

CULT OF THE SKIN DEMON

An adventure by **Jürgen Mayer** madmoses@gmail.com

Map by **Dyson Logos**, used with permission, from **Dyson's Dodecahedron**: rpgcharacters.wordpress.com

Inspiration:

Map ideas by Nate McD, The Hidden Cult Scenario Pack from Beyond the Wall by Flatland Games, The Dungeon Alphabet by Michael Curtis from Goodman Games, Abulafia www.random-generator.com, wampuscountry.blogspot.com by Eric Jensen, inkwellideas.com RPG articles, Vornheim and dndwithpornstars.blogspot.com by Zak Smith, cauldronsandclerics.blogspot.com by Luka Rejec

Introduction

This module is intended as a starting adventure for a group of 1st level characters, or a funnel for 0-level characters. The monsters all come with a rough hit dice guideline, and you have to quickly stat them yourself for whatever system you are using. Feel free to adjust their capabilities and the damage output of the traps to the power level of your party.

Background Story

A man possessed by demonic forces is wandering from village to village and gives out "wisdom berries" to gullible people. These actually contain essence of the Skin Demon and (on a failed saving throw vs. poison) will infuse the desire and the knowledge to bring minions of the Skin Demon into this world and to prepare more demonic berries to extend the cult.

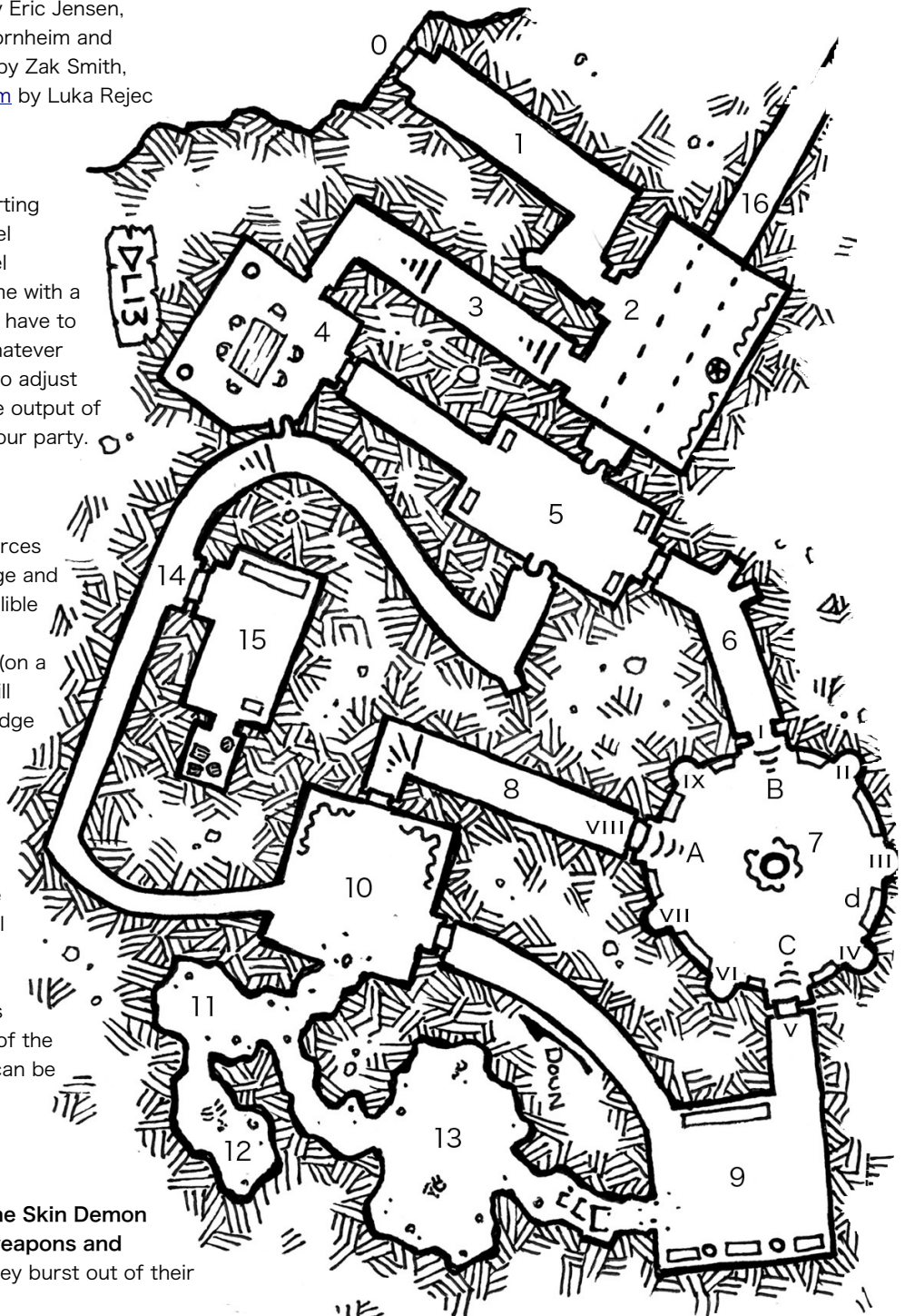
To allow a demonic minion of the Skin Demon to enter the material plane, the skin of an animal (or monster, human or humanoid) is needed as a shell. These demons will look like grotesque versions of the original creature. A human skin can be fused with a demon to create a demon warlock with spellcasting abilities.

While in their skin, **minions of the Skin Demon can be harmed by mundane weapons and magic**. When they reach **0hp**, they burst out of their

earthly shell and have a **50% chance of being able to act** in the mortal realm for **one more round** before being banished to wherever they came from.

People under the influence of the Skin Demon can be released if a quick prayer using the Skin Demon's true name (Zlgrur) is uttered in their presence.

A cult of the Skin Demon has formed in the PCs' home village and they are using an old underground temple used for worshipping a chaos god in bygone ages as their secret base. Before locating the dungeon, let the PCs find some clues to what is going on and where, and some skinned animals and even one or two corpses without skin.



0 Entrance

The **stone door** is **sealed by demonic magic**. A **rune circle** has been carved into it. The door looks ancient, but the carvings are recent. In the middle of the circle is a lot of **dried blood**. The door will not open until **fresh blood** has been applied to the circle. The blood of a **small mammal** is sufficient, or **1 hp** worth of human blood.

If the blood of a PC is used on the rune circle, a **faint bond** with the demonic forces is formed. Make a **saving throw vs. spells**. Success means the PC gets +1 on all checks against minions of the Skin Demon. Failure means the demons get +1 on all checks against this PC.

1 Corridor

The **alcove** contains an **offering bowl** for the chaos god that was worshipped here. The bowl is **full of ashes**. **Anything that is put into the bowl turns to ash** (including limbs). It does not work on anything magical or holy in nature (this includes magic-users and clerics). It loses its power when removed from the temple. Anyone who makes a **substantial offering** here (a finger or handful of gold) **scores a critical success** on his next natural 19 (once, although bigger offerings may be worth up to 5 uses).

2 Worship Room

Contains an **ages-old statue of a chaos god**, **moth-devoured tapestries**, and **decayed wooden benches**. Everything of value was plundered long ago.

A **Demon Giant Snake (2HD)** is waiting here as a sentry against intruders. It can **slither on walls and ceilings**. The demon snake will smell the PCs as soon as they enter at 0 and move to an **ambush position above the archway** into this room to drop down on the first PC. If the PCs run through 1, they might be able to confront the snake before it has hidden.

3 Stairway

If the PCs listen, they might be able to hear **babbling coming from 4**. It sounds like some creature is trying to mimic human speech, but failing.

4 Meeting Room

A **table** and **6 chairs**. A **wooden bowl** on the table contains one withered looking "**wisdom berry**" (**save vs. poison** or slowly turn into a cultist of the Skin Demon, this takes one night and is reversible with the true name of the Skin Demon).

The **secret door** is **well hidden** from this side and very hard to find. It can be **unlocked by turning the column** in the western corner. It is obvious and **easy to open from 14**.

Demon Man (1HD). This was the first, failed attempt of the cult to create a demon warlock. It looks truly grotesque, a crude and clumsy **union of a demon and an old man**. It sits at the table, **spouting gibberish** at anyone who enters. If you can, make the PCs feel sorry for the creature before it attacks them for not belonging to the cult.

5 Chest Room

Chest 1: Very difficult lock. Jewellery worth 1d20 gp. One of it is a **Ring of Warmth** (made of bronze, hard to tell apart from the other stuff; wearer never gets cold, never freezes, is immune to cold based damage and magic).

Chest 2: Cleaning rags. Has a **secret compartment** in the lid with a **small drawing of room 7** that shows that the exits are in N, NW and S.

Chest 3: 12 old black candles, 4 torches, 1 lamp. No oil.

Chest 4: 4 Demon Rats (1HD). Can be **easily trapped** in the chest again if a PC **with higher initiative** closes the chest. However, if the **PC doesn't take precautions** (closing it from the sides or from behind, or using a tool), **1d4 of the rats** get an **opportunity attack** (**save vs. breath weapon** to avoid).

Southern secret door: Well hidden from 5, not hidden from 14. **Can only be opened from 14**. If opened or closed, PCs can make a check to notice a **click sound** coming from where the **northern secret door** is located.

Northern secret door: Well hidden from 5, not hidden but also **no way to open it from 16**. Can only be pushed **open from 5** if **southern secret door is open**.

6 Corridor

2 alcoves containing very old **skeletons (1HD)** that were guardians from the time when this was used as the temple of a chaos god. Their magic is **dormant**, but they will **awaken** and attack if **any magic is cast** in this corridor, or if they are **touched by any magic item**.

A **vertical lever** is next to the **door to room 7** (see there).

7 Pivoting Library

Central column clad in **red tapestries**. Some **bookshelves, tables** and **chairs**.

The bookshelves are **partly full of ancient books** in various states of **decay**. They are mostly useless, and the vast majority will **crumble to dust** when pulled out or opened. If the PCs manage to decipher some book titles, they will be pretty mundane.

Next to the central column is a **3ft high stone pillar** with a **compass on its top**. In front of it is a **big lever** that can be pushed **clockwise or counterclockwise**. There is a **standing desk** next to it with a **lantern on top**. The desk has a **secret but easy to open compartment** with a **cloth** with a simple **drawing of the room** with its exits.

Pushing the **big lever** in one direction will **rotate the room** one slot in that direction, then the lever jumps back to the middle position.

The **vertical levers** on the **outside of the doors** from 6, 8, and 9, if **pushed down**, **rotate** the room so that **exit A** faces the respective **door** (there are actually six doors in total, one outside in each of the corridors, one inside each of the room exits). If **pushed up**, it **rotates exit A** to a **random position** (roll **1d10** for the position, a 0 means no rotation). Also roll **1d10 for initial position** (roll again on an 8 or 0).

If one of the **inside doors is open** or opened while **on another position than a room exit**, it will cause a **trap** at that position to activate. This means that potentially 3 traps can activate at once.

The **traps** are:

- II:** **Acid stone wall.** Looks normal. Harmless unless touched with bare skin (**1d4 dmg**).
- III:** Nest of **chaos bugs** is catapulted into the room. **Save vs breath weapon** to avoid getting bitten or get **-1 to all rolls for the next turn**.
- IV:** **Lightning.** **1d6 dmg** (halved if **save vs. magic item** successful). Will hit the nearest person in metal armor or holding a metal object. **50% chance of jumping** to the next person (and continuing).
- VI:** Cone of a **hundred tiny darts** hits everyone not standing behind central column or tapestries or directly at the bookshelves next to VI. **1d4 dmg + 1d4 poison dmg** if **save vs. poison** fails.
- VII:** Poisonous, **foul-smelling gas** fills the room. **1d4 dmg each round** if **save vs. poison** fails. Effect stops if an exit can be opened to 6, 8 or 9 and the gas diffuses.
- IX:** **Frost explosion.** **Save vs. magic item** or take **1d4 dmg**.

These are the **positions of each exit** for every **position of exit A**:

A	B	C
I	III	VII
II	IV	VIII
III	V	IX
IV	VI	I
V	VII	II
VI	VIII	III
VII	IX	IV
VIII	I	V
IX	II	VI

all exits in optimum position

The **bookshelf** marked with a **d** is **special**. Carefully observing PCs might notice a book that looks different, because it is actually a **wooden lever made to look like a book**. If pulled, the bookshelf d can be **swung open**, revealing a **hidden bookshelf** behind it. There is a different hidden bookshelf to be found behind d for all positions of the room.

These are the positions of the **hidden bookshelves** for every **position of A**:

A	d is between	books found are mainly about
I	V - VI	Demonology and Summoning
II	VI - VII	Alchemy and Poisons
III	VII - VIII	Death and Necromancy
IV	VIII - IX	Mind Control and Empathy
V	IX - I	Chaos and Destruction
VI	I - II	Portals and Teleportation
VII	II - III	Elemental Magic
VIII	III - IV	Architecture
IX	IV - V	Animal and Plant Magic

The hidden bookshelves contain **1d4 salvageable books** each. Careful study by an apt magic-user can reveal **1d4-2 spells per book** within a **month of research** (except those about architecture). Sold to the right buyer, **each book** is worth up to **8d20 gp**.

On an **appropriate check**, imaginative PCs may find the **true name of the Skin Demon** in the demonology bookshelf.

If the PCs spend **more than two turns** in this room after rotating it, consider the **ritual** described in **room 10 finished** by the time they leave the room, meaning they probably will have to deal with the Cult Champion and the Demon Warlock at the same time.

8 Corridor

A **vertical lever** is next to the **door to room 7** (see there).

Potential roll for ritual in 10 needed when entering (**1d6 rounds** before ritual is finished).

Demon Dog from 10 will be here if **PCs enter from 7**. **Cult Champion from 10** will come here **after 1 round** if demon dog barks.

9 Old Sanctum

A **vertical lever** is next to the **door to room 7** (see there).

Potential roll for ritual in 10 needed when entering (**1d6 rounds** before ritual is finished).

Demon Dog from 10 will be here if **PCs enter from 7**. **Cult Champion from 10** will come here **after 2 rounds** if demon dog barks.

Shelves contain **old ritual items and materials**, some of them from the chaos god originally worshipped here.

Ritual dagger (+1 to all spell checks if wielded by a chaotic character). **2d20 cursed gold coins**: smell **pungent, cause sickness** if carrying **more than 2 coins** for a day, afterwards cause **1d4 damage per day** until discarded.

Magic potion, rusty **orange**, smells like strong, old, green tea, **causes bad luck for one day** (critical failures on rolls of natural ones or twos on any roll).

Magic potion, red/blue swirl, smells like caramel, grants **x-ray vision for one turn**.

Magic potion, inky, smells like burnt leaves, grants **plant control powers for one turn**. This potion is expired but works with a side effect: **plants start to grow on the user**. These can be controlled by the power of the potion, though. They do not fall off when the turn is over. **If cut off, cause 1d6 dmg**.

10 Ritual Chamber

2 crude **white tapestries** with **chaotic runes** painted with **animal blood**.

4 Cultists (1HD). At least some of these are **friends or even family** of the PCs. One of them is the originally possessed minion of the Skin Demon in the village.

Cult Champion (2HD). Wields magic **longsword+1 with double dmg vs spirits, demons & undead**. Sent to 8 or 9 when a demon dog barks. Needs **1 round to reach 8, 2 rounds to 9**. Sent to **14** together with the 2 demon dogs **if the stair siren** is triggered (**2 rounds** to reach long part of the corridor).

2 Demon Dogs (1HD). Sent to **watch the entrances of 8 or 9** when room 7 rotates. Will **bark** when encountering PCs, **alerting cult champion**, and if possible retreat to fight PCs together with the champion.

The **cultists** are conducting the **ritual with a human skin** to create a **demon warlock**. It will be created **1d6 rounds after the PCs** manage to **enter 8 or 9**, or **2d6 rounds after entering 14**. If interrupted, they will **call for the demon bear in 13** and try to finish the ritual. If ritual is **finished, they will try to flee**, preferably **via 14 and 16**. They will **not fight friends** or family amongst the PCs unless they are about to be killed. A quick prayer with the **Skin Demon's true name will free them** from its influence. In this case they will help to defeat the demon bear when it is arriving from 13.

Demon Warlock (2HD).

Partial Invulnerability: Can **only be harmed by iron**. **Loses invulnerability** as long as it is **touched by iron** (e.g. a spell cast during the same initiative round as a sword strike may harm it). Loses invulnerability if its **true**

name is uttered by the attacker.

Scream of Fear: Usable **once per encounter**. All foes must make a **saving throw vs. spells** or **flee for 1d6 rounds**.

Spells: Can use one **mind control spell** and one **offensive spell** per day.

11, 12, 13 Caverns

Demon Bear (3HD), usually **located in 13**. Will **relocate to 11 or 12** if it hears or smells someone there. Will investigate and **attack intruders** coming down the **steps from 9**. Will **assist cultists in 10** when they call for its help (**3 rounds** until it arrives).

14 Corridor

Potential roll for ritual in 10 needed when **entering from room 4** (**2d6 rounds** before ritual is finished).

The **stair** next to room 4's secret door is **trapped**. Stepping on the **middle of the lowest step** will activate a **short but loud siren**. In addition, the **ceiling stones fall down** and deal **1d4 dmg to everyone on the stairs** at this time (**save vs. breath weapon** to avoid). This will **alert the Cult Champion and 2 Demon Dogs** from room 10, who will arrive in the long section of the corridor after **2 rounds**.

The **alcove** in the corner near the secret door to 5 contains a **leather bag** with **rusty caltrops** (if running over caltrop-covered floor, make an attack vs. AC for **1d4 dmg, halve movement until healed**).

15 Storage Room

Shelf is **mostly empty** except for some food (**3d6 rations**). If the shelf is **searched carefully**, a **hidden key** can be discovered. It **opens the chest 1 in room 5**.

Chest: Book about local mammals, called **"Mammals."** May have useful information about local mammals. Does not contain any useful information about demonic mammals. **Magic potion, red**, smells like bull, drinking it equals **one night of good bed rest** (recover hp, spells, etc, as per your system's rules).

The **small side room** contains **2 crates** (one contains **animal entrails**, one contains **2 flasks of oil**) and **2 barrels** (one with a few pieces of **ripped animal skin**, one half filled with **wine**).

16 Escape Tunnel

Roughly dug escape tunnel. The ceiling is held by **wooden beams every 20ft**. Creatures taller than a dwarf have to crawl. **Attacking a beam** has a **20% chance of the ceiling collapsing after 1d4 rounds**. **Destroying a beam** increases this to **80%**.