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GM'S MONTHLY MISCELLANY: NOVEMBER 2016





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GM'S MONTHLY MISCELLANY: NOVEMBER 2016

Featuring material from some of Raging Swan Press's newest products as well as classic releases of yesteryear, advice articles and material from Gloamhold, the GM's Monthly Miscellany series is a terrific free resource for the busy, time-crunched GM.

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SOURCES

As well as new, never seen before material from my own Borderland of Adventure campaign, this instalment of GM's Monthly Miscellany presents information from several Raging Swan Press products and advice articles including:

- **Places of Power: Tumblestone Inn** Creighton Broadhurst.
- **Village Backdrop: Suurin** Jeff Gomez.
- **20 Things #8: Cultist's Lair** John Bennett, Creighton Broadhurst and Mike Welham.

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FOREWORD



Welcome to the last “new” GM’s Monthly Miscellany of the year. Next month—as is tradition—we’ll be compiling every 2016 instalment into *GM’s Monthly Miscellany: Compendium 2016* (which will also be available in print for everyone like me who loves the feel of an actual printed book!)

In any event, herein you’ll find excerpts from some of Raging Swan’s newest products including *Village Backdrop: Suurin*, *Places of Power: Tumblestone Inn* and *20 Things #8: Cultist’s Lair*.

It’s been a busy couple of months at Raging Swan Press but I think I’m definitely getting on top of the work. Things seem to be going so well I’m managing to find more time to write! Given this is why I started Raging Swan Press in the first place, this makes me happy. I hope it makes you happy as well, as this month I’m releasing *Places of Power: Tumblestone Inn*. By the time you

read this, we’ll have also released the village of

Greystone—which is part of the Ashlar and Gloamhold campaign mini-setting. In December, it’s the village of Lanthorn’s go—wizards, trolls and goblins in close proximity do not make for a peaceful, tranquil place...

One of the things I’ve particularly enjoyed over the last few months is getting back to Gloamhold and its gloomy precincts—its development rather took a back seat at the beginning of the year which frustrated me immensely. However, with my burgeoning free time (or perhaps better time management) the *Gloamhold Campaign Guide* is rocking along!

You might also be aware that Raging Swan Press is now on Patreon. We signed up at the start of April 2015, and it’s going rather marvellously. The thrust of our Patreon campaign is to be able to afford better rates of pay for our freelance game designers. As I’m sure you know, the economics of 3PP are notoriously tight, but Patreon gives us at Raging Swan Press a way to increase our freelancer rates. At time of writing, we’ve already increased our word rate to 9 cents a word, which gives me a warm, fuzzy feeling inside. We want to pay more, but to do that we need your help! If you sign up, you get our supplements earlier than normal and cheaper than normal. Even better, you can pledge what you want and cancel when you want. If you are interested in taking a look at the campaign, check out patreon.com/ragingswanpress or head over to patreon.com and search for Raging Swan!

In any event, I hope you enjoy the material in this GM’s Monthly Miscellany, but more importantly I hope you find it useful and that it enhances your campaign. If you’ve got any comments or questions about Raging Swan Press, I’d love to hear from you. You can contact me at creighton@ragingswan.com.

10 CULTISTS WITH PERSONALITY

Cultists come from all walks of life. Many maintain a façade of normality, allowing them to hide among an unsuspecting society; others are far too deranged or dangerous to escape notice.

1. **Tanathrax:** A tiefling with red scales, slightly glowing amber eyes and a stubby tail, Tanathrax is convinced he comes from a draconic, rather than fiendish, bloodline. She involves herself in the cult as an enforcer, but intends to subvert its goals to suit an ancient red dragon who has no idea Tanathrax exists.
2. **Pendrake Abrogast:** This rakish blond haired, blue eyed noble enjoys the benefits of his conventional good looks. He is known for his dalliances with all genders and debauched parties he throws at his estate. During days when he “nurses a hangover,” he actually participates in cult rituals, usually with the same people he partied with the night before. He believes the titled shall inherit the world and looks forward to the total subjugation or annihilation of the lesser folk (except those required to serve him).
3. **Nelva and Quentin Indra:** This affable halfling couple once adventured together, but retired to open their general goods store. The grey-haired shop owners get to know everyone in their store and have remarkably keen recollections for names and faces. They are astute observers and keep an eye out for potential victims or recruits.
4. **Valdrin Boke:** Valdrin has dirty blond hair and scars crisscross his body, but his face is injury-free. He wields a pair of daggers named after lesser beings associated with the cult, and uses them for murders committed in the cult’s name. The cult keeps him on a tight leash, but occasionally he escapes—or is released—to carry out his “sacred” duty.
5. **Felice Granger:** Felice has dark brown hair that turns bright red when she engages in her favourite activity: arson. She believes she can conjure forth actual hellfire. She has shown a surprising, yet unreliable, ability to start fires with a thought, which she believes comes from her invisible guardian devils.
6. **Pastoran Fenn:** Pastoran is a softly-spoken gnome cleric with a warm personality. He wears no holy symbol, claiming he is a servant of the people rather than some unseen deity. He enjoys spreading hope only to see it crushed afterwards and often convinces seriously ill or near-dead people to take their lives while he watches.
7. **Odette Varyan:** Odette, a human woman with dark brown skin, lived a sheltered life, overprotected by her father and older brothers and resented it. However, when she found her purpose in the cult, she realized she could use her perceived helplessness to her advantage. She pretends someone is following her or targeting her to lure unwitting protectors to their dooms.
8. **Ghena Haroth:** This female half-orc paladin serves in an organization with nobler goals than many cults, but the tyrannical regime she seeks to subvert refers to it as a cult. She is gruff and slow to make friends, partially out of distrust and partially out of knowledge that her comrades have short lifespans. She often makes difficult decisions about peoples’ lives, causing her to seek atonement for her actions on a regular basis.
9. **Mervynne the Prognosticator:** Mervynne is a human man with tight, curly hair who makes a living as a fortune teller. While many of his fortunes are part of a convincing act, the proceeds from which fill the cult’s coffers, he has some powers of divination. Specifically, he seems to be able to identify people whose paths intersect with the cult’s plans.
10. **Tessa:** This half-elf woman leads the Twilight Performers, a carnival troupe, and she is the resident “beast tamer.” She often gains the trust of settlement leaders by stopping a rampaging monster—typically one she releases herself, but she does not pass up a convenient opportunity. She is never without her collection of whips.



SUURIN AT A GLANCE

Ruler Devia Brookshire

Government Overlord

Population 67 (51 halflings, 11 hobgoblins, 3 humans, 1 dwarf, 1 half orc)

Alignments LE

Languages Common, Goblin, Halfling

Corruption +2; **Crime** -2; **Economy** +0; **Law** +0; **Lore** -1; **Society** -3

Qualities Morally permissive, notorious

Danger 10; **Disadvantages** Soul crushing

Suurin was supposed to be a halfling utopia, a return to the imaginary times before strife and prejudice; halfling burrows furnished in rich mahogany, cool streams and cobblestone bridges, green fields alive with laughing children. Unfortunately, these same fields grow prodigious quantities of blue daffodil, a flower easily synthesized into the mind-numbing drug skez. Now, Devia Brookshire—a drug racketeer—has transformed this haven into the skez capital of the realm. The roads are kept safe, not by city guards or peaceful inclinations, but by the iron first of a crime lord who knows chaos is bad for business.

VILLAGERS

Appearance The halflings of Suurin are gaunt, weak, dirty and distracted. The hobgoblins are squat and musclebound, foul smelling but well groomed. All suffer from visible black veins in the eyes and face—a hallmark of skez consumption.

Dress The halflings wear dirty, torn clothing and pay little attention to their general appearance. The hobgoblins are always armed with swords and clad in hard leather armour.

Nomenclature *male* Corrin, Haldon, Rinad, Janvryn, Wilmin; *female* Anyra, Leris, Odivra, Uvilda; *family* Brookshire, Greenleaf, Housefur, Meadowood, Soulder.

MARKETPLACE

Resources & Industry Drugs (skez)

Base Value 650 gp; **Purchase Limit** 3,750 gp; **Spellcasting** 3rd; **Minor Items** 2d4; **Medium Items** 1d4; **Major Items** –

When the PCs arrive in Suurin, the following items are for sale:

- **Potions & Oils** *invisibility* (300 gp), *delay poison* (50 gp)
- **Scrolls (Arcane)** *alarm* (25 gp), *charm person* (25 gp), *sleep* (25 gp)
- **Scroll (Divine)** *detect animals or plants* (25 gp)
- **Drugs** blue skez (50 gp), crimson skez (75 gp), green skez (30 gp)

VILLAGE LORE

A PC making a Knowledge (geography) or Knowledge (local) check may know some information about Suurin. A successful check gains all the information revealed by a lesser result.

DC 10: Suurin produces copious amounts of the drug skez, which is distributed across the region.

DC 15: Devia, the crime lord of Suurin, was born and raised in the village. She left for the city at a young age and returned when her gang kicked her out.

DC 20: Devia employs hobgoblin mercenaries to protect her assets. She pays her employees well, but some of the hobgoblins have higher ambitions.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

A PC can use Diplomacy to gather information about Suurin and its surroundings. This takes 1d4 hours and requires a DC 10 check. A PC exceeding this check gains one additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10. Use the table below to determine which rumour(s) the PC learns.

D6	RUMOUR
1	Though Devia pays them well, Akarak and Bekarak may soon kill her and take her place.
2	Doric the barkeep spikes his drinks with skez to keep his patrons interested.
3*	Devia murdered her own father when she returned to Suurin.
4	Murgle the hobgoblin is in love with the baker's daughter and wants to save her from Suurin.
5*	Skez is highly explosive in large quantities. The factory could burn down at any minute.
6*	Devia's old gang is interested in acquiring Suurin. If Devia isn't amenable, they will take it by force.

*False rumour



NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the population are nothing more than drugged up peasants. A few, however, are of interest to adventurers:

Akarak and Bekarak (location 3; LE male hobgoblin fighter 3)
Akarak and Bekarak are Devia's two gruff, taciturn and violent bodyguards. They lead a dozen other hobgoblin.

Albrich Greenleaf (location 5; N old male halfling commoner 2)
Albrich Greenleaf is one of the few not addicted to skez. He watched the addiction and death of all three of his sons and now does what little he can to subvert the drug trade.

Devia Brookshire (location 3; LE female halfling bard 2/expert 1)
Devia Brookshire is the source of Suurin's wealth and woes. She rules Suurin; a crime lord prodigy hopped up on skez and without a shred of moral conscience.

Leylan Brookshire (location 7; N male halfling commoner 1)
A close friend of Devia he was the first to become addicted to skez. For some time, he acted as her second in command. Now, he's just another skez-head starving on the street.

Ragran (location 2; LN female half-orc expert 3)
Ragran is a hard working alchemist. She cares little for politics, and keeps her head down. After she accidentally blew up her last employer's laboratory, she's just happy to have a job.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Most of the village comprises halfling burrows. A few locations, however, are of interest to adventurers:

1. **Blue Daffodil Fields:** Fields of dark blue flowers provide both natural beauty and the raw ingredients for skez production.
2. **The Factory:** Within the cramped factory, eight alchemists work in shifts to ensure skez production never stops.
3. **Brookshire Residence:** Devia runs all operations from her ancestral burrow (where she also stores her skez).
4. **The Barracks:** The hobgoblins' barracks is an orderly, foul-smelling enlarged burrow.
5. **Main Street:** Skez-heads stumble across the main street or sleep face-down in the mud beside the cobblestones.
6. **Greenleaf Residence:** Albrich Greenleaf considers himself the last bastion of decency in a corrupted village, and imagines his residence to be the last vestige of Suurin's glory days.
7. **Willowbreeze Bar:** A dark silence pervades this outdoor beer garden where skez is washed down with bitter beer.



TUMBLESTONE INN AT A GLANCE

Tumblestone Inn lies a score of miles from the nearest settlement of note. This fortified inn, established 20 years ago, lies in a wilderness region unclaimed by any lord. Its owner, Aelliah Wilmaytn, now daubed Lady Tumblestone, was the captain of the Crimson Shields mercenary company, who retired after the blood, suffering and constant campaigning became too much for her weary bones. Now, she runs Tumblestone Inn as a place for those with coin to hire mercenaries, sellswords and other martial specialists. Here can be found—among others—bodyguards, siege engineers, mercenaries and more.

The inn serves as neutral ground, a place where patrons and prospective employees can gather and negotiate in relative safety. Aelliah guarantees peace within her walls, and her staunchly loyal guards—veterans of her old company all—back up her word with bared blade. Fist fights are tolerated; but the use of lethal force is forbidden. To Aelliah all have an equal right to safety within her walls; without such a guarantee her business could not function. Those who contravene her laws are summarily ejected and never allowed to again pass through the inn's gate. Because the inn is such a good place for hiring mercenaries, few patrons or mercenaries dare to test her resolve in this matter.

Set upon the fringes of a forest marking the kingdom's borderland, the inn not only acts as a marketplace of sorts, but also as an important, if minor, border fort. Because Aelliah pays for and garrisons the place herself—and watches over the surrounding area—the local lords leave her alone. (That and, of course, they have all had cause to use the inn's unique services from time to time).

The inn itself is built upon the ruins of a much older keep. Destroyed in a border raid nearby a century ago, none of the lord's family survived the onslaught. With no one to inherit the place—and wreathed as it was in tragedy and vague suggestions of a terrible curse—the site lay unclaimed. Thus the keep faded from prominence until the so-called Battle of Tumblestone when the Crimson Shields defended the place against the Jagged Fang orcs. After the battle, Aelliah, tiring of blood, slaughter and death, claimed the place as her own and set about building Tumblestone Inn.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Ruler Aelliah Wilmaytn

Population 66* (56 humans, 2 dwarves, 1 gnome, 3 half-elves, 4 half-orcs) This number represents permanent residents; normally upwards of 40 other folk can be found here.

Alignments LN, N, NG

Languages Common

Resources & Industry Mercenaries

LORE

A PC making a Knowledge (geography) or Knowledge (local) check may know something about Tumblestone Inn. A successful check reveals all information revealed by a lesser check.

DC 10: Tumblestone Inn is the place to go if you want to hire mercenaries or sellswords. The inn serves as neutral ground for such dealings.

DC 15: Tumblestone inn is a fortified inn built amid the ruins of an elder fortress sacked by orcs long ago.

DC 20: Aelliah Wilmaytn—Lady Tumblestone—was a skilled mercenary captain and is still a fearsome warrior.

NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the population are nothing more than ordinary semi-retired mercenaries and their camp followers.

- **Appearance** Many of the warriors guarding the inn are now in or approaching middle-age. Many have served Aelliah for decades. They appear as what they are—grizzled, veteran warriors.
- **Dress** Aelliah's guards are well equipped; all wear half-plate and use a variety of personal weapons. The guards' families—many of whom work in the inn—wear typical peasant garb.
- **Nomenclature** *male* Aaro, Hannu, Onni, Teijo, Usko; *female* Aila, Aune, Laila, Pirjo, Terhi; *family* Aalto, Eerola, Leino, Rekunen, Varala.

Some of the inhabitants, however, are notable:

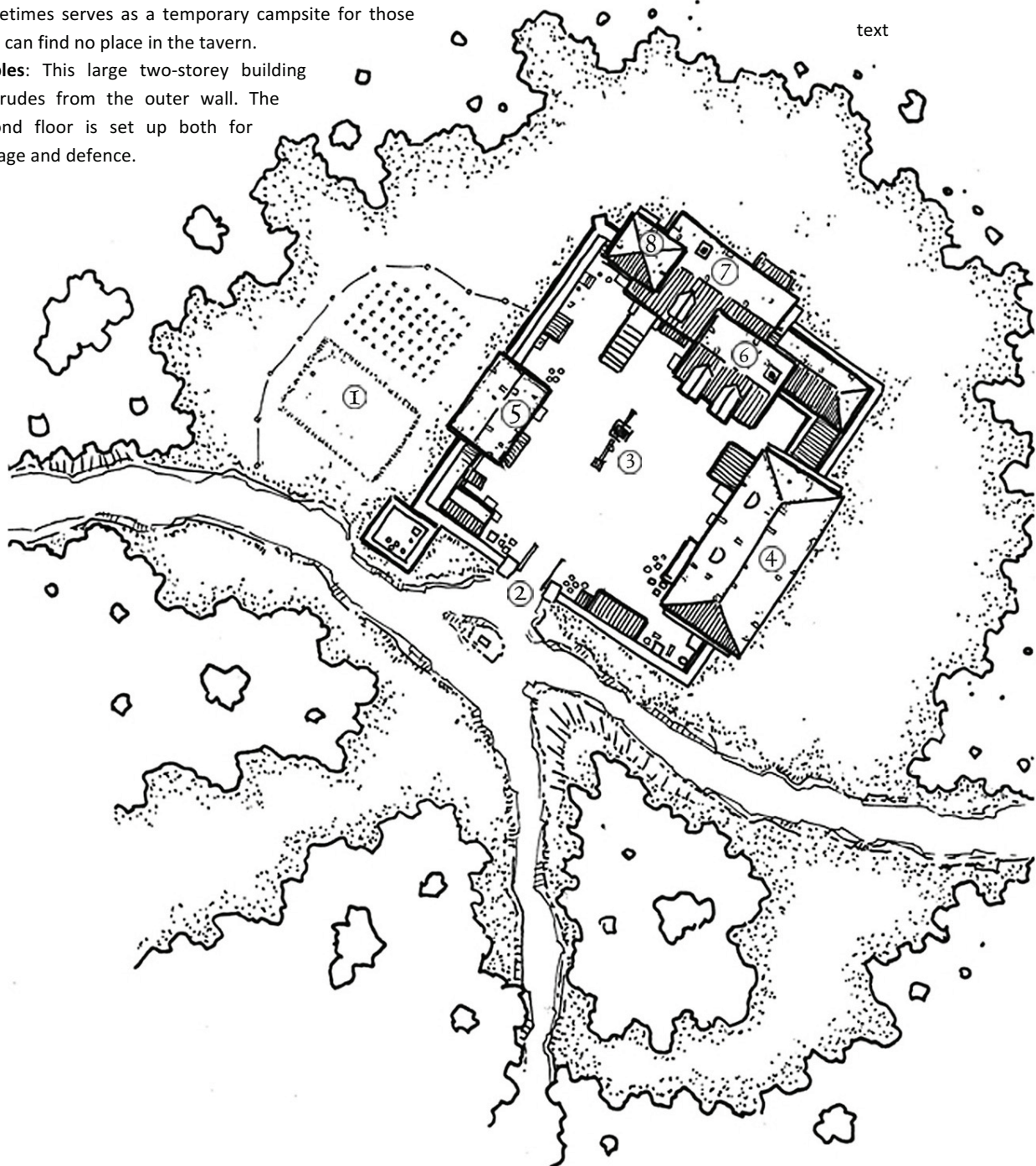
- **Aelliah Wilmaytn (location 8; LN female middle-aged half-elf fighter 8)** Although retired, Aelliah practises daily with her weapons and oversees every part of the inn's operation. She loves the inn—it's the culmination of a long-held dream—and fiercely protects it and her followers.
- **Erfael Fonkinbeak (location 6; N male gnome fighter 2/wizard [illusionist] 5)** Aelliah's lieutenant is a gregarious, hard-drinking fellow who much enjoys the taproom's boisterous atmosphere. He might seem like a fun-loving rake—and in truth he deliberately portrays such—but in reality his eyes miss little of import.
- **Sergeant Mikko Keto (location 8; LN male old human fighter 5)** Fiercely loyal to Aelliah this grizzled old warrior oversees the inn's defences. A childhood friend of Aelliah's mother, Mikko has served Aelliah for five decades and views her as his own flesh and blood.
- **Armas Eerola (location 5; NG male middle-aged human cleric 5/fighter 3)** A devout follower of the god of war, Armas maintains the Chapel of Dancing Blades.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Most of Tumblestone Inn comprises locations of little interest to adventurers. A few locations, however, are notable:

1. **Field of the Fallen:** Here lie the fallen of the Battle of Tumblestone.
2. **Gates:** These always guarded gates open at dawn and close at dusk each day.
3. **Courtyard:** Overlooked by high walls, this expanse of mud sometimes serves as a temporary campsite for those who can find no place in the tavern.
4. **Stables:** This large two-storey building protrudes from the outer wall. The second floor is set up both for storage and defence.

5. **Chapel of Dancing Blades:** Here, mercenaries come to worship the god of war and to practise their martial skills.
6. **The Common Room:** Here—in the throbbing heart of the settlement—much of the business of hiring mercenaries is done. Amid pipe smoke, deals are sealed and compacts made.
7. **The Halls:** Here, the inn's guests rest, sleep and plot.
8. **The Black Tower:** So named for its fire-blackened stones, this tower rises high above the rest of the compound. It is the only part of the original keep to survive relatively intact.



GLOAMHOLD UPDATES

Over the recent month, several updates to various locations in Gloamhold have emerged from the shadows...

NEW MONSTER: THE SINKWEB

Found in the deepest, the oldest or the foulest spider-haunted dungeons, sinkwebs are silent, lurking killers.

Comprising the semi-sentient tendrils of huge, ancient spider webs and insatiable desire to hunt and kill drives sinkwebs to seek out warm flesh to feast upon. Encrusted with the dust and grime of ages past these thickly woven webs hold the mummified remains of countless creatures great and small.

Animated by the necrotic energies released when prey dies trapped within their silken confines, they are merciless, near infinitely patient ambush predators. Terrifyingly these animate undead are capable of limited movement. Unlike a normal spider web, they do not have to wait for their prey to blunder into their threads; rather they silently inch through their dungeon-homes in search of food. Countless adventurers have died screaming, jolted from their slumber by the first silken, but impossibly strong, caress of a sinkweb falling across their prone bodies.

Attracted by a ready supply of food, vast colonies of tiny spiders often infest sinkwebs and pour forth in scuttling swarms to fall upon those caught in its powerful embrace. Thus, adventurers unfortunate enough to encounter a sinkweb must not only contend with the creature itself, but also with its tiny, mindless—and ever-hungry—allies.

They hunt by first grappling and then pulling prey deep into its silken embrace. Vulnerable to fire, they can be driven off by its presence, but are otherwise implacable and fearless hunters.

THE FLAMING LADY

Also known as the Lady's Light by delvers, this partially sunken wreck—the Lady's Kiss—was once a smugglers' vessel. Dragged deep into Gloamhold by the Murkwater's capricious and uncaring spring tides, the boat became wedged in a deep notch cleaving the unforgiving rock of the Murkwater's bank.

Its crew survived for a few desperate weeks, huddled on a nearby ledge until—one by one—hunger, thirst and—ultimately—madness claimed them all. Before he died, one of the doomed band wreathed the ship's warrior woman figurehead in permanent, but heatless, writhing flames. Although the priest—and all his comrades—are long dead, the flames live on and the battered wreck has become a well-known waymarker for explorers and adventurers.

Although its crew are all dead, the Lady's Kiss isn't abandoned. Pounded by waves, picked over by scavengers and ignored by those that know better it is home to a small colony of lacedons. Led by two particularly powerful specimens—once crewmen on the Lady's Kiss—the colony prey on the weak and those venturing too close to the wreck.

VARMA' PIT

Named for the adventurer credited with discovering this gigantic sinkhole, Varma's Pit is nothing more than a huge hole piercing the rock above the Twilight City's crumbling, shadowed precincts. Hidden among a great stand of stunted, wind-blasted thorn bushes and dwarf trees, it is hard to find. To make matters worse, its walls and ledges are inherently unstable and crumble if unduly disturbed. If that wasn't enough to deter explorers, centuries of bat guano deposits make climbing here all but suicidal.

Vast colonies of bats—some monstrously huge and others strangely deformed—nest in the Pit's walls and emerge at night in a near-constant stream to hunt in the fresh open air. Ever hungry, persistent stories circulating among adventurers bestow these bats with a sinister, preternatural hunger for warm flesh.

Even so, Varma's Pit holds a special attraction to adventurers. For on the brightest of summer days, when the sun's golden orb is directly overhead, its rays cut through the deep gloom below to caress the uppermost portions of the Twilight City's many ruined ziggurats almost 1,000 ft. below.

The fate of Varma herself remains unknown. After she discovered it was—in theory—possible to reach the Twilight City without having to dare the Murkwater's treacherous tides, Varma spent months organising a secretive, but well-funded and equipped, expedition to explore the so-called Pit and to find a route down to the city far below. A trickle of survivors—mainly porters and men-at-arms—straggled back into Languard a month after the expedition set out, but all they could report was that Varma and her companions descended into the Pit early one morning and never emerged. The following night, a vast storm of carnivorous bats burst forth from the darkness and set upon those awaiting their mistress's return. The survivors fled, and Varma's fate—and that of her companions—remains a mystery.

Varma's Pit is also known as the Cave of the Long Drop and Slaughter Fall (both named after Varma's supposed fate).

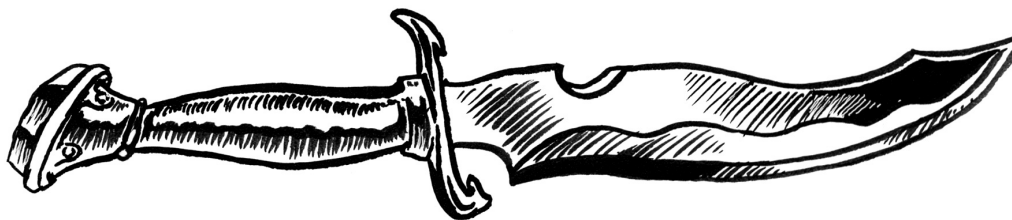
20 VILE THINGS TO FIND IN A CULTIST'S LAIR

Cultists often seek out terrible deities and alien entities in their quest for power and to further their nefarious ends. They often use profane and vile accoutrements in blasphemous rituals to venerate their terrible, fell masters.

1. Ten blood red candles containing teeth and fingernail clippings. When lit, the candles smell of fresh blood.
2. Three suits made from humanoid flesh and decorated with animal skulls, fur and feathers.
3. The faint outline of a summoning circle. Black, acrid smoke drifts up from it—seemingly from nowhere—and the air smells like tar.
4. Four humanoid skulls inscribed with symbols pertaining to the cult. Slips of paper with names written on them are stuffed into the skulls' mouths.
5. Three golden statues of local, good-aligned gods stained with fresh blood.
6. A gold encased skull of a demon or devil (worth 150 gp). The eyes glow dimly—and sinisterly—red.
7. A 10-foot tall sculpture of a deity, entity or creature the cult reveres made from various parts of human limbs sown together. Smoke constantly drifts from the statue's nostrils.
8. A pool filled with a strange, red fluid gives off a silver glow. It's not poisonous or magic but leaves a luminescent glow behind if smeared on anything. A horned, humanoid skull rests at the bottom of the pool.
9. The burnt remains of sacred holy texts and items smoulder on an obsidian altar.
10. This 3-foot tall idol of a squamous creature constantly oozes a thin, milky and slightly caustic ooze (and deals 1d4 acid damage if touched).
11. The tattered wings of an angelic creature are pinned to the wall with black, metal spikes.
12. A number of jars of various sizes containing the pulsating organs of a demon; all emit a stench of brimstone, if opened.
13. Six corpses lying on slabs and awaiting reanimation—their hands have been removed and replaced with cruel looking weapons grafted onto the corpses' arms.
14. The skeleton of some giant, painted black and engraved with unholy rites. It occasionally trembles slightly.
15. Two matching drinking vessels made from unicorn horns stained red with blood.
16. A gorgeously illuminated holy text except the images of the good deity and its servants have been replaced with demons, devils or other strange creatures.
17. An altar fashioned from the small skulls of numerous tiny fey. Bloody tears weep from their sockets and the air around it smells like spoiled milk.
18. A pool filled with a green, viscous slime emitting a smell of decay and cinnamon.
19. A skeleton, half-dissolved, lies within a summoning circle inscribed with pulsating runes.
20. Four necklaces made from the teeth of an angelic creature and onyx (each 150 gp each; if worn by a good-aligned creature they emit a profound aura of sadness).

There is a 25% chance that touching a profane object has disastrous consequences.

1. The PC is possessed by an alien entity until the next time he sleeps.
2. A surge of profane energy envelops the PC, dealing 2d6 damage.
3. The PC sees horrific visions for the next hour, taking a –2 penalty on all rolls.
4. The PC's alignment turns evil for 24 hours.
5. An evil outsider (demon, devil etc.) appears and is quite angry.
6. The PC can only speak in an ancient, alien language for the next 24 hours.
7. Worms and insects crawl out from the earth and woodwork wherever the PC goes for one week.
8. The PC learns the true name of an evil entity who now wants that PC dead.
9. The PC has terrible nightmares of a vile, rotting city; he cannot regain hit points through rest for one week.
10. An evil doppelganger of the PC appears in a nearby settlement and causes mayhem and chaos.



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