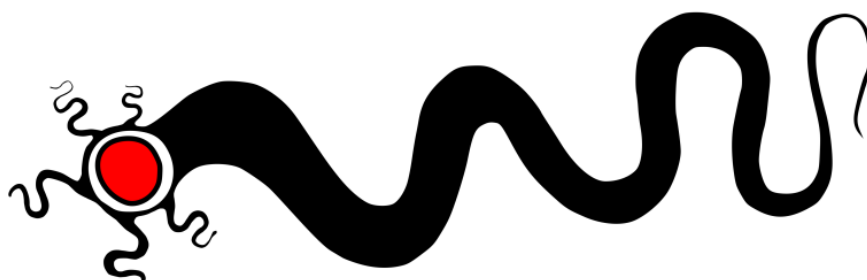


Dead End A Tékumel One-Shot

INSPIRED BY PATRICK BRADY'S SERIES OF "SHÉDRA ONE-SHOTS"



Summary: *The Tsolyáni civil war is raging. Pursued by soldiers of the Legion of the Lord of Red Devastation and their hláka scouts, legionaries belonging to the Battalions of the Seal of the Worm (the PCs) are escorting a wounded priest of Sarkú and the mysterious artifact he carries to ruins where they hope to find a means of escape. The PCs and their wounded master arrive at the ruins to find them occupied by a group of chnéhls. After gaining access to some underground passages, the PCs finally enter an abandoned tubeway-car station where they board a transport just as the Red Devastation soldiers rush in. After a few hours of travel, the PCs reach the city of Sarkú where Prince Dhich'uné has assembled his troops on the eve of their attack on the imperial city of Avanthár.*

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High-definition copies of the maps included in the following document, without numbered-keys, may be found in the file archives of Brett Slocum's Tékumel Discussion Group, [in the following folder](#).

Note: you may have to sign up to the Yahoo Group to be able to download the maps.

Version 170619.

Dead End A Tékumel One-Shot

ABOUT THIS ADVENTURE

This system-agnostic one-shot with a twist gives players the chance to get a taste of Tékumel in a fun and unusual way. There's magic, monsters, dungeons, and futuristic technological marvels, with an epic, although almost purely descriptive, epilogue. More importantly, the players get to play **shédras**, living-dead soldiers.

When the adventure starts, the PCs are indeed already dead: they've just been called back to something like life by their company's priest, who is himself badly wounded.

This adventure's unusual premise was first imagined and used by Patrick Brady in his own, convention-style sessions. It has been shamelessly adapted here, making this adventure a one-off: there's a beginning, a middle, and an end, with no chance of ever going back to playing the same PCs who start dead and stay dead!

All of it is designed to excite the imagination of the players, surprise them perhaps, and maybe make them want to explore Tékumel further, this time with standard PCs, over the course of a series of longer, more complex adventures.

The following document is organized into seven parts. Each part gives an overview of the events that occur in that section of the adventure, and offers a series of notes, suggestions, and commentaries on said events.

These notes and suggestions are only there to help the game referees who may not be very familiar with the world of Tékumel. Referees used to the world will have no trouble running the adventure, which, as any convention-style one-shot, is quite simple and railroad.

This adventure takes place during the Tsolyáni civil war, on Dohála 25, 2366 A.S.. A day later, Prince Dhich'uné, a Sárku priest and one of the heirs of the recently deceased Emperor Hirkané, launches an attack on the seat of Imperial power in Tsolyánu, the Golden Tower of Avanthár, with his legions of dead and other-plane troops.

This adventure's starting location is not very important. In its test-runs, the scorched forest was placed a little ways off from the city of Purdimál. Of course, you may choose to start your version of this adventure anywhere you please.

RECENT EVENTS

A priest of The Worm based in Purdimál acquired a high-map of the Ancients which he believes may help Prince Dhich'uné win the war now raging across Tsolyánu.

Escorted by soldiers of the Battalions of the Seal of the Worm, but pursued by tipped off Red Devastation troops, the priest set off for some nearby ruins where he hoped to find a tubeway station and the means by which to reach the city of Sárku quickly.

However, the Vimúhla soldiers caught up with the priest and his escort, and attacked them just as they were about to reach the ruins. All of the Worm Lord troops were killed. The priest managed to hide, badly wounded, a few meters away from the battlefield.

From his hiding place, the wounded Worm cleric decided to call back a handful of soldiers from the dead, have them

recover the high-map of the Ancient from the battle zone, and help him reach the ruins.

PART 1: PROLOGUE

Your players may wake up in the middle of the battle zone, right from the get-go: after a flash of light, they open their eyes and find themselves coming back to their senses on the scorched battlefield. That's a perfectly good way of starting this adventure, of course. But you may also choose to start it by offering your players a taste of Tékumel's cosmic-horror undercurrents.

It goes without saying that, at the adventure's outset, your players should not know that they are about to play living-dead player characters (PCs); discovering their true nature is part of the fun! But improvising your opening scene along the lines of the following description may help some of your players realize that things are a bit off right from the get-go.

The Void.

A Darkness.

A white light dwindles away in the distance. The PCs are falling ... floating ... towards another glow. The sound of wind over waves crashing on an invisible shore rises around them.

The Isles of ...

Suddenly, the shrinking white light turns red and the fall of the PCs stops. They suddenly find themselves pulled back towards the scarlet luminescence. The sounds of waves and wind recede, slowly replaced by a low but powerful hum.

In the dark emptiness surrounding the reddish light, monumental, undulating shapes coagulate, slowly twisting and writhing. Their pull on the PCs becomes stronger, and stronger ...

A flash!

PART 2: THE SCORCHED FOREST

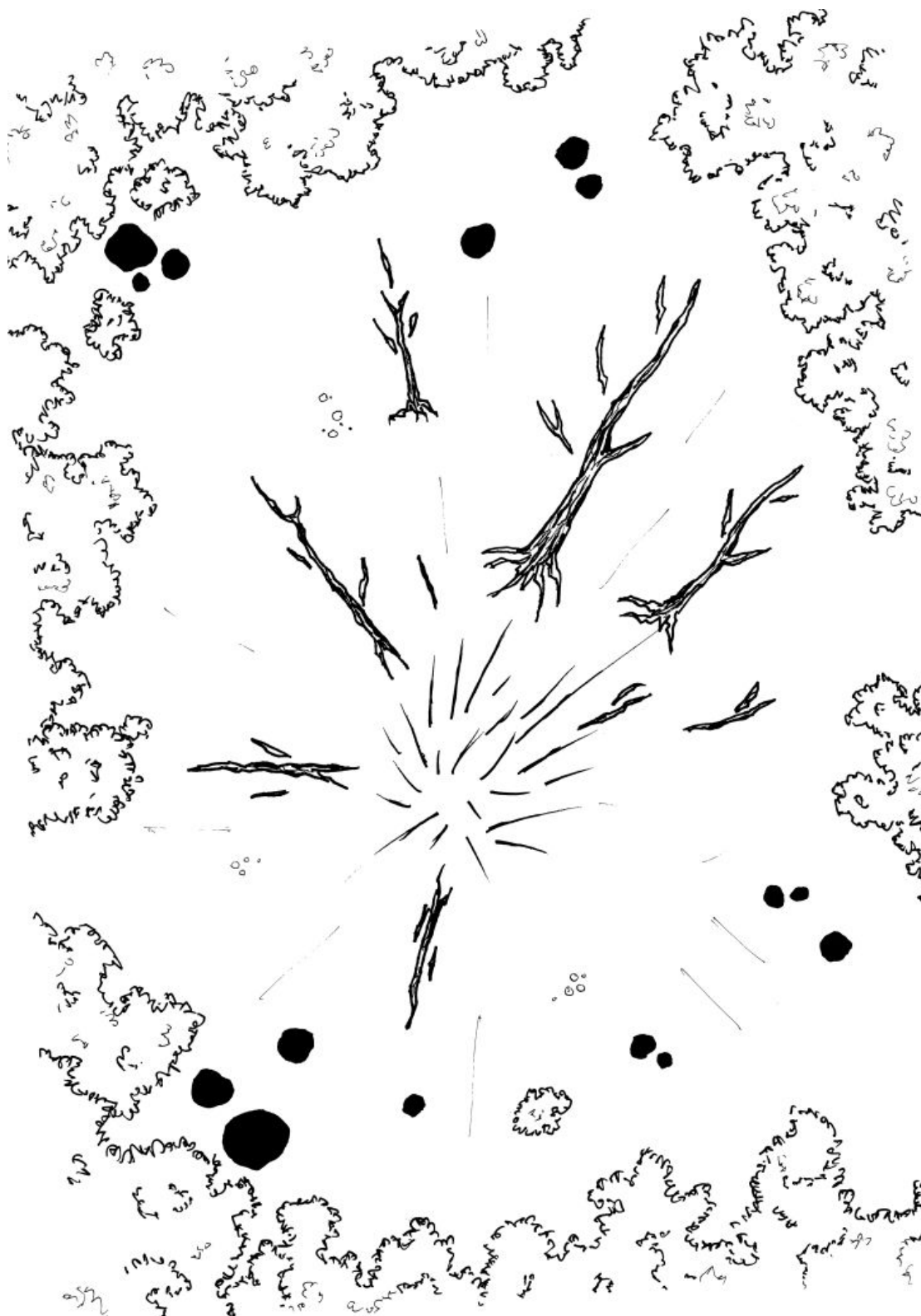
OVERVIEW

The player-characters wake up as **shédras** in the middle of a scorched battlefield surrounded by a thick jungle. At first, none of them has any memory of what happened. In fact, they should not know, at this point, that they have been brought back from the dead.

One thing is certain: a brief, violent battle occurred, and they are lying in the middle of what's left of it. The scorched armor-clad cadavers of soldiers belonging, like them, to the Battalions of the Seal of the Worm can be seen all around. There are others too, wearing the armor of the feared Legion of the Lord of Red Devastation.

In the sky, two or three **hláka** scouts (working for the Red Devastation, as their flame-red arm-bands indicate) are circling. As soon as the PCs move, the flying creatures notice them and blow their battle-horns. As the sound of the scouts' horns echoes over the jungle, another one responds from further in the distance. The hunt is on and the PCs are the preys!

After a moment, the PCs' memory starts to return: lead by a Sárku priest, they were ambushed by Red Devastation



The Scorched Clearing.

Note: the black shapes represent cut-off tree trunks, as seen from above.

troops as they were making their way through the forest to a close-by ruin.

Around this time, the PCs find themselves irresistibly attracted by a “power source” seemingly located a short distance away, under the cover of the thick jungle.

The “power” turns out to be the priest of Sárku who was leading the PCs’ band of legionaries until the attack. He has healed himself, but his eyes look quite sunken from behind his skull-white facial makeup, while he sits, hidden, between the large roots of a giant tree.

After a moment spent observing and examining the PCs with interest (after all, he’s the one who raised them from the dead!), the priest orders the PCs to go back to the battle zone to find an object hidden in the remains of his destroyed litter: “*You’ll know it when you see it. Now, go!*”

The PCs return to the scorched area and find the mysterious object in the scattered debris of the broken litter. It is a palm-size cube made of various colored stones. As they caress it, the PCs can hear indistinct voices whispering in their heads: they have found a small high-map of the Ancients.

The PCs promptly return the object to their master, who tells them that they must now quickly leave the area to find safety in the nearby ruin.

NOTES & SUGGESTIONS

1. THE SCORCHED CLEARING

- Have your players regain consciousness anywhere you feel appropriate on [the map](#). Describe the stench of burnt flesh, the flying chri-flies, the dead legionaries (two factions, two sets of armor), and a broken litter (wherever you want to put it on the map) with its four dead bearer-slaves.

- The PCs should notice that the clearing fire seems to have been very localized. Because there’s still quite a bit of smoke, it’s likely that the conflagration took place no more than an hour ago.

The localized nature of the fire’s damage suggests it was the result of a “Doomkill” spell, cast by the Vimúla priest currently traveling with the group of Red Devastation soldiers searching for survivors of the battle, not far from the scorched clearing.

2. THE PCS AS SHÉDRAS

- The first time this one-shot was run, the players took a while to realize that their PCs were living-dead soldiers. The second time around, clearer hints were given right from the beginning. A PC woke up to notice that a **hláka** javelin was piercing his mid-section completely painlessly. Another had to wait for his comrades to tell him that he had three arrows stuck in his back, a little detail he had not noticed since he didn’t feel anything! A **hláka** shrieking “*Shédra!*” as he/it flew away from the battlefield also worked.

However you choose to reveal to your players that their PCs are living-dead, consider making it as horrific and surprising as possible. It’s just more fun.

- It is reported that in the one-shot that inspired this adventure, the **shédras** wake up suffering from complete amnesia before gradually remembering what happened and who

they were before their deaths (their names, their skills, etc). In this adventure’s test-runs, the opposite occurred: the PCs started with complete memories of their past lives (“skills” in game parlance) before gradually forgetting details as they became “more and more dead!” (in game terms, skill checks related to certain bits of knowledge were made harder by increasing their difficulty as the adventure progressed). At the end of the one-shot, the PCs had no memory of their past lives (names, clans, other languages, etc.) and only could remember their soldiering skills.

- Don’t hesitate to mention to the players that their PCs’ appearance changes as the one-shot progresses, that is, “the longer they stay dead”: everybody’s eyes should gradually turn white, the PCs’ skin should get paler and grayer, lips should recede to show more teeth and gums, etc. Let’s call it “accelerated decrepitude”.

- Read up about **shédras** in whichever rule-book you’re using. Just keep in mind that these creatures can see in the dark and regain their strength (hit points) by eating people, zombie-film style. In that instance, make sure that whenever your PCs get close to corpses after getting wounded, they should feel hungry, like they’ve never felt before!

3. DETAILS ON THE LEGIONS

THE BATTALIONS OF THE SEAL OF THE WORM

- Weaponry: long sword + mace + long spear + light crossbow.
- Appearance: a copper helmet with a black crest and a white trim. A copper armor with a black trim. A white kilt. A black and white shield with a copper trim.

THE LEGION OF THE LORD OF RED DEVASTATION

- Weaponry: two-handed sword.
- Appearance: a blue, masked helmet with a red-orange crest and a gold trim. A blue armor with a gold trim. A white kilt. A blue and red-orange shield with a gold trim. A red-orange cloak with a gold trim.

4. THE RED DEVASTATION IN HOT PURSUIT

- Throughout this one-shot, it’s important to remind your players that they are being hunted/pursued by a powerful enemy, those fun-because-utterly-fanatical Red Devastation soldiers! Keep the pressure on your PCs by suddenly describing the sound of a war-horn rising from the distance, “... *and it feels like it’s getting closer*”.

Of course, once the players enter [the ruins](#), they shouldn’t be able to hear the war-horns anymore. So wait for them to reach the “[pyramid level](#)” and describe how the walls suddenly start to shake and tremble, with dust and rubble falling from the ceiling: that’s the Red Devastation soldiers and their accompanying priest of Vimúla attacking the **chnéhl** living in the levels above. “... *They’re getting closer!*” Later, once the players have dispatched the two **ru’úns** encountered in [Part 6](#) of this one-shot, and have had time to call a tubeway-car, tell them that the Red Devastation soldiers have entered the tubeway station, and that they,

the PCs, are about to get attacked ... just as the tubeway transport arrives!

- In other words, the Red Devastation is here to scare the players and push them along, not to destroy their PCs. If there were to be a confrontation between the PCs and the Red Devastation NPCs, the PCs would surely perish, as they are out-numbered and under-powered. Moreover, this one-shot is supposed to help give the players a glimpse of what Tékumel can offer. So killing them before the end would be counter-productive.

5. THE HLÁKAS

- Use the **hlákas** to keep the pressure on the PCs, when near the scorched jungle clearing, when on their way to the ruins, and when observing the ruins. You may also have the **hlákas** attack the PCs from time to time too; these creatures will only attack once before flying to safety though.

- As you describe the PCs' regaining consciousness, pick one player and tell her that her semi-unconscious PC feels that someone or something is trying to rob her. As soon as the PC opens her eyes, describe that she's being robbed by a winged humanoid (a **hláka** scout!), who is trying to get to a purse or some similar object tucked under the soldier's armor. The **hláka**, at first startled by the PC's regaining consciousness/coming back to life, realizes almost immediately that a **shédra** has risen: the flying non-human then escapes in terror, shrieking "*Shédra! Shédra!*".

6. ADDITIONAL NOTES

- The PCs should not know what a "high-map of the Ancients" is. Depending on their personal backgrounds, have them roll difficult "knowledge-of-the-world" rolls (whatever that is in the system you are using). This is indeed very rare stuff, that only priests (very educated ones at that) know something about. In other words, it's fine, perhaps preferable, if that object remains weird and unknowable for the whole of this adventure.

- Have a bunch of human Vimúla scouts arrive on the scene just as the PCs start looking for the high-map of the Ancients. The human scouts reach the area way ahead of the Red Devastation soldiers. See how your PCs deal with them. This could be a good occasion to reveal to them that they don't feel pain when hit by swords or stones, nor do they bleed ... nor ... "*Wait, are we dead?!*"

- Tékumel is a tropical world. Don't hesitate to play with the weather, just for mood. Have a heavy rain come in as the first section progresses for instance, and keep it going until the PCs enter the underground ruins. Once they reach the city of Sarkú, mention that the sky has now completely cleared to reveal Tékumel's starless sky. Such details suggest the passing of time and give players

the sense that the world is alive.

PART 3: THE RUIN

OVERVIEW

After a brief hike through the thick, oppressive jungle, the PCs and their master reach some ruins, located on top of a small outcrop. The ruins have been taken over by a group of **chnéhls**, a semi-intelligent race of ape-like creatures. To get inside, the PCs may choose to attack the creatures frontally (to enter via [Entrance A](#)), or they may observe how the mutant-apes discard their refuse and realize that there is a "safer" way in (via [Entrance B](#)).

NOTES & SUGGESTIONS

1. HIKING THROUGH THE JUNGLE

- Give the PCs a brief description of the jungle. Think dense, with enormous trees rising above a thick undergrowth. Think giant ferns, phosphorescent flora and fauna. Whistling trees. Strange crawling reddish mushrooms. Insects flying here and there, chris (flies), aqpú (dark-green scarabs), drí (ants), etc. You don't have to be super detailed, but a few brief descriptive words here and there help set the mood and create a unique ambiance.

- You may also choose to frighten your players a little by mentioning that their PCs notice two **zrnés** (six-legged, 2.5m predators) trailing them from afar. Don't have these creatures attack the players though. Again, this is mood/setting-establishing stuff.

2. THE HLÁKAS

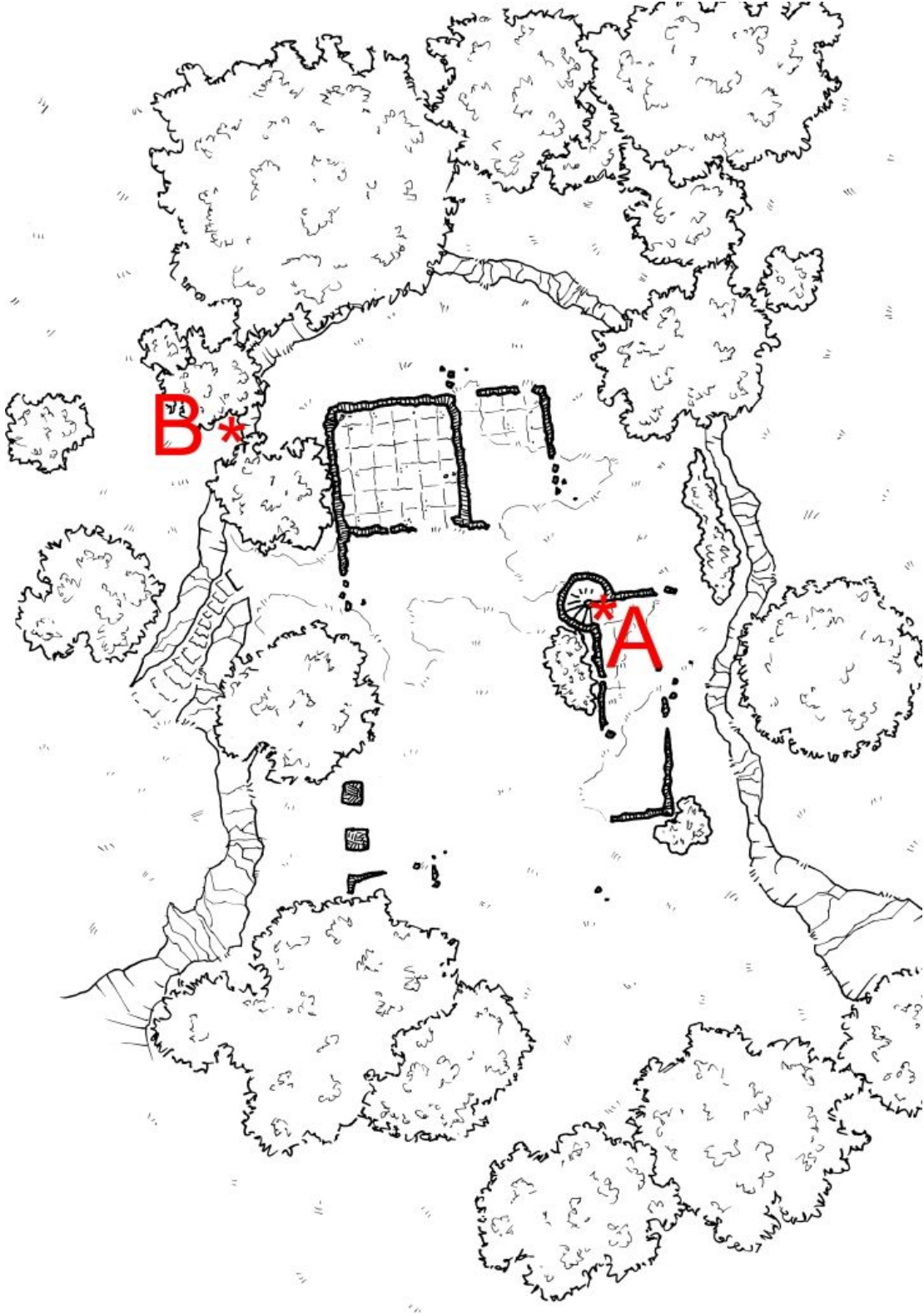
- The pesky flying scouts are still around, tracking the PCs as they make their way through the jungle to the ruins. They're also still using their war-horns to mark the PCs' position in relation to the pursuing group of Red Devastation legionaries. So use them to keep the pressure on your players. At no time should their PCs feel safe. Of course, the PCs can always attempt to shoot one or two of the scouts down. They may even succeed!

3. THE CHNÉHL

- A group of **chnéhl** calls the ruin home. There's about thirty individuals: youngsters and adults of both sexes. The group is lead by a bigger and smarter leader. Most adults are armed with small and large clubs. The leader is armed with a chlén-hide mace.

If you don't find these creatures to be an appealing obstacle, feel free to replace them with brigands, renegade soldiers, some other vat-mutant species, etc.

- Around the ruins, half-eaten human bodies are scattered. With the civil war raging in the region, there's plenty of food to be found! Heads of human legionaries are impaled on



The Ruin.

sharp stakes and positioned here and there, in the ruin's immediate vicinity.

- When the PCs arrive, there's a handful of **chnéhl** going about their business. Some are eating, some are digesting, some are sleeping, some are keeping a watchful eye on the surrounding forest, etc. Others go in and out of [Entrance A](#).

- This being Téकुmel, consider giving this group of ape-creatures realistic behaviors, probably inspired by the ones of gorilla colonies in the central regions of Africa, but with a proto-language and the ability to use fire, as well as crude and not-so crude weapons.

4. THE RUIN ENTRANCES

ENTRANCE A

- This is the regular entrance, so to speak. It leads to **Room 7** of [the underground portion of the ruins](#). **Chnéhls** are always present here, day and night, feeding, playing, napping, guarding the area, etc.

ENTRANCE B

- A pillared, rectangular, man-size opening is located behind the garbage/refuse pile that has been growing here ever since the **chnéhl** moved in. This is indeed where the mutant-apes have been throwing the half-eaten bodies they've been feeding on. The rotting corpses have attracted a colony of **dlaqós** too, which have established a nest under the ruin.
- Your PCs, being **shédras**, will find the rotting carcasses very appetizing, particularly if they've been wounded earlier (in game terms: this is good way for them to regain their lost hit-points). In fact, your PCs won't be able to stop themselves from gorging on the rotting, mostly human, carcasses. Describe away fearlessly!
- A flight of stairs leads down to **Room 1** of [the underground portion of the ruins](#).

PART 4: THE UNDERGROUND COMPLEX

OVERVIEW

However the PCs manage to make their way inside the corridors of the underground ruin, whether by attacking the **chnéhls**, the **dlaqós**, or managing to avoid them altogether, three passages, two of which are secret, lead even deeper under the earth. Down we go!

NOTES & SUGGESTIONS

1. UNDERGROUND COMPLEX MAP KEYS

ROOM 1

- At the entrance, rotting corpses and carcasses pile up. An unbearable stench fills the space, while crawling, squirming, flying insects do their work. Food for the **shédras**!
- There's no light. Walls are covered with rot and molds. Bits of rotten armor lie about. If there were inscriptions on the walls, they're long gone, eaten away by the humidity. Otherwise, the room's empty.

ROOM 2

- There's less stench as your PCs progress deeper into the underground complex.
- A part of the right wall has been rebuilt relatively recently: tools can be seen on the ground in that area. The stone blocks of that portion of the wall can be easily removed, to reveal a passage leading to **room 5**.
- Your PCs may hear, if not see, their first small **dlaqó** here, which should suggest to them that there may be more of these insects ahead.
- If your PCs don't think of giving the room a good inspection and thus miss the discarded tools, they will have to fight their way through the **dlaqó** nest. There are five or six individuals there, small ones and a couple of large specimens.

ROOM 3

- This is the **dlaqó** nest proper. The PCs will be attacked on sight if they enter this area. The insects will fight to the death.
- There are plenty of **dlaqó** eggs to be found. Rotting corpses as well, dragged-in from outside.
- The right side of the room is barricaded from the **chnéhl** side of the underground complex. The PCs will have to make their way through the stakes and branches of the barricade to reach **room 6**.

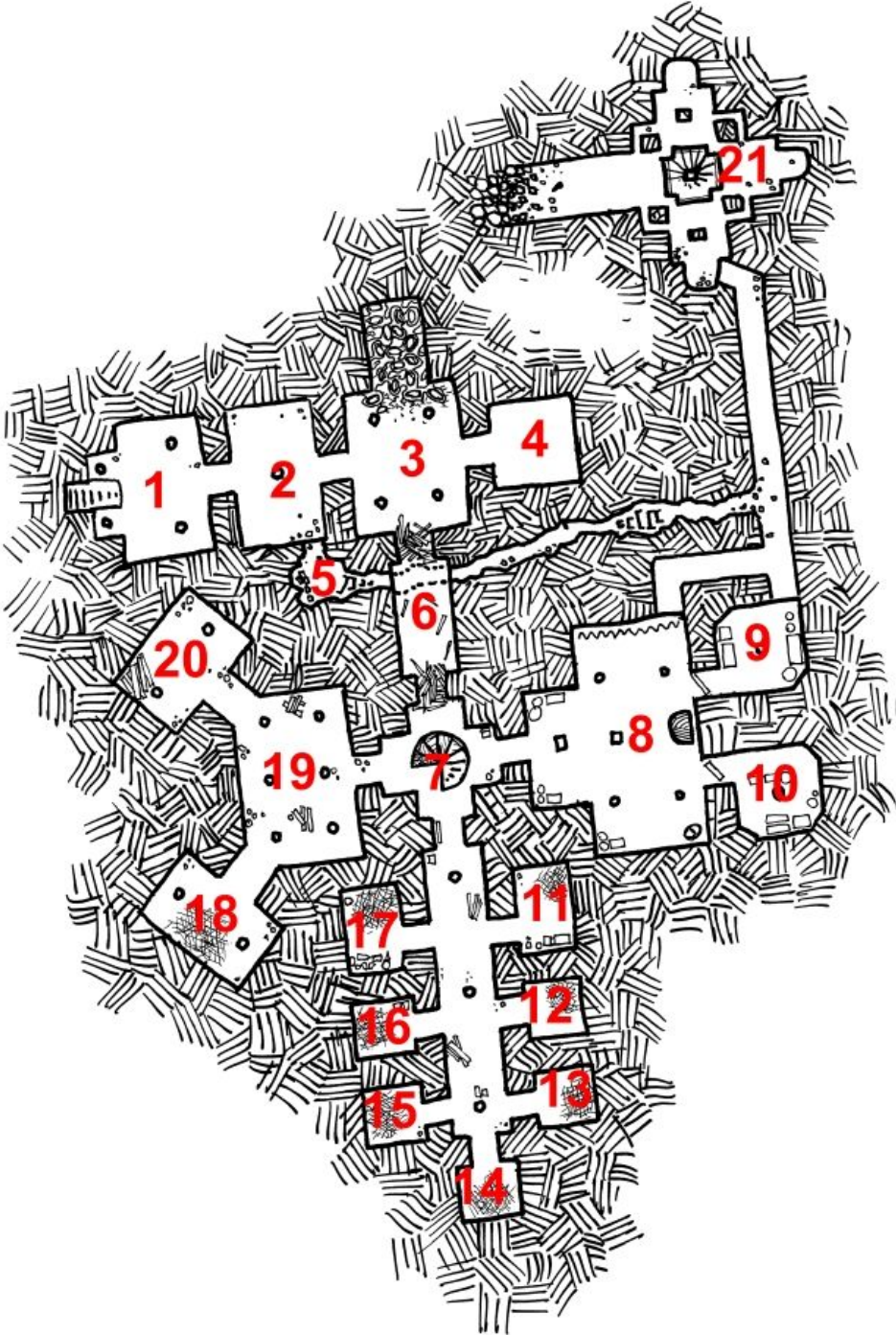
ROOM 4

- The final room of the **dlaqó** nest. Nothing but bones and detritus.

Besides the rotted bits of armor and weapons, there is no treasure to be found anywhere in the **dlaqó** nest rooms.

ROOM 5

- Hammers, picks, and digging tools are scattered about. The rock wall is bare and raw. A passage leads further into the darkness.



The Underground Complex.

ROOM 6

- A barricaded passage made of planks, stakes and branches.

ROOM 7

- Large stone stairs lead up to **Entrance A**.

ROOM 8

- A large empty room with a camp fire burning at the foot of the wall opposite the entrance.
- A rotting piece of tapestry is hanging here. Behind it can be found a secret passage that leads deeper into the underground complex.

Treasure: 5 káitars.

ROOMS 9 & 10

- Put whatever you want here, such as broken pottery, rotten wooden boxes, etc.
- These two rooms are the living quarters of a male and a female **chnéhl**. Your PCs must kill them before they alert the rest of the group.
- **Note for Room 9:** a secret passage leads deeper into the underground complex.

Treasure: 6 káitars + 7 káitars.

ROOMS 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 & 17

- A pungent animal stench floats all over this area. This is where most of the **chnéhls** sleep, eat, and live, on nests made of branches and dry grass. Lots of junk can be found too, along with discarded bits of food, etc.
- There is one female **chnéhl** with a young or two per room.
- If a fight breaks out in this section of the underground ruin, the rest of the **chnéhl** tribe will quickly rush in to fight and attempt to kill the intruders. No quarters!

Treasure: 3 káitars + 2 káitars + 8 káitars + 2 káitars + 5 káitars.

ROOMS 18, 19 & 20

- The **chnéhl** leader resides here, along with two males and five females.

Treasure: one Chén armor of your choice + 17 káitars + a gem worth 12 káitars.

ROOM 21

- A flight of stairs leads deeper underground.

PART 5: THE UNDERGROUND PYRAMID

OVERVIEW

This area reveals a large underground pyramid, but a means of definitely escaping the pursuing Red Devastation soldiers is to be found further down.

NOTES & SUGGESTIONS

- This whole level is empty. These are all merely abandoned rooms, filled with broken tables, crates and bits of pottery scattered around. Although the underground pyramid stands out, there's nothing special about it.
- To keep your players on their toes, you may of course choose to add a monster or two here, or even a Nexus Point, which would open up the one-shot a great deal. You may also choose to fill this space with some other element, like a giant, non-terrestrial plant, such as a large tree-like-fungus growing in one corner of the pyramid-room, with floating, luminescent seeds flying/floating about everywhere.
- This is also where you should remind the PCs that they are still being pursued by the Red Devastation legionaries. So have the walls of the dungeon shake, each time the Vimúla priest traveling with the Red Devastation troops casts a spell to destroy the **chnéhl** tribe living above.

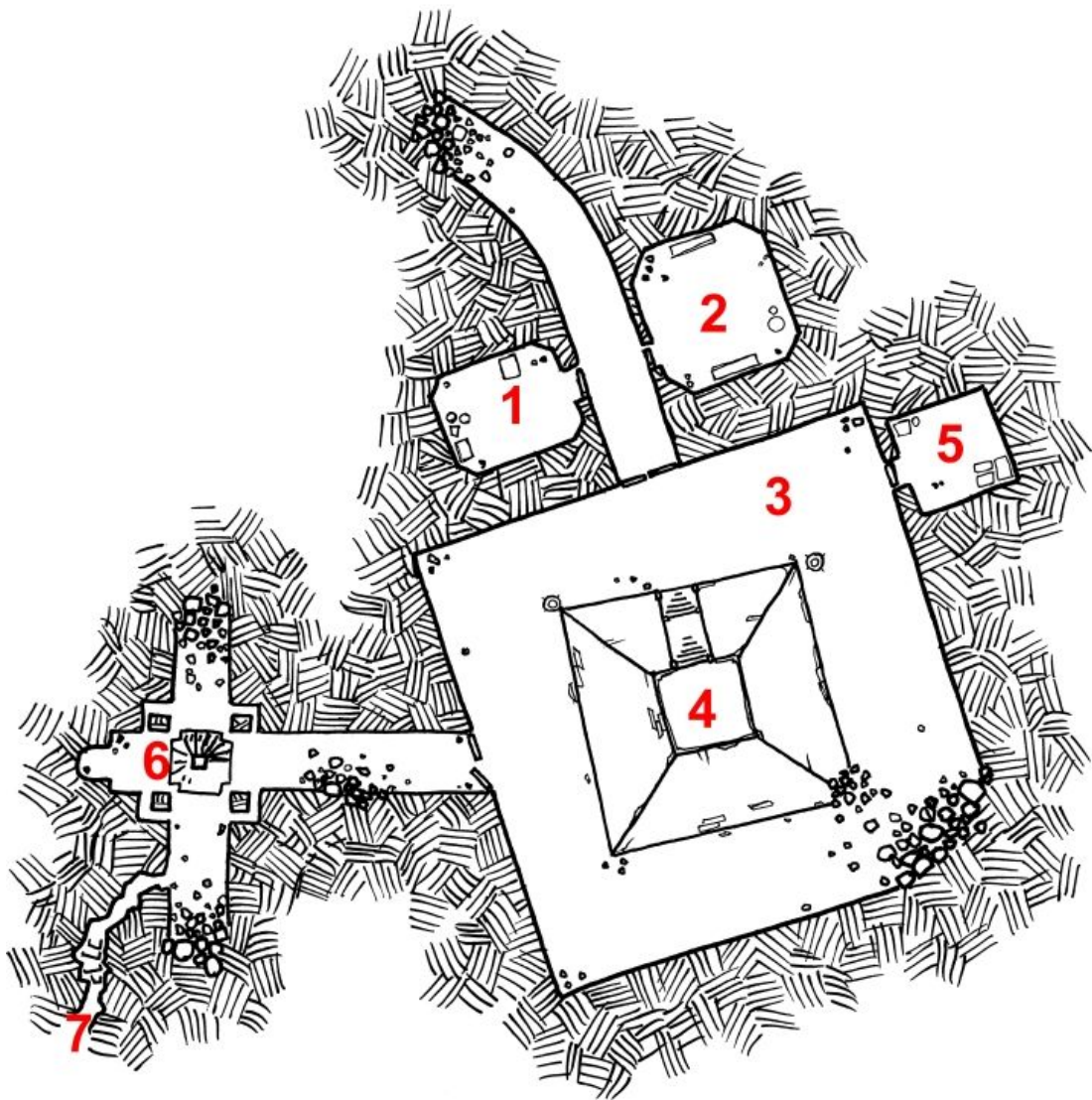
ROOM 7

- This passage leads to the next and final location.

PART 6: THE TUBEWAY-CAR STATION

OVERVIEW

After a few minutes spent making their way through a meandering, low-ceilinged bare-rock tunnel, the PCs and their priest enter an abandoned tubeway-car station, guarded by a couple of robot-soldiers, **ru'úns**. The PCs must destroy them to get to the heart of the tube-station. The Sárku priest (if still alive), or the PCs themselves, will have to call a tubeway-car, which will arrive a few minutes later, just as or a little after the Red Devastation legionaries enter the station.



The Underground Pyramid.

NOTES & SUGGESTIONS

1. TUBEWAY CAR STATION MAP KEYS

ROOM 1

- The walls of this ten meter high hallway are made of metal! “Oooooh ...”.
- Junk (bits of armor, broken weapons, bones, etc.) and lots of dust litter the ground. The whole area is in total darkness.
- In one corner of the hallway, his/her/its back to the PCs, stands a person wearing a complete golden armor. This is a **ru’ún**, of course, although the players might not know it. The **ru’ún** will activate as soon as the PCs approach it. The robotic warrior will turn around, blast the intruders with its frontal light, and emit a few sounds (words from a long-dead language, incomprehensible to the PCs), in essence asking the PCs to identify themselves. Of course, the PCs won’t understand anything, making them incapable of giving the machine a proper reply.
- The **ru’ún** will ask for the PCs’ ID three times before attacking. After the first request, a blade will slide out of the machine’s right forearm through an opening in its wrist. After the second request, the robot will lift its left arm to point it directly at the PC closest to it. The **ru’ún** will attack right after asking for ID a third time.
- Beware, as this is probably the most dangerous fight of the session. Because this fight takes place inside a large room with metal walls, the Sárku priest, if he is still alive, will not be able to use his spells to help the PCs fend off the age-old robot-sentinel.
- When the first **ru’ún** gets close to being destroyed, have a second one, already partially broken, enter the hallway from **room 3**. This one has a missing arm (to be found in **room 3**), and a **ssú** sword stuck in its neck (the dried-up bodies of the **ssús** it killed way back when are located in **room 3** too).

Treasure, found in the junk littering the hallway: a golden ring worth 250 káitars + a copper necklace worth 3 káitars + a silver brooch worth 12.5 káitars + 17 káitars in coins + a **ssú** bastard sword stuck in the second **ru’ún**’s neck.

ROOM 2

- There’s nothing of importance here. Fill it with whatever junk you want.

ROOM 3

- This is the tubeway station proper. It has fifteen meter high ceilings which, as soon as the PCs step in, become luminescent, thus lighting the entire room. A nine meter wide, seemingly bottomless pit opens into the floor.
- Scattered about, the PCs find the dried-up bodies of five **ssús**, along with their gear and leather bags. All have been dead for a very long time.

- Facing the bottomless pit, a stand is erected (3a on the map), with three, flat, colored pushbuttons on top:
The red button, to be pressed to call a transport.
The yellow button, that lits up when a transport is on its way.
The blue button, that shines when a transport is present in the station.
- If the Sárku priest is still alive, he will look at a scroll he brought along with him and press the red pushbutton to call a tubeway-car. If not, the PCs will have to do it themselves (they are not so dead that they can’t think anymore, not yet at least).
- Around this time, about ten or fifteen Red Devastation soldiers should enter **room 1**, accompanied by a priest of Vimúla. They will take a minute or two to orient themselves, which should give the PCs enough time to barricade themselves and call a transport, if they haven’t done so already.
In this one-shot’s test-runs, the Red Devastation soldiers never fought the PCs directly. The Vimúla troops attacked the PCs just as they were boarding the tubeway-car.
Because the plan is to let the PCs reach the city of Sarkú, a good approach would therefore simply be to built up the tension between the PCs waiting for the tubeway transport, and the marauding Red Devastation legionaries getting closer and closer.

Ssú treasure: two gems worth 31 káitars and 15 káitars respectively + 201 káitars in coins + two amulets of your choice + two bastard swords + one Eye of your choice + a spell scroll of your choice.

ROOMS 4 & 5

- There’s nothing of importance here. Fill it with your favorite rubbish!

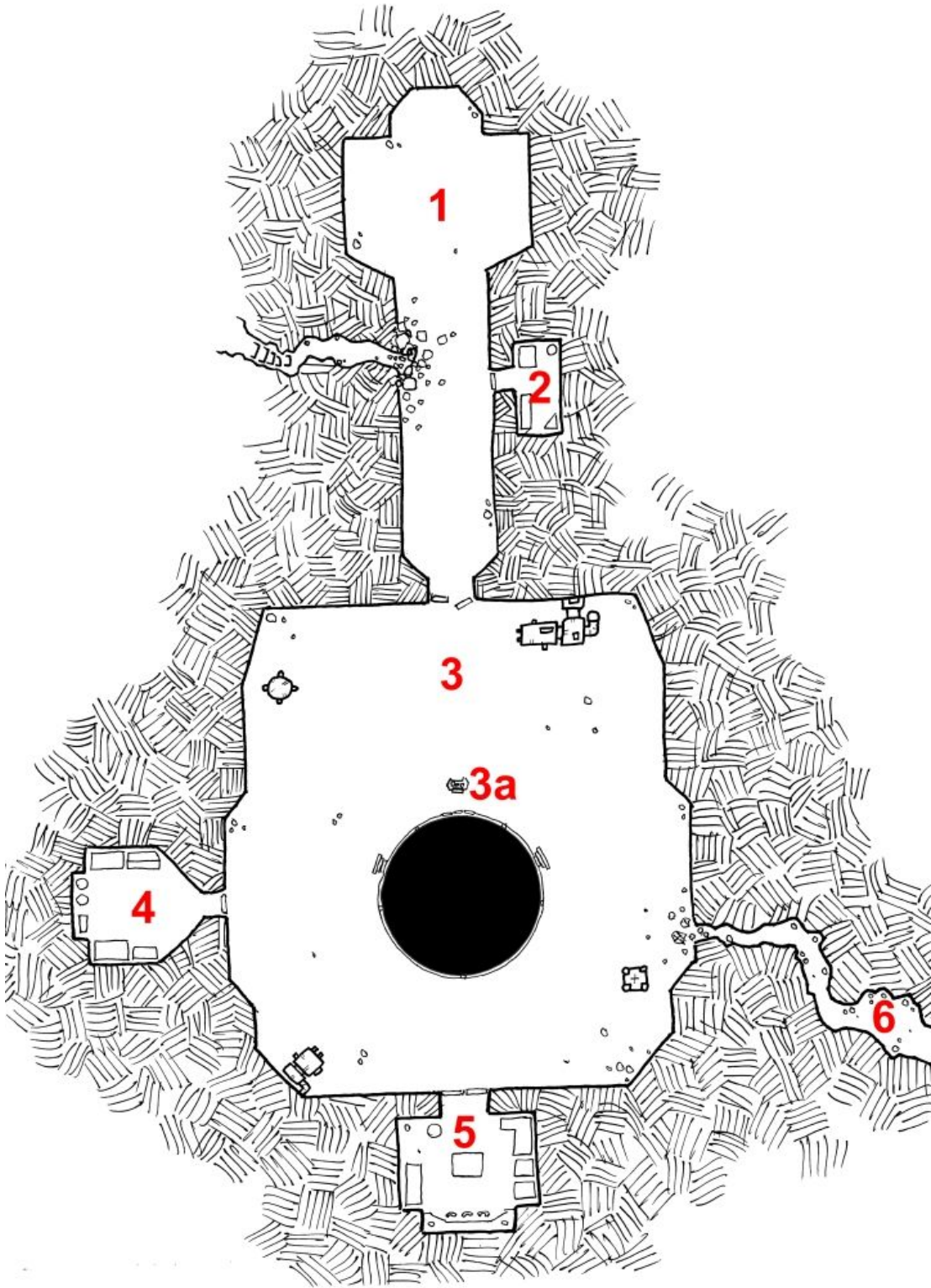
ROOM/PASSAGE 6

- This passage leads off to ... the gods know where.
- You may choose to erase this passage from your version of the map, or let your players explore it further.

2. THE TUBEWAY-CAR

- This futuristic means of transport looks like a silvery globe, nine meters in diameter. One third of it is above ground. Its surface is smooth as an egg, except for a circular line marking the limits of a door. A small protuberance (a button) lets the PCs open that door. Inside, a similar button lets them close it.

- This particular tubeway-car is in good order: once inside, let the players know that there’s air conditioning (it starts as soon as they step in), ambient light, and elevator music



The Tubeway-car Station.

wafting from behind the walls.

PART 7: EPILOGUE

OVERVIEW

The tubeway transport takes the PCs all the way to the city of Sárku, which they reach after a few hours of high-speed travel.

There, non-other than Prince Dhich'uné is arranging his troops on the eve of their assault on Avanthár's Golden Tower.

NOTES & SUGGESTIONS

- This last part of the one-shot is almost entirely descriptive. Your players have already "made it" (escaped the ruined complex with the map of the Ancients), and they will have very little agency over what happens from this point forward. This is about mood and ambiance and "opening up the world".

- The moment the PCs exit their transport, which has arrived in a tubeway station three times as large as the one they left behind, they should notice throngs of other **shédras**, as well as foul creatures of Sarkú (bodies with claws instead of hands, bodies with giant mouths instead of heads, etc.), making their way out of the station, up giant stairs. All seem to be walking along, not paying attention to anything around them, as if mesmerized.

- Unbeknownst to the PCs, a gathering of forces is taking place: Prince Dhich'uné has indeed called upon the living, dead and other-plane legions of Sárku to come together on the eve of an invasion of the capital city of Avanthár to take the Golden Tower and thus, the Petal Throne.

- The PCs follow the flow of other monstrous and living-dead creatures, going through a seemingly endless series of stairs, ramps, corridors, and passages, all surrounded by giant colonnades, porticoes, and frescoes. Imagine the vastness of the underground city/fortress of Moria in J.R.R. Tolkien's "The Lord of the Rings", but built by worshipers of one of H.P. Lovecraft's Elder Gods. An immense, pulsing fracas becomes louder and louder as the PCs go up, echoing from room to room and from hall to hall.

- As the PCs progress, surrounded by an ever increasing number of non-dead soldiers and deformed creatures, they should start to feel a sort of exultation rising inside them as fast as the last memories of their past lives as living soldiers of Sarkú fade from their minds.

- Finally, our band of heroic (albeit dead) adventurers reaches a stony platform, opened to the sky, situated high above a natural crescent-shaped, rocky basin surrounded by five dark hills. There, Sárku's legions have gathered: thousands of soldiers, living and dead, striking their armors rhythmically, expectantly. The fracas! Night has fallen since the PCs entered the **chnéhl** ruins, now located far to the east. The dark night-sky is cloudless and star-less. Tékumel's two moons, reddish Káshi and greenish Gayél, light the foreboding landscape.

- On the platform's edge, overlooking the dreadful vista, his back to the PCs, a **vorodlá** officer stands in full armor. The creature's triangular, emaciated face turns to the PCs and orders "Get to your legion! *Eternal Splendor awaits!*" before jumping off, wings spread wide, into the open space in front of him.

- On the other side of the basin, stands a dark fortress. Soon, at the top of its highest wall, a man in full priestly regalia comes forth: it is Prince Dhich'uné, his face, hands, arms, and legs painted white to look like bones. Tomorrow, he will be the new Emperor of Tsolyánu. The Prince raises his bone-white arm, waits a beat, and lowers it slowly. The fracas stops and, as its echoes reverberate across the rocky landscape, the city of Sarkú falls silent.

The End.

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