer is locked (DC 20 Pick Lock check) and trapped (DC 15 Find/Disable Trap checks) so that any failed attempt

to pick the lock releases a blue cloud of sleeping gas (DC 15 Will save or sleep for 1d5 hours). Any failed attempt to disable the trap also triggers the gas. The volume of gas is sufficient to target every character on the second floor.

Inside the coffer is a collection of aged scrolls inked on a variety of tanned skins, cracking vellum, and stained parchment. Desperate to escape the isle before she is called to a death match, Adena will eagerly offer the scrolls in exchange for the party's aid. (Time permitting, her larcenous heart longs for one chance at stealing the jewels before she and her new companions flee the isle...)

The coffer contains scrolls scribed with the following spells: *cantrip*, *feather fall*, *flaming hands*, *magic shield*, *demon summoning*, *dispel magic*, and *lightning bolt*.

The first backpack contains Adena's thieving gear: a 50' rope, grappling hook, thieves' tools, charcoal, weapon black, three candles, flint and steel, a small steel mirror, a small clay jar of lard, and 2 large canvas sacks.

Adena takes the second backpack if she's in a rush to escape the isle. It holds a bag of caltrops, a vial of sleeping gas (as the coffer trap, above), a bandolier of 6 throwing daggers, a roll of bandages, a pouch containing 250 gp in various coins, a hooded cloak, nun's robes and habit, a wineskin (poisoned, Fort save DC 20 or unconscious and 1d12 points of Stamina damage), and a one week's worth of rations.

Adena the Wolf: Init +1; Atk short sword +3 melee (1d6) or dagger +3 missile fire (1d4); AC 11; HD 5d6; hp 22; MV 30'; Act 1d20+1d14; SP burn Luck (d7, 13 points), Backstab +9, Sneak Silently +10, Hide in Shadows +9, Pick Pocket +5, Climb Sheer Surfaces +9, Pick Lock +9, Find Trap +7, Disable Trap +5, Forge Document +4, Disguise Self +8, Read Languages +2, Handle Poison +9, Cast Spell from Scroll (d14-1); SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +0; AL C.

The Golem: Init +0; Atk fist +3 melee (1d10+5); AC 15; HD 4d12; hp 45; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +4, Ref -2, Will Immune; AL L.

Area 1-10 – The House of Earth and Mud: *A small blockhouse, identical to so many on this forsaken island, is set back against the cliff wall. The stink of rotting seaweed is overwhelming, and a steady ooze of mud seeps through the lower blocks.*

A mere one story in height, the blockhouse is inhabited by Alred, the self-declared Harbinger of Fate, and his squat, hopping apprentice-familiar. A swollen wooden door guards the entrance, and is readily torn open (DC 10 Strength check or 1d3 rounds of effort). There are no windows or chimney. Altogether the blockhouse seems a poor demesne for a powerful spellcaster capable of warping worlds.

The hovel's muddy floor is thick with toads and salamanders, all having wriggled free of Alred's body. The walls and ceiling are covered with much larger adults. Dead-eyed toads and salamanders watch the PCs from every side.

It is impossible, save for only the most powerful magicians or cunning of thieves, to enter the blockhouse without alerting the swarm of amphibians. Characters under the protec-

tion of Alred are welcome, but all others are swarmed, borne down into the muck and mud by the weight of the Harbinger's spawn.

Alred seldom leaves the safety of the blockhouse. When he does, it is usually only to witness the death matches. Wherever he goes he is followed by his Hopping Apprentice and a parade of devoted amphibians.

The wizard's spells are recorded in the spots and colorings on hundreds of toads and salamanders that align themselves at their master's command, permitting him to study his spells. If the PCs somehow learn to command the swarm, they can discern the following spells: *chill touch*, *choking cloud*, *comprehend languages*, *feather fall*, *invoke patron*, *patron bond*, *phantasm*, *strength*, *lightning bolt*, and *turn to stone*.

The Harbinger's sole humanoid companion is the Hopping Apprentice, a short, human-like thing with a broad-mouth and wide-set, bulbous eyes. If the apprentice scores a critical hit in combat, his mouth stretches wide, his body swells, and he swallows the target whole. Swallowed characters suffer 1d4 damage per round. Characters can cut themselves free by dealing the apprentice 10+ hit points of damage, but the close confines of the apprentice's belly allow only the use of daggers or knives.

Hidden in the muck are two relics, precious to Alred: a toad and a salamander, cast in gold and set with gemstones. Each is worth 1,500 gp to devotees of the salientian faiths.

The stats for Alred, the Harbinger of Fate are found in **Appendix B**.

Combat with the Amphibian Swarm: There are hundreds of toads and salamanders in the hovel. If characters enter without invitation, or if their master is threatened, the amphibians swarm together, attacking the characters from all sides and covering the PCs in a matter of moments.

Each round of combat, make a single attack roll against each PC within the chamber—for every point equal to or above the PC's AC, the toads and salamanders inflict 1d4 damage.

Further, each round the PC must make a DC 12 Strength check or be borne down to the ground by the weight of the amphibians, suffering -2 to the character's AC and -1d to all action dice. A character can struggle back to his feet with a DC 15 Strength check, or be hauled to his feet by an ally accomplishing the same.

Hopping Apprentice/Familiar: Init +1; Atk dagger +6 melee (1d4+4); AC 13; HD 5d12; hp 35; MV 25' or swim 35'; Act 1d20; SP HD burn for master, swallow target on critical hit; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +0; AL C.

Amphibian Swarm (100+): Init +3; Atk bite +5 (see above); AC 10; HD 1d4; hp 2 each; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +0; AL N.

Area 1-11 – Demesne of Urzeth the Unbound: *The octagonal tower is five stories in height, and topped with an overhanging bretasche and a steep, sloping roof. A narrow stone bridge spans the gap between the tower and the cliff edge, rising to the*

entrance arch.

Urzeth and his retainers lair within the high tower, occupying only the top floor. Having shed his mortal coil, Urzeth never sleeps. Nor does his shape-changing lamia lover, complicating PCs' efforts to infiltrate the tower.

There are two means of entering and exiting the tower:

Stone Bridge: The stone bridge narrows to a mere 5' in width at its peak, and runs from the precipice to the tower gatehouse. There are no handrails or guards on the stone span; PCs falling from the bridge plummet 500' to the rocky shore below.

The entrance to the tower is through a vaulted arch, guarded by a heavy stone portcullis. Just above the arch is a leering goat-demon, carved in stone. Urzeth has enchanted the carving with *magic mouth*, so that if anyone other than he or his retainers pass through the archway, the mouth shrieks violently, alerting all within.

The portcullis can be raised with a DC 20 Strength check; up to two additional companions can add their Strength bonuses to the PC making the check. The stout iron bars also rise at a command from Urzeth – a weakness that can be exploited by PCs able to magically mimic the sorcerer's voice.

Tower Windows: The highest floor of the tower is pierced on each side by tall, narrow windows. A scant 6" in width, the windows offer little opportunity for typical thieves. Thus they are neither shuttered nor warded, and believed to be all but impassable.

But PCs are anything but typical. If characters have the ability to reduce themselves in size, entrance into the tower is easily accomplished. Whether large or small, PCs scaling the walls of the tower must succeed on three DC 15 Climb Sheer Surfaces checks.

The first four floors of the tower are empty, save for stone staircases rising to the next level. The stairs leading to the fifth and final floor are blocked by an iron-bound door, once again warded by a *magic mouth* that screams at the sight of intruders.

When Urzeth is in residence, this upper door is always barred from within. The door can be burst with a DC 20 Strength check or battered down after being dealt 35 points of damage.

The fifth and final floor is home to Urzeth and his retainers.

In the chamber is a single sleeping mat, belonging to Indrigo, Urzeth's faithful assassin. The assassin keeps a backpack near his bed, holding three vials of poison (see stats below), an oiled cloak, one week's rations, three flasks of oil, flint and steel, a waterskin, and a pouch containing 50 gp in a variety of coins. Sewn into the fabric of the cloak are five small diamonds, each worth 100 gp.

Urzeth's belongings consist of a simple bookstand and his massive, black grimoire. Nearly three feet on a side, the tome contains the following spells: *animal summoning*, *color spray*, *flaming hands*, *magic missile*, *magic shield*, *levitation*, *mag-*

ic mouth, *phantasm*, *dispel magic*, *fly*, and *lightning bolt*.

For her part, the shape-changing Amathies has no possessions, preferring to materialize whatever clothes and gear best suits her form.

Defending the Tower: If alerted to intruders, Indrigo poisons his blades and then slips down to the fourth floor, where he hides in the shadows. The assassin waits for the PCs to advance up the stairs and trigger the *magic mouth*; with the PCs distracted and his movements covered by the wailing mouth, Indrigo backstabs the last PC in the marching order.

Characters struck by the assassin's short sword or dagger must succeed on a DC 20 Fort save or take an additional 1d12 damage. The Fort save DC is reduced by -5 with each attack, as the green poisonous paste is slowly wiped away in the furious dueling (whether the blows strike home or not). After four attempted strikes, Indrigo's blades lose all ability to poison his foes.

As the door is breached, Amathies reverts to her snake-woman form, lashing out with claws and a poisonous bite. Characters bitten by the lamia must succeed on DC 15 Will saves or suffer -1d to their actions for the next hour. Characters reduced to 1d5 action die or lower fall into a coma, and can only be revived by the command (or death) of the lamia.

Urzeth casts spells as he is able, but does his utmost to avoid combat. If it appears that the PCs might force their way into his chambers, the sorcerer *polymorphs* himself into a black bird and flies out through one of the narrow windows.

The stats for Urzeth the Unbound can be found in **Appendix B**.

Amathies: Init +4; Atk claw +6 melee (1d6+6) or bite +4 melee (1d5 plus poison); AC 20; HD 6d12; hp 36 MV 35' or slither 40'; Act 2d20; SP poisonous bite, *detect good* (+8 spell check), half damage from non-magical weapons, fire and lightning; SV Fort +5, Ref +8, Will +8; AL L.

Indrigo, Assassin: Init +1; Atk short sword +3 melee (1d6+1) or dagger +3 melee or missile fire (1d4+1); AC 14; HD 4d6; hp 19; MV 30'; Act 1d20 and 1d16 (off-hand weapon); SP poison, burn Luck (d6, 9 points), Backstab + 8, Sneak Silently +7, Hide in Shadows +6, Climb Sheer Surfaces +6, Find Trap +7, Disable Trap +2; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +4; AL L.

Area 1-12 – The Sea Wall: The steep cliff wraps around the back of the island. Untouched by hammer or chisel, the raw stone rises several hundred feet from crashing waves, to the peak of the island.

The backside of the island remains undeveloped. Sheer cliffs rise from sea to sky, punctuated only by the occasional crag and hung with dripping seaweed. Characters seeking to traverse the cliffs are in for a climb.

Crossing the sea wall requires five DC 10 Climb or Agility checks. If PCs are caught in combat, or otherwise distracted, the checks worsen to DC 15 and must be made each round the characters strive to cling to the rock wall.

The cliff walls are pierced by occasional caves. No more than 3' in diameter, and burrowing down into the heart of the isle,



these are all lead to hives of the insect servitors (area 1-4a). Characters mistakenly angering the servitors find themselves attacked from all sides, as tides of giant insects crawl free from the seawall and proceed to hurl the PCs to their doom.

Area 1-13 – The Charnel Arch: *The black arch climbs a hundred feet into the air, rising to a pair of high platforms. Composed of glossy black stone, formed in irregular lumps, the arch radiates a thin, oily miasma that befouls the air.*

As the PCs draw nearer the arch, they realize that what were mistook for steps are the charred bodies of slain duelists, fused to the stone.

The foul, wafting mist that floats around the arch reeks of burnt flesh. The oily cloud settles on anyone ascending the arches, limning duelists with ongoing spells or magic items in blue flames. Bonuses granted by the island's arcane wine and edibles are immune to this effect.

During duels, characters have but three rounds to divest themselves of magic before they are set upon by the crowd. At all other times, the effect still takes place, but the island's inhabitants take no heed of magic-bearing PCs. The blue flames deal no damage (apart from alerting foes to the PCs' magic) and fade after 1d3 hours. (PC use of halfling Luck does not attract the blue flames, though other casters may notice and take steps to eliminate the outside influence.)

The arch rises 300', assuring the death of anyone that falls from the high perch. At its narrowest, the arch is a mere 5' in width – a span composed entirely of carbonized bodies.

When a death match isn't taking place, the arch is largely abandoned. Insect servitors pass to and fro on their errands, but pay the PCs little heed. Characters attempting to scale the arch (to secrete magic items, poisons, weapons, or the like) can do so with minimal effort (DC 10 Hide in Shadows check or DC 13 Luck check for non-thieves). The DCs for this

task increase by +7 if the PCs are being shadowed by agents of other spellcasters.

This inattention undergoes dramatic changes when a duel is taking place. See **Appendix A** for details on the Charnel Arch during death matches.

Area 1-14 – Demesne of Dagon: *The seemingly endless steps come to an end, rising into a circular chamber that stands open to the sky. A large, circular table dominates the chamber. Carved from obsidian and surrounded by thrones, the table is polished to a brilliant gleam. At the very center of the table is a black pit that pitches down into the heart of the isle.*

The secret masters use the chamber to watch the death matches and to celebrate the victors. After each match, the survivor is borne to the feasting hall atop a grand palanquin for an audience with the six masters of Dagon. All other characters are turned away by a pair of towering insect champions – monstrosity larger versions of the smaller servitors.

The caster enters to find six hooded sorcerers seated around the table, and one empty throne. The masters congratulate the PC on his or her triumph, and offer the caster a thick, white wine in a goblet carved from the skull of an elf. The wine restores all the PC's hit points, grants an additional 1d5 hp, and restores a previously-burned stat by 1d5 points (randomly select from any stats that the caster has burned; the stat cannot be improved beyond the PC's original score). The hit point bonus is permanent. The sorcerers bid the PC good luck in the future duels with their hopes that the character survives to join their circle. Then the PC is carried back to the lowly tower (area 1-5), atop a palanquin borne by the insect servitors.

If the PC wins the final spell duel, the scene changes:

As before, six secret masters sit around the table, with a single empty throne. The masters beckon for the character to

sit, offering yet another glass of the fortifying wine. However, this time, the wine is poisoned.

If the PC partakes, the character must attempt a DC 10 Fort save or be paralyzed. The character must make this saving throw each round, until either divinely healed (with a 21+ check result), or 10 rounds have passed. If the PC fails the saving throw during the 10 rounds, the character is paralyzed for the next 1d4 hours. See **Captive of the Masters**, below, for the character's grisly end.

If the PC refuses, the masters command the insect champions to seize the PC. If both champions succeed on an attack in the same round, the character is caught and held by the pair. Then the sorcerers rise as one, surround the character and force the PC to drink. The champions keep their hold of the PC until the paralysis sets in. If, by some feat, the character resists, he can break free of a champion's grip with a DC 20 Strength check.

Captive of the Masters: The insect champions place the paralyzed character atop the obsidian table. The masters carefully cut the PC open and then take turns hungrily devouring the character's magic-infused organs. The masters are experts at their craft – the PC lives to experience much of the feast.

Once the character finally expires, his potent heart and brain are carefully removed, and offered up in solemn prayer to the island. The quivering heart is cast down into the pit at the center of the table, while the brain is carefully divided into equal portions and shared by the masters.

Outside of Spell Duels: The masters are only present on the isle during the spell duels, materializing in the chamber a short while before a death match, and staying only long enough to fete the victor (or dine on him, if it is the final death match).

Combat & Escape from Dagon: Threatened, the masters summon all the insect servitors on the island to their aid. The servitors begin to arrive at a rate of 1d3-2 per round; increase the die size by +1d for each round that passes after the alarm is raised and stop rolling for new servitors after reaching d20-2.

Example: On the second round 1d4-2 servitors arrive. On the third round 1d5-2 arrive. On the fourth round 1d6-2 appear and so on until a mob of 1d20-2 servitors arrives, marking the last of the swarm.

The servitors attempt to overwhelm the PCs with sheer numbers. If they succeed in bearing a character to the ground, the servitors carry the poor soul to the pit at the center of the chamber and hurl the character to his doom. Characters flung into the pit have one chance seize the lip (DC 15 Ref save); those that fail plummet to the heart of the isle.

The masters are fearsome in aspect, but are concerned most for their own survival. If one of the six masters falls in battle, the morale of the group falters and breaks. The masters need three rounds of uninterrupted casting to *teleport* free of the island. They do their best to flee pursuers, breaking free of

the mob to hide among the buildings on the isle. Desperate masters hide just long enough to catch their breath and then *teleport* away.

When the masters' morale breaks, it shatters their hold over the insect servitors. One by one the servitors break from combat and return to their hives.

Simultaneously, the island begins to sink precipitously beneath the waves. Black-sailed ships are dragged into the inky waters, and debris and flotsam rise to the surface as the island vanishes over the course of 1d5+2 rounds. Characters succeeding on a Luck check are able to pull themselves and nearby allies atop floating debris. A character succeeding on the Luck check by 5 or more discovers a single black-sailed ship that survived destruction. Deprived of its original masters, the ship now obeys a command of a wizard or elf succeeding on a DC 20 spell check. (In extremis, the PCs may sail the ship as a normal vessel.)

Treasure: The seven thrones are each set with precious metal and jewels, but the focal point of each throne is a single fist-sized jewel. Cut with hundreds of facets, the stones are among the most valuable jewels in the Known World, each fetching 1d7×1,000 gp. Of course, only the wealthiest of regents can afford such an extravagance; most rulers would simply opt for seizing the stones from PCs, rather than buying them.

Each of the secret masters carries a small bit of treasure on his or her person. Those looting the body of a slain master discover 1d5 gems worth 100 gp each, a long dagger with a wavy blade (1d5), and an iron *crown of Dagon*.

Donning the crown immediately turns the character's alignment to Chaos and grants the character +1d5 to both Int and Luck. Forbidden secrets flood the PC's mind and he instantly apprehends 1d3+1 randomly determined spells. The PC must make a spell check for each, as if attempting to cast the spell; if successful, the PC is able to record the spell in his grimoire. If not, the spell is lost.

The blessings of Dagon come at a great price. Any patron relationship is immediately stricken from the celestial record, costing the PC any patron spells. So long as the character is in possession of the crown, the character cannot bond to any patron. Similarly, the PC is reviled by gods, and any attempts to divinely heal the character suffer a -2HD penalty.

Finally, if the PC ever loses possession of the crown, he immediately loses one level and enough XP to place him at the bottom of his new level.

Secret Masters (6): Init +0; Atk long dagger +3 melee (1d5) or *black bolt* (DC 15 Ref save or 2d8 damage); AC 12; HD 7d4; hp 20 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP *black bolt*, spellcasting (+8 spell check: *chill touch*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *darkness*), command servitors, *teleport*; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +10; AL C.

Insect Champions (2): Init -2; Atk pincher +5 melee (1d6+5) or glaive +5 melee (1d12+5); AC 15; HD 4d12; hp 48 each; MV 30'; Act 4d20; SV Fort +2, Ref -1, Will +4; AL L.

SECTION 2: TIMELINE ENCOUNTERS



Following are details of the encounters that transpire as the various sorcerers and wizards vie for advantage outside of the death matches. The smallest edge can make the difference between death and victory, and PCs that fail to take the initiative to seize every advantage may be doomed to an inglorious death atop the Charnel Arch.

The encounters are presented as if without PC intervention. Some encounters, especially those transpiring early in the timeline, may take place without the PCs' knowledge. Judges should make changes to the events based upon the PCs' actions. Indeed, some events might be averted all together.

TIMELINE ENCOUNTERS

2-1 – Day 1, Morning & Afternoon: If PCs venture beyond the confines of their tower (unaccompanied by the PC spell duelist), they are confronted in the street by a band of apprentices sent by Illka the Fey. The apprentices taunt and insult the PCs, trying to goad the party into a fight. The band has little stomach for an actual battle; after two or more of their number fall, the band withdraws, hurling insults.

Apprentices (8): Init +1; Atk short sword +1 melee (1d7+1) or dagger +3 missile fire (1d4+1); AC 14; HD 4d6; hp 19 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP *cantrip* (1d16+1 spell check); SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +4; AL C.

2-2 – Day 1, Dusk: A great gong is sounded, summoning all on the island to the Charnel Arch (area 1-13) to witness the spell duel between Renox, the White Magister, and Kasaca the Corruptor. Both attempt *lightning bolt*, leaving Kasaca wounded. She wins initiative the following round and casts *sleep*, for which Renox has no counter. Renox fails his save and slips from the arch, plummeting to his death. His body is borne away while the mob falls upon his imps, tearing them apart before devouring their demonic flesh.

Kasaca is raised atop a grand palanquin and carried to the peak of the island (area 1-14) to be feted by the secret masters.

Following the match, banners are raised announcing the next death match: Urzeth the Unbound versus Illka the Fey.

Alert PCs note that Xander the Magnificent watches the party with great interest throughout the death match.

2-3 – Day 1, Night: In the dead of the night, Indrigo the Assassin slips into the Crystalline Tower and poisons all the food and drink with finely ground iron dust and shavings. The following day, Illka the Fey suffers -1d to all her actions. Illka's patron reveals the source of the tampering, but Indrigo has long since vanished.

2-4 – Day 2, Afternoon: Illka's apprentices assault Amathies and Indrigo in the street, not knowing Urzeth the Unbound is nearby. The sorcerer emerges, and demands the death of the underlings that would assault his retinue. With Illka the Fey nowhere to be found, the apprentices are executed on the spot.

2-5 – Day 2, Dusk: The island is summoned together to witness the death match between Urzeth the Unbound and Illka the Fey. Poisoned and bereft of her retinue, Illka appears alone and is pale and wan, seemingly on the verge of death. Urzeth casts *lightning bolt*, which Illka attempts to counter with *scorching ray*. She fails her spell check and dies in flash of light and rolling thunder, her charred corpse fused to the Charnel Arch.

Urzeth the Unbound is cheered by the roaring audience and carried atop a palanquin to area 1-14. Banners are raised, announcing the next death match: Alred, the Harbinger of Fate versus the PCs.

Following the death match the PCs are shadowed by two different parties: both the Hopping Apprentice and Adena the Wolf (having shed her disguise as Xander the Magnificent).

2-6 – Day 2, Night: Late in the night, the Hopping Apprentice creeps near the PCs' tower and hurls a vial that explodes in a cloud of poisonous fumes. The oily miasma seeps in past windows and doors, saturating the PCs' tower and targeting all within a 100' radius. For 2d4+4 rounds, targets in the cloud suffer a -4 penalty to all rolls (attacks, damage, skills, and saves), take 1d4 points of damage each round, and must make a DC 20 Fort save when first exposed or be poisoned (-2d4 Stamina, duration 1 day).

The apprentice lingers in the darkness, hoping to attack weakened PCs as they struggle free of the cloud.

(Characters that had been sleeping will be bereft of armor – and possibly weaponless, unless their players declare otherwise.)

Two rounds after battle is joined, Adena emerges from the shadows, attacking the apprentice. Faced with worsening odds and an unknown foe, the apprentice retreats from the battlefield. As the island awakens to the furor, Adena withdraws, vanishing into the night.

Unless the PCs capture the Hopping Apprentice, they cannot demand his punishment. The Hopping Apprentice stays close to his master the following day, stymieing efforts to hold him to account.

Hopping Apprentice/Familiar: Init +1; Atk dagger +6 melee (1d4+4); AC 13; HD 5d12; hp 35; MV 25' or swim 35'; Act 1d20; SP HD burn for master, swallow target on critical hit; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +0; AL C.

2-7 – Day 3, Dusk: The great gong is sounded and the entire island is summoned to witness the death match between the PCs and Alred, the Harbinger of Fate.

If the PCs triumph, the duelist is carried atop a grand palanquin to be toasted by the secret masters (area 1-14).

Following the match, banners are raised, announcing the next death match: Urzeth the Unbound versus Kasaca the Corruptor.

DAGON

I-11



I-10



I-9

I-13

I-14

I-12

BACK

I-7

I-18







2-8 – Day 3, Night: Adena the Wolf sheds her disguise and attempts to establish contact with the party. She is desperate to escape the island and seeks the PCs' aid. If pressed, she reveals her plot to steal gems from the thrones in area 1-14.

2-9 – Day 4, Afternoon: The spear companions of Kasaca the Corruptor clash with Amathies and Indrigo. The spear companions fare poorly. Kasaca steps from the shadows to demand the deaths of Amathies and Indrigo, but judgment is stayed by the arrival of Urzeth the Unbound.

2-10 – Day 4, Dusk: The island is summoned to witness the death match between Urzeth the Unbound and Kasaca the Corruptor. Kasaca wins initiative and leads with *sleep*, which Urzeth successfully counters with *dispel magic*. Kasaca wins initiative again and casts *ray of enfeeblement*, which Urzeth partially overwhelms with *lightning bolt*, wounding Kasaca. Urzeth wins initiative on the third round and casts *magic missile*. Kasaca attempts *ray of enfeeblement* as a counter, but fails her spell check and is laid low by the rain of missiles.

The crowd of insect servitors swarms Kasaca's retinue, devouring them. Urzeth the Unbound is borne to the demesne of Dagon to be feted by the secret masters and banners are raised, announcing the next death match: Xander the Magnificent versus the PCs.

2-11 – Day 4, Night: With or without the PCs' aide, Adena the Wolf attempts to flee the island. She slips down to the docks and cuts free one of the black-sailed ships. An alarm is raised as the ship drifts away and Adena struggles to raise the sail. Insect servitors swarm to the docks and a single secret master emerges at their head.

At a gesture from the master, the ship returns to the dock. Adena is mobbed by the servitors, bound and carried away to their hives.

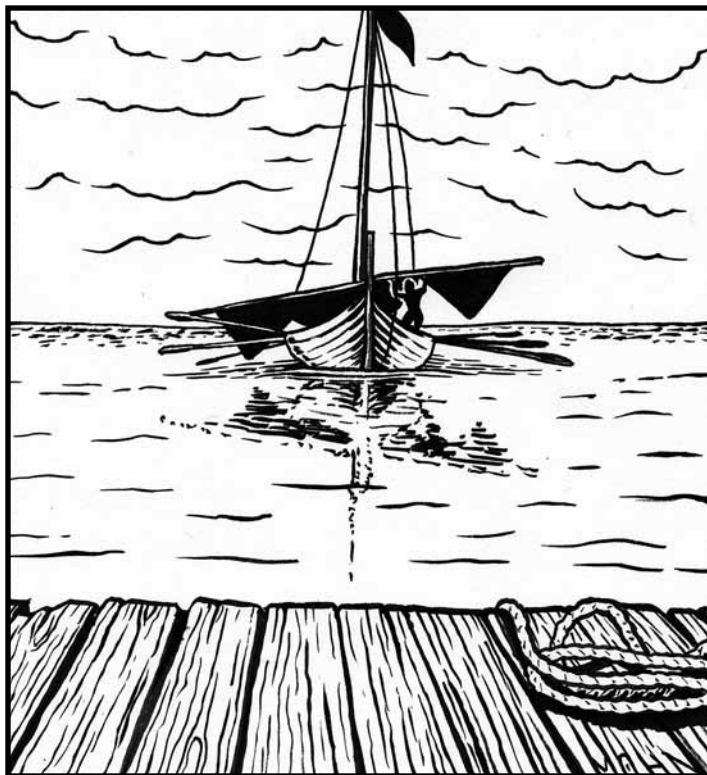
2-12 – Day 5, Predawn: Indrigo observes the PCs' tower, watching for any lone sentries or characters leaving the tower. If successful in assassinating one character, he bides his time and attacks another, slowly working his way through the party.

If Indrigo is rebuffed, he retreats back to his master, reporting on the PCs' strengths.

Indrigo, Manservant Assassin: Init +1; Atk short sword +3 melee (1d6+1) or dagger +3 melee or missile fire (1d4+1); AC 14; HD 4d6; hp 19; MV 30'; Act 1d20 and 1d16 (off-hand weapon); SP poison, burn Luck (d6, 9 points) Backstab + 8, Sneak Silently +7, Hide in Shadows +6, Climb Sheer Surfaces +6, Find Trap +7, Disable Trap +2; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +4; AL L.

2-13 – Day 5, Dusk: The island is summoned to witness the death match between Xander the Magnificent and the PC. Adena the Wolf is brought forth from the hives and marched in shame to the Charnel Arch.

Desperate, terrified, and with no magic at her disposal, Adena charges the PC duelist, hoping to kill the character in melee. It takes her three rounds to reach the PC, during which time the PC can launch spells, unobstructed.



At the (likely) conclusion of the match, the PC duelist is placed atop a palanquin and borne to area 1-14 to be toasted by the secret masters.

Following the match, banners are raised, announcing the final death match: Urzeth the Unbound versus the PCs.

2-14 – Day 5, Night: A raging storm consumes the isle with driving rain as brilliant lightning strikes blaze across up the sky. Amathies assumes the form of Adena the Wolf and stands mournfully in the rain, calling to the PC duelist. In wailing cries over the crash of thunder, she claims to know the secret of the isle – if only the duelist will follow her on one last adventure.

In the form of Adena, she leads the caster (or any others that might follow) towards the docks where she and Indrigo ambush the PCs. The pair fight to the death, doing their best to take any of the PCs with them.

Amathies: Init +4; Atk claw +6 melee (1d6+6) or bite +4 melee (1d5 plus poison); AC 20; HD 6d12; hp 36; MV 35' or slither 40'; Act 2d20; SP poisonous bite, *detect good* (+8 spell check), half damage from non-magical weapons, fire and lightning; SV Fort +5, Ref +8, Will +8; AL L.

Indrigo, Manservant Assassin: Init +1; Atk short sword +3 melee (1d6+1) or dagger +3 melee or missile fire (1d4+1); AC 14; HD 4d6; hp 19; MV 30'; Act 1d20 and 1d16 (off-hand weapon); SP poison, burn Luck (d6, 9 points), Backstab + 8, Sneak Silently +7, Hide in Shadows +6, Climb Sheer Surfaces +6, Find Trap +7, Disable Trap +2; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +4; AL L.

2-15 – Day 6, Dusk: The entire island is summoned to the Charnel Arch to witness the final death match: the bout between Urzeth the Unbound and the PC spell duelist.

APPENDIX A: THE DEATH MATCHES



he spell duels are held atop the Charnel Arch (area 1-13) after dusk. Mobs of insect servitors, 1d30+20 in number, gather near the base of the arch, bearing oily torches that cast a hellish hue over the crowd. Any surviving contenders are present with their entourages, along with any other visitors on the island. Six secret masters watch from their thrones high above (see area 1-14).

The crowd parts for the evening's duelists and their escorts. (If necessary, reticent wizards are forcefully marched to the arch.) The corpse-mist settles down over the contenders, wreathing any magic items and ongoing magic effects in blue flames. Characters have but three rounds to divest themselves of magic before being set upon by the crowds. (Bonuses received from the various eats and drinks native to the island are permitted and do not register as magical.) PC use of halfling Luck goes unnoticed by the secret masters and their minions; however, other casters may notice and take steps to eliminate the wee ones' influence.

Finally, each duelist is presented with a choice of melee weapons to bear into battle. Masterfully crafted, each weapon does +1d damage better than a typical weapon of its type.

Once stripped of magic and equipped for slaughter, the duelists mount the high arch. At the sounding of a great gong, the spell duel begins.

The pair battle until one is slain; attempting to retreat from the arch incites the crowd of insect servitors to violence. So too does any intervention by outsiders.

Following the death match, the corpse is borne away to the abattoir (area 1-3), where it is processed in secret to make the sweetmeats, wines, and pâtés enjoyed by duelists. The loser's retinue is immediately set upon by the mob of insect servitors. The mob rends the retinue limb from limb and devours the corpses. In any given death match, 1d30+50 insect servitors are in attendance.

The winner of the duel is borne upon atop a grand palanquin to the masters' demesne, where he or she is toasted with wine and feted as a potential master. (See area 1-14 for more details.) The victor's retinue is plied with wine, ale, and beer in a procession back to their tower.

SPELL DUEL SEQUENCE

1. Both casters for roll initiative (1d20 + Agility modifier). Winner declares a spell or makes a physical attack on the opposing caster. Note: Initiative is rolled anew every round.
2. If the opposing caster has an appropriate spell (see **Counterspell Families**, below), he may counter. Otherwise, the opposing caster may "take the hit," and if he survives, take his own action.
3. If countering: both sides secretly declare any Luck burns or spellburn.
4. Both sides make their spell checks and then reveal their burns.
5. Compare spell checks results on Table I; the caster with the higher spell check ("the attacker") rolls the indicated die on Table II: Counterspell Power, and the judge adjudicates the results. In case of a tie, the judge rolls 1d7 on Table III: Wrath of Dagon.
6. Begin the next round with an initiative check.

DAGON SPELL DUEL MATRIX

The spell duel matrices in the DCC RPG core rulebook favor the caster with the higher initiative, to the detriment of a defending caster with a superior spell check. Hearing the furor in the cosmos, Dagon has leveled the field. The caster with initiative still gets to choose the spell (thereby determining the "tenor" of the duel), but secondary results are identical, whether the caster wins initiative or not.



CHANGES FROM TRADITIONAL SPELL DUELS

Wizards and sorcerers familiar with traditional spell duels should review the following.

- Momentum is not used or tracked.
- Both the attacker and the defender use the same counterspell table (replacing table 4-6 in the core rulebook).
- Mercurial magic is not used.
- All burns, including Luck, must be recorded (in secret) prior to a spell check.
- Phlogiston disturbance is replaced by the Wrath of Dagon table.

Table I: Dagon Spell Duel Matrix

		ATTACKER'S spell check																			
		>11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30+
DEFENDER spell check	>11	Tie	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6	d7	d7	d8	d8	d10	d10	d12	d12	d14	d16	d20	d24	d30
	12	d3	Tie	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6	d7	d7	d8	d8	d10	d10	d12	d12	d14	d16	d20	d24
	13	d4	d3	Tie	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6	d7	d7	d8	d8	d10	d10	d12	d12	d14	d16	d20
	14	d5	d4	d3	Tie	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6	d7	d7	d8	d8	d10	d10	d12	d12	d14	d16
	15	d5	d5	d4	d3	Tie	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6	d7	d7	d8	d8	d10	d10	d12	d12	d14
	16	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	Tie	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6	d7	d7	d8	d8	d10	d10	d12	d12
	17	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	Tie	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6	d7	d7	d8	d8	d10	d10	d12
	18	d7	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	Tie	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6	d7	d7	d8	d8	d10	d10
	19	d7	d7	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	Tie	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6	d7	d7	d8	d8	d10
	20	d8	d7	d7	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	Tie	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6	d7	d7	d8	d8
	21	d8	d8	d7	d7	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	Tie	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6	d7	d7	d8
	22	d10	d8	d8	d7	d7	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	Tie	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6	d7	d7
	23	d10	d10	d8	d8	d7	d7	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	Tie	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6	d7
	24	d12	d10	d10	d8	d8	d7	d7	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	Tie	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6	d6
	25	d12	d12	d10	d10	d8	d8	d7	d7	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	Tie	d3	d4	d5	d5	d6
	26	d14	d12	d12	d10	d10	d8	d8	d7	d7	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	Tie	d3	d4	d5	d5
	27	d16	d14	d12	d12	d10	d10	d8	d8	d7	d7	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	Tie	d3	d4	d5
	28	d20	d16	d14	d12	d12	d10	d10	d8	d8	d7	d7	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	Tie	d3	d4
	29	d24	d20	d16	d14	d12	d12	d10	d10	d8	d8	d7	d7	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	Tie	d3
	30+	d30	d24	d20	d16	d14	d12	d12	d10	d10	d8	d8	d7	d7	d6	d6	d5	d5	d4	d3	Tie

Counterspell Families

As per traditional spell dueling, any attack spell may be countered by *dispel magic* or by an identical attack spell. In addition, the strange magic of Dagon allow for a greater range of counterspell combinations. The following spell families cover the 1st, 2nd and 3rd level spells. Note that *dispel magic*, successfully cast, can counter any spell.

Ray: *magic shield*, *magic missile*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *scorching ray*, *lightning bolt*

Touch: *chill touch*, *flaming hands*, *Nythuul's porcupine coat*

Cloud /Spray: *choking cloud*, *color spray*, *Ekim's mystical mask*, *spider web*, *Emirikol's entropic maelstrom*, *fireball*

Enchantment: *charm person*, *Ekim's mystical mask*, *sleep*, *phantasm*, *scare*, *paralysis*, *slow*, *turn to stone*

Fire: *flaming hands*, *fire resistance*, *scorching ray*, *fireball*

Special Notes and Adjudication

Momentum & Mercurial Magic: The courts of Dagon permit none of the trivialities that can accompany normal spellcasting. Momentum is not tracked, and no mercurial magic effects come into play.

Patron Invocation: Inviting another patron into the realm of Dagon always courts disaster. The spell fails, regardless of the spell check, and the caster automatically invokes the Wrath of Dagon (see Table III).

Loss of Spell: Certain spell duel results can reduce the check result of the attacker or defender. A wizard loses a spell for the day only if his *initial, unmodified* spell check (before spellburn or burned Luck) is below the minimum threshold. If his initial check summons sufficient eldritch power to set the spell duel in motion, he does not count as losing the spell. The same goes for the defender's *initial, unmodified* spell check. For clerics, the same rule applies in regards to their accumulation of casting penalties.

Table II: Counterspell Power

Regardless of initiative, the caster with the higher spell check is referenced as the **attacker**. The caster with the lesser spell check is the **defender**.

Roll (variable)

- 1 Push-through d4: roll d4 and subtract this from defender's spell check. Defender's spell takes effect at this lower result, and attacker's spell takes effect *simultaneously* at normal spell check result.
- 2 Push-through d8: roll d8 and subtract this from defender's spell check. Defender's spell takes effect at this lower result, and attacker's spell takes effect *first* at normal spell check result.
- 3 - 5 Overwhelm: attacker's spell takes effect and defender's spell is cancelled.
- 6 Overwhelm and reflect d8: roll d8 and subtract this from defender's spell check. Attacker's spell takes effect *simultaneously* at normal spell check result, and defender's spell check is reflected back on him at this lower spell check result.
- 7 Overwhelm and reflect d8: roll d8 and subtract this from defender's spell check. Attacker's spell takes effect *first* at normal spell check result, and defender's spell check is reflected back on him at this lower spell check result.
- 8 Overwhelm and reflect d6: roll d6 and subtract this from defender's spell check. Attacker's spell takes effect *first* at normal spell check result, and defender's spell check is reflected back on him at this lower spell check result.
- 9 Overwhelm and reflect d4: roll d4 and subtract this from defender's spell check. Attacker's spell takes effect *first* at normal spell check result, and defender's spell check is reflected back on him at this lower spell check result.
- 10 Reflect and overwhelm: attacker's spell takes effect at normal spell check, and defender's spell check is reflected back on him at normal spell check result.
- 11-12 Dire overwhelm: attacker's spell takes effect at normal spell check, and defender's spell check is reflected back on him at normal spell check result. Additionally, the defender suffers 1d5 points Strength damage.

- 13-15 Ruinous overwhelm: attacker's spell takes effect at normal spell check, and defender's spell check is reflected back on him at normal spell check result. Additionally, the defender suffers 1d8 points Strength damage and 1d3 points Agility damage.
- 16-19 Devastating overwhelm: attacker's spell takes effect at normal spell check, and defender's spell check is reflected back on him at normal spell check result. Additionally, the defender suffers 1d10 points Strength damage and 1d5 points Agility damage.
- 20-24 Overwhelm and Recover: attacker's spell takes effect at normal spell check, and defender's spell check is reflected back on him at normal spell check result. Additionally, the defender suffers 1d12 points Strength damage, 1d8 points Agility damage, and 1d3 points Stamina damage. If the defender dies, the attacker can consume his soul, recovering 1d3 attribute points.
- 25+ Overwhelm and Recover: attacker's spell takes effect at normal spell check, and defender's spell check is reflected back on him at normal spell check result. Additionally, the defender suffers 1d14 points Strength damage, 1d10 points Agility damage, and 1d5 points Stamina damage. If the defender dies, the attacker can consume his soul, recovering 1d5 attribute points.

Table III: Wrath of Dagon

Tied spell checks upset Father Dagon. Roll 1d7 to determine the result of his ire.

Roll	Result
1-2	For the remainder of the duel neither wizard may cast any spells. The duel must be settled by melee combat.
3	Father Dagon sighs, exhaling a foul miasma over the proceeding. Both casters must make DC 20 Fort saves or suffer 1d14 damage.
4-5	For the remainder of the duel, both casters suffer 1d4 damage per spell level any time they attempt to cast a spell.
6	Searing rain falls from the heavens. Duelists suffer 1d12 damage (DC 15 Fort save for half).
7	For the remainder of the duel, both casters suffer -1d to all spell checks (DC 20 Will save to avoid).

APPENDIX B: SPELL DUELISTS



Here are six wizards competing with the PCs for the title of Master of Dagon. Each, along with his or her retinue, is detailed here.

Wizards, elves, and PCs with backgrounds specializing in the occult will have heard stories and legends of each of these casters. Whether or not the tales are accurate, the PCs will know that their foes are mighty casters, beyond reproach.

Each of the NPC wizards is given stats for spell burning – a vital tactic for surviving a duel. It is left up to the judge,

just as it is left to the PCs, how much a wizard should burn in any particular contest. Remember that burns (including Luck!) must be declared in secret prior to the spell checks. Woe to the tepid wizard too frightened to burn!

A final stat note: Each of the duelists' weapon stats have been improved to reflect the quality of the weapons provided by the secret masters for the duels. If encountered outside of a spell duel, their weapon damage should be reduced by -1d, to reflect normal weapons of their type.

RENOX, THE WHITE MAGISTER



he Magister is an aging warlock, who relies on form, rigidity, and precision to protect himself while trafficking with demons and devils. Dedicated to the ways of Law, he speaks slowly and with great deliberation. The Magister has a slim, bony frame, a bald pate, and a gaping wound on his chest that steadily weeps blood – the result of an old corruption.

Renox is served by six squat imps, each vying for the old man's soul. While the imps serve and obey their master's commands to the word, they do so with an embittered sarcasm born from centuries of servitude. Each demon hopes to be the instrument of its master's slow, painful demise and thus will allow no harm to come to Renox while he is on the isle.

Renox, the White Magister: Init +0; Atk dagger +2 melee (1d5); AC 10; HD 6d4; hp 21; MV 30; Act 1d20+1d16; SP spells; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +4; AL L.

Known spells (+8 spell check): *enlarge, force manipulation, magic shield, read magic, runic alphabet (mortal), ward portal, ray of enfeeblement, shatter, haste, lightning bolt.*

Spellburn stats: Str 9, Agi 10, Sta 13, Luck 8.

Imp (6): Init +0; Atk claw +4 melee (1d3) or bite +0 melee (1d7); AC 13; HD 3d12; hp 15 each; MV 20' or fly 35'; Act 1d20; SP invisibility 100', half damage from non-magical weapons and fire, ESP with master; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +4; AL C.



ALRED, HARBINGER OF FATE



Alred is a squat, bitter man who sweats toads and salamanders from his pores, leaving a trail of tiny amphibians wherever he goes. Driven by hunger to exert his will over all creation, no trick or cheat is too low. Alred reserves his greatest hatred for charismatic characters; any PC with a Personality of 12 or better receives the worst of Alred's petty jabs and cruel taunts.

The Harbinger is always accompanied by his salientian apprentice, whose short height and hopping mannerism makes his master appear tall and graceful in comparison. With a wide mouth and wide-set, bulbous eyes, the apprentice could very well be one of Alred's spawn. He fawns on Alred's every word, and has a foul habit of leering longingly at the victims of his master's spoken barbs.

The apprentice serves as both servant and familiar; the Harbinger can see and hear all that his apprentice witnesses. The Harbinger can also burn the apprentice's HD to fuel his own spellburn, adding +1 to a spell check for every HD burned. Reduce the apprentice's hp by 7 for each HD burned, and if Alred burns all 5 HD, the apprentice is slain.

(Note that this is explicitly against the rules of the spell duel, but PCs will need to spot the apprentice as he writhes and twists in agony, and make the connection for themselves. Assaulting the apprentice during the death match is permitted – and regarded with no more attention than a fight between two mongrel dogs.)

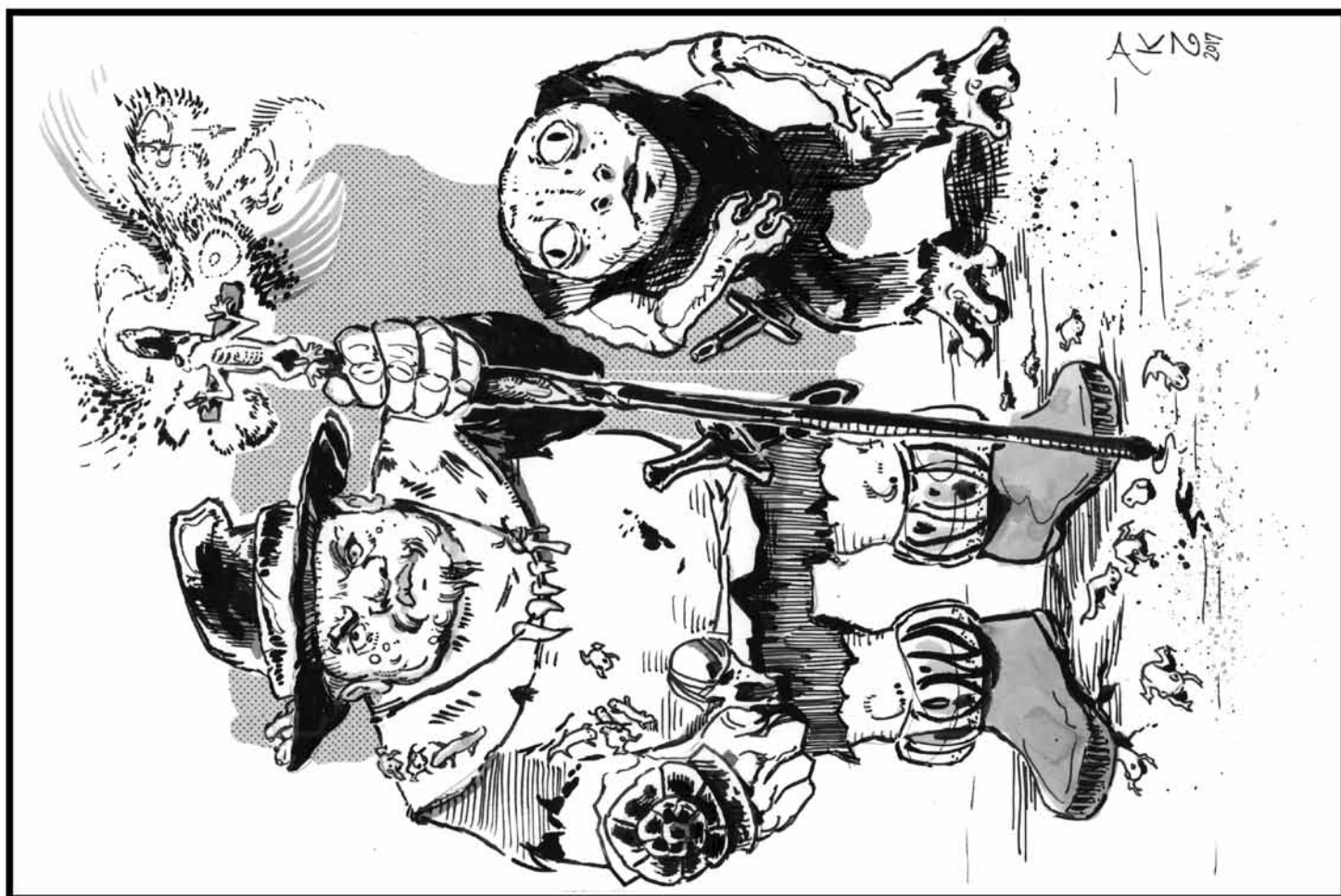
If the apprentice succeeds on a critical hit in combat, his mouth stretches wide, his body swells and he swallows the target whole. Swallowed characters take 1d4 damage per round. Worse, their HD can be used by Alred to fuel his spellburn. Alred can burn a victim's HD at the rate of one per round; apply the average of the PC's class die as damage to the victim, rounding up.

Alred, Harbinger of Fate: Init -1; Atk staff +1 melee (1d5-1); AC 9; HD 6d4; hp 9; MV 30'; Act 1d20+1d16; SP spells; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +5; AL C.

Known spells (+7 spell check): *chill touch*, *choking cloud*, *comprehend languages*, *feather fall*, *incoke patron*, *patron bond*, *phantasm*, *strength*, *lightning bolt*, *turn to stone*.

Spellburn stats: Str 6, Agi 7, Sta 8, Luck 11.

Hopping Apprentice/Familiar: Init +1; Atk dagger +6 melee (1d4+4); AC 13; HD 5d12; hp 35; MV 25' or swim 35'; Act 1d20; SP HD burn for master, swallow target on critical hit; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +0; AL C.



KASACA THE CORRUPTOR

Khe sorceress calling herself Kasaca the Corruptor inhabits a body broken from a lifetime spent in service of the dark arts. Her arms, legs, and face are skeletal in mien, while her ponderous belly sags low. The sorceress favors thick black robes stitched with herbs to conceal her scent.

Kasaca is never without her companion, Jedorai. The tall, powerfully-built warrior wears a stylized cuirass and great helm, and carries a long spear and shield into battle. If Jedorai is ever slain, it devastates the wicked sorceress, reducing all her actions by -1d. However, if she learns the identity of the murders, she receives +1d to all actions as she seeks her revenge.

Jedorai commands a company of 5 female spear companions, each outfitted like their mistress. Jedorai and the spear companions will gladly give their lives in defense of the Corruptor, though each will do her utmost to ensure that their lives are sold dearly.

It is said that Jedorai can detect any lie she overhears, though she seldom betrays this fact, save for a knowing, sidelong glance to her mistress.

Kasaca the Corruptor: Init -2; Atk staff +2 melee (1d5); AC 8; HD 6d4; hp 25; MV 35'; Act 1d20+1d16; SP spells; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +4; AL C.

Known spells (+7 spell check): *animal summoning, chill touch, enlarge, invoke patron, patron bond, sleep, invisible companion, ray of enfeeblement, lightning bolt, slow.*

Spellburn stats: Str 10, Agi 5, Sta 13, Luck 13.

Jedorai: Init +3; Atk long spear +4 melee (1d10+4) or javelin +4 missile fire (1d6+4); AC 15; HD 6d12; hp 66; MV 35'; Act 2d20; SP detect lie; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +3; AL C.

Spear Companions (5): Init +1; Atk spear +2 melee (1d6+2); AC 13; HD 3d12; hp 30 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +1; AL C.



ILLKA THE FEY



young – by elven standards – Illka has lived in exile for several hundred years. Reviled for her ceaseless thirst for power, she was cursed by her tutors to wander the earth until she met her doom. This punishment proved trivial; the wandering elf has amassed arcane secrets from every forgotten corner of the globe, and still yearns for more.

Slender and willowy, Illka's appearance belies a fearsome will that admits no master. The elf-maid has little time for the indulgences common to her peers, and wastes no time on either cruelty or kindness, unless doing so brings her closer to her goals.

Illka is served by a small retinue of apprentices. Each is as self-serving as their mistress, but all know that their fortunes rise and fall in time with Illka's. They will not willingly sacrifice themselves for their mistress, but they know that without her, they are as good as dead.

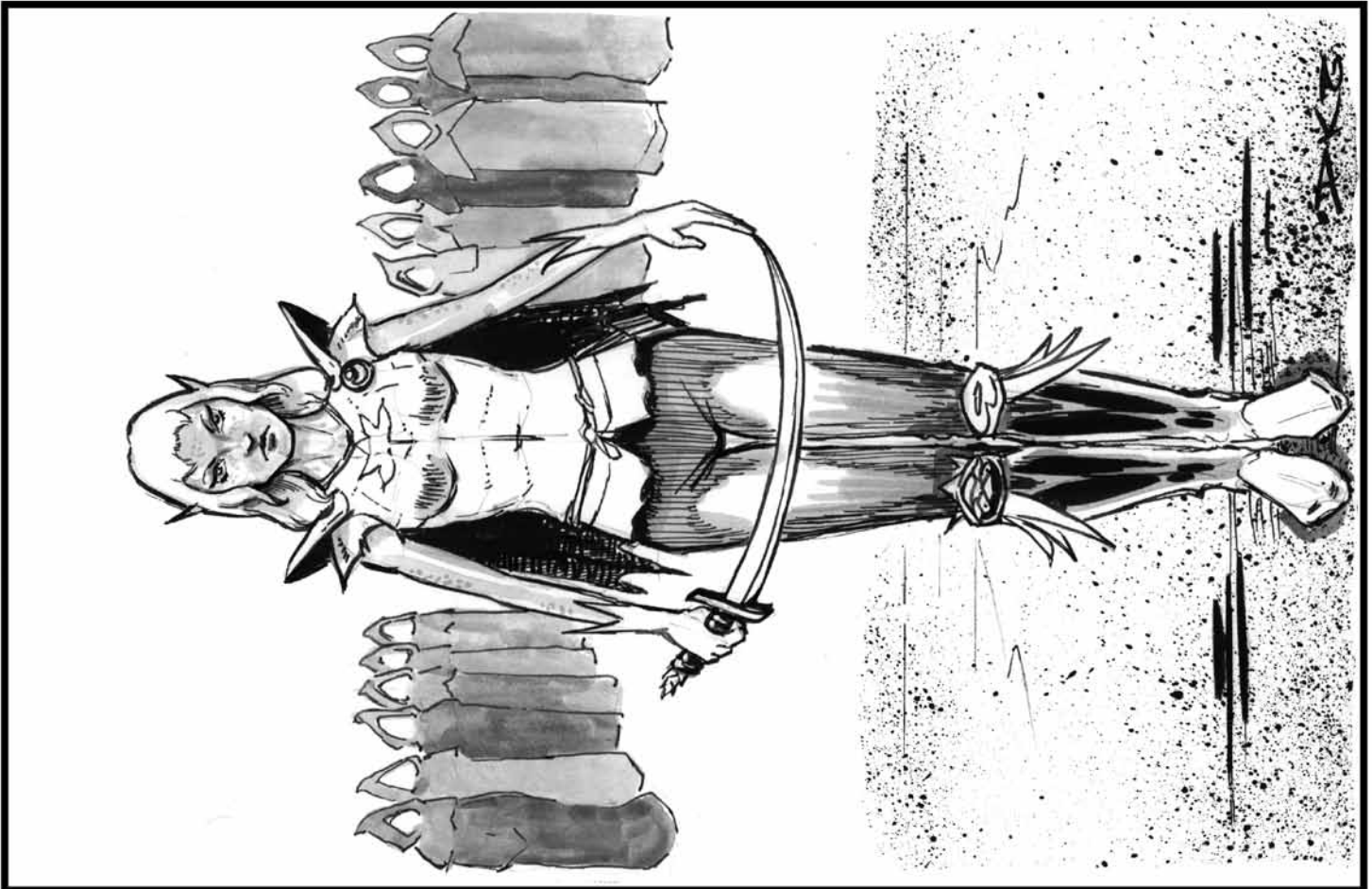
Her apprentices are given to wearing hooded black robes, and are largely indistinguishable from one another – a trait they use to sow confusion. The apprentices wear simple chain hauberks beneath their robes and wield savagely serrated short swords of Lemurian-make.

Illka the Fey: Init +2; Atk mithril longsword +3 melee (1d10); AC 12; HD 5d6; hp 23; MV 30'; Act 1d20+1d14; SP spells, heightened senses, iron vulnerability, infravision; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +2; AL C.

Known spells (+6 spell check): *comprehend languages, feather fall, flaming hands, magic shield, invoke patron, patron bond, scorching ray, strength, turn to stone.*

Spellburn stats: Str 9, Agi 16, Sta 7, Luck 8.

Apprentices (12): Init +1; Atk short sword +1 melee (1d7+1) or dagger +3 missile fire (1d4+1); AC 14; HD 4d6; hp 19 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP *cantrip* (1d16+1 spell check); SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +4; AL C.



XANDER THE MAGNIFICENT

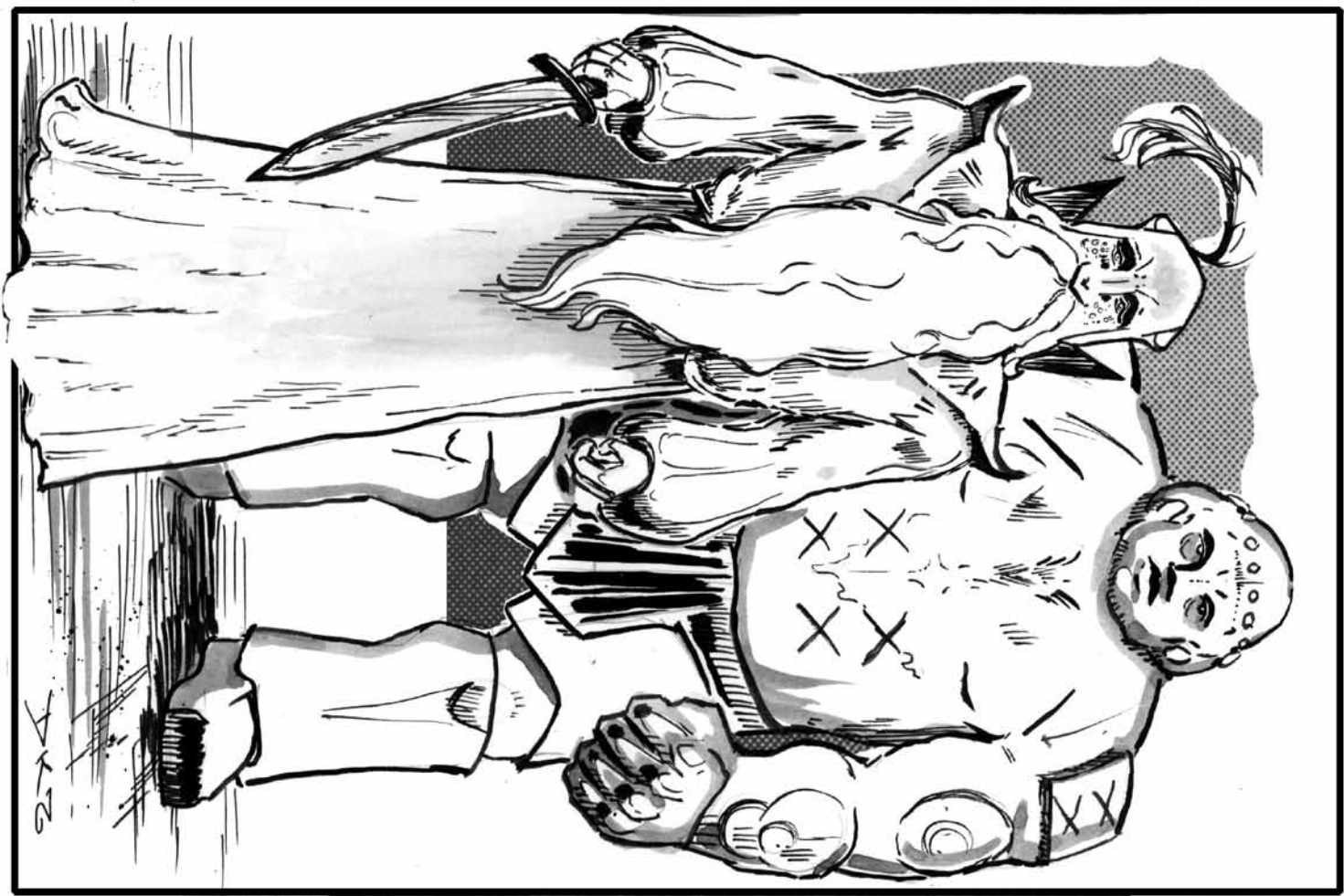
Xander is a barrel-chested man, with a flowing white beard that runs to his waist and a face pockmarked with corruption. He leans heavily on an ebony staff as he walks and is always accompanied by a towering clay golem.

However, the character of Xander the Magnificent is only a ruse, kept up by Adena the Wolf – a female thief of no small fame. Adena's disguise has fooled all the other competitors, and her clay golem insures that no one gets close enough to Xander to discover the ruse.

Adena's true reason for being on the isle is to steal the gemstones from the thrones of the secret masters (area 1-14). She planned to survive the tournament with the use of magic scrolls long enough to escape with the jewels, not realizing the provisions the secret masters had set in place (see area 1-13). Now Adena is desperate to escape the isle, and eagerly offers all her scrolls in exchange for the party's aid: *cantrip, feather fall, flaming hands, magic shield, demon summoning, dispel magic, and lightning bolt*.

Xander the Magnificent/Adena the Wolf: Init +1; Atk short sword +3 melee (1d7) or dagger +3 missile fire (1d4); AC 11; HD 5d6; hp 22; MV 30'; Act 1d20+1d14; SP burn Luck, Backstab +9, Sneak Silently +10, Hide in Shadows +9, Pick Pocket +5, Climb Sheer Surfaces +9, Pick Lock +9, Find Trap +7, Disable Trap +5, Forge Document +4, Disguise Self +8, Read Languages +2, Handle Poison +9, Cast Spell From Scroll (d14-1); SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +0; AL C. Luck for burning: 13 (d7).

The Golem: Init +0; Atk fist +3 melee (1d10+5); AC 15; HD 4d12; hp 45; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +4, Ref -2, Will Immune; AL L.



URZETH THE UNBOUND



he once-wizard Urzeth now exists solely as brilliant green flame, inhabiting the robes and cloak of the former mage. Humanoid in form, Urzeth's new incarnation is but a single step on his path to immortality. The powerful being wields an enormous two-handed sword in battle, casting licking green flames down the blade. (No mechanical effect.)

Urzeth is served by two faithful retainers: Amathies, a demonic lamia; and the scowling, broad-shouldered assassin known as Indrigo.

Amathies' true form is that of a woman with the torso of a snake, but most commonly she takes the form of a tall, human female, with the slitted eyes of a snake. The lamia serves her lover with devotion, blind to Urzeth's disregard. In battle she reverts to snake-woman form, lashing out with blackened claws and a poisonous bite. Characters bitten by the lamia must succeed on DC 15 Will saves or suffer -1d to their actions for the next hour. Characters reduced to 1d5 action die or lower fall into a coma, and can only be revived by the command (or death) of the lamia.

Indrigo is a short, ugly man, with a powerful build and permanent scowl. He has served Urzeth as for decades as both manservant and assassin. Indrigo enjoys some thief skills and the ability to burn Luck as a thief. Given a chance to prepare before a battle, the assassin poisons his blades. Characters struck by the assassin's short sword or dagger must succeed on a DC 20 Fort save or take an additional 1d12 damage. The Fort save DC is reduced by -5 with each attack, as the green poisonous paste is slowly wiped away. After four attempted strikes, the blades lose all ability to poison his foes.

Urzeth the Unbound: Init +1; Atk two-handed sword +5 melee (1d12+2); AC 11; HD 7d4; hp 18; MV 30'; Act 2d20; SP spells, *polymorph self*; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +4; AL C.

Known spells (+7 spell check): *animal summoning*, *color spray*, *flaming hands*, *magical missile*, *magic shield*, *levitation*, *magic mouth*, *phantasm*, *dispel magic*, *fly*, *lightning bolt*.

Spellburn stats: Str 12, Agi 13, Sta 8, Luck 8.

Amathies: Init +4; Atk claw +6 melee (1d6+6) or bite +4 melee (1d5 plus poison); AC 20; HD 6d12; hp 36; MV 35' or slither 40'; Act 2d20; SP poisonous bite, *detect good* (+8 spell check), half damage from non-magical weapons, fire and lightning; SV Fort +5, Ref +8, Will +8; AL L.

Indrigo, Manservant Assassin: Init +1; Atk short sword +3 melee (1d6+1) or dagger +3 melee or missile fire (1d4+1); AC 14; HD 4d6; hp 19; MV 30'; Act 1d20 and 1d16 (off-hand weapon); SP poison, burn Luck (d6, 9 points), Backstab +8, Sneak Silently +7, Hide in Shadows +6, Climb Sheer Surfaces +6, Find Trap +7, Disable Trap +2; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +4; AL L.



Way OF THE DAGON

I beseech you the influential, together with others, to accept this covenant pact in the pursuit of power immeasurable. I willingly give my body and fortune to those who are bound beyond the veil...whatever consequences shall come!

☐

STRENGTH

☐

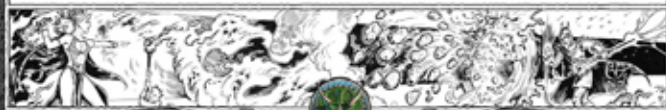
LUCK

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AGILITY

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STAMINA



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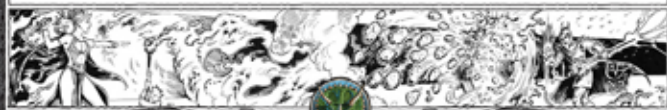
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NOTES FROM THE ROAD: ENTER JIM KELLY...AND THE DAGON



hough not immediately obvious, DCC the RPG takes portions of its DNA from the 1973 cinema classic *Enter the Dragon*. Gary Con 2011 – the same convention that would see the development of the spell duel rules, and arguments for and against including Satan (“Cultists are boring ... the PCs need to fight Satanists!”) – also saw one designer levy the command, “Jim Kelly is the coolest! The game needs Jim Kelly.”

The command was immediately subverted by other designers noting that there was also a gamer named Jim Kelly in attendance at Gary Con, and that perhaps *he* needed to be included in the game as well.

Mighty Jim Kelly (kung fu legend, not the gamer) received a cover homage in DCC #74: *Blades Against Death*, but it wasn't until Gen Con 2015 that *Enter the Dragon* returned, in the form of a spell duel tournament, *Enter the Dagon*.

Conceived as a mid-level alternative to the 0-level epic funnel, *Enter the Dagon* mirrors its namesake by pitting hundreds of spellcasters against one another in mortal combat for the pleasure of foul Father Dagon. Many casters enter, but only one leaves.

Like the 0-level funnel, players were able to drop onto the game at any point over the three, 4-hour sessions. For the price of a generic ticket, each player was provided with a pre-generated wizard and a personalized grimoire. Players were seated opposite one another and immediately thrust into a spell duel to the death.

The surviving wizard was pitted against another fresh caster, in a gruesome, arcane king of the hill, and the line of fresh challengers ensured that no one character could dominate for very long.

Over the course of the convention, we saw tactics and counters emerge, dominate, and then be undone. Initially, most wizards (rightly) focused on spell burning, hoping to deal as much damage as possible.

(And indeed, when a foe has 20 hp or less, a *magic missile* launching 3d4+2 missiles, each dealing 1d10+4 dmg, is guaranteed to get the job done.)

But as tactics evolved, some casters pioneered more creative measures. Perhaps the most dramatic came in one of the later games, when a caster won initiative and elected not to attack, but instead cast *enlarge* on himself, burning the majority of his stats to ensure a maximum result.

In the moment it seemed like a strange move, and perhaps a deadly waste of initiative. But for readers like myself who haven't memorized the spell result, I'll share it here, in all its horrifying glory:

The caster transforms himself or one target into a giant of truly godlike proportions. The target grows to a height of up to 100', at the caster's discretion. The target's statistics are similarly improved due to his new size, to a maximum benefit of +10 to attack, damage, and AC if he reaches the full 100' height. At that full height, he also receives a bonus of up to +100 hit points.

As the player read the result aloud, the rest of us stood dumbstruck, stunned. The caster had just transformed himself into a god, with a spell duration likely to last several duels.

The tournament had been cleverly, fairly, and completely broken.

But the duel wasn't over. Facing down the looming giant, the young sorceress scanned her grimoire and picked the best offensive spell she had – the humble *ray of enfeeblement*. The titan failed his save, and took a mere 1d6 points of Strength damage. Then we realized the *enlarged* caster – the god-like giant with over 100 hp and an untouchable armor class – had burned all his stats.

The titan tumbled earthward, defeated. I can't recall if it crushed the sorceress in the fall, but I know that Ref saves were involved to evade the avalanche of giant-flesh.

And so the tournament proceeded, with wizards treading the knife's edge of burning enough stats to win a duel, while not weakening themselves to the point where the slightest stat loss could spell their doom.

Fate played its own part, with some casters surviving duels thanks to the vagaries of dice, but no one caster could depend on Luck for long. In the end hundreds of casters had passed into the realm of foul Dagon, and only four remained, facing off against one another in a final epic showdown.

And as for *Enter the Dagon*, the adventure where a team of wizards (and thieves? clerics?) infiltrate an island spell tournament? You hold that adventure in your hands. Welcome to *Enter the Dagon*.

GEN CON 2015

This adventure was originally run as a tournament at Gen Con 2015, and updated and evolved for Gen Con 2016. Here are some photos of the tournaments and winners!



Above: Harley running tournament sessions. Someday you have to game with him.

Below: The tournament championship belts in repose.



Below left: *Enter the Dragon* spell duel finalists, led by winner Mike Markey showing off his championship belt! From left to right: Nita Bittman, Connor Skach, Aaron Koelman, Mike Markey, Harley Stroh.

Below right: Harley wandering around the hotel carrying the tournament belt.



GEN CON 2016



Above right: A large crowd gathered to hear the tournament results announced.

Left: Joseph Goodman shows off the tournament belt to the crowd.



Left: Harley Stroh presents the belt to the winner.

Below: Tournament winner Silas Moore.



We're with the band.

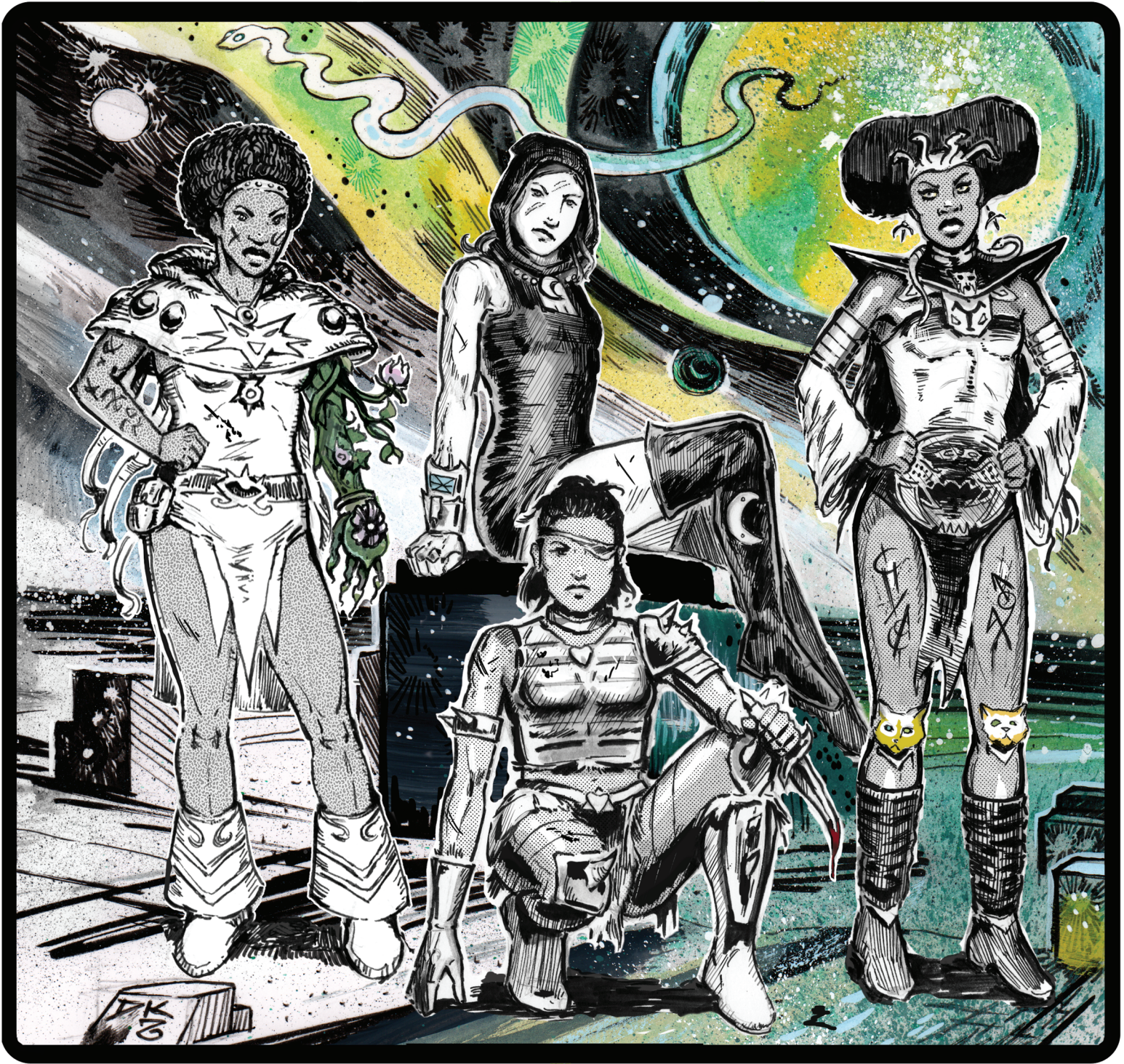


The band of adventurers, that is. Join us in the pages of Dungeon Crawl Classics adventure modules. Stand-alone, world-neutral, all new, and inspired by Appendix N. Learn more at www.goodman-games.com.



DCC RPG

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DCC RPG

DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS

Enter The Dagon

#95: A LEVEL 5 ADVENTURE
BY HARLEY STROH

The Isle of Dagon: to common folk, it presages death, pestilence and woe. To warlocks, witches, and wizards, the isle offers a wealth of occult power, forbidden knowledge, and spells beyond the ken of mortal man. But before you can lay claim to the island's secrets, first you must survive its fabled spell duels – a series of death matches where only one caster may reign supreme.

Wizards and elves will be tested to the fullest of their abilities. To triumph, parties must also survive the machinations of the other contenders and their wicked retinues. For when vying for the title of Master of Dagon, and battling against some of the most powerful sorcerers to tread the Known Worlds, you will need every advantage you can glean. Will you and your companions sit passively by, awaiting whatever fate befalls you? Or will you take the fight to your foes?

And when your life – and those of your companions – hangs on the casting of a single spell, will you have the courage to accept Dagon's challenge?

The time for questioning has passed. Black-sailed ships have come to ferry you and your companions to the fabled death matches. It is time to Enter the Dagon.

