

# BACKSTORY GASTROPOD

## THE SHAMEFUL CHILD

Zenbestefunkh and Kobi realised they have made a terrible mistake.

Solum can only be born from a Tertiary Marriage of Male, Female and Solum, and only through this marriage can the name of a House descend.

The three had accidentally birthed an Heir to the Houses of Zor and Kalasp, and even worse, they were part.. *something*. Not Born of Fire at all.

Both Nobles insisted that Zemo's gender be hidden. Disguised as a male they could be regarded as nothing more than the product of a dalliance, of which the Nobility have many. Of the House, but not fully in it, and definitely not a threat to the current rulers, the intended line of descent or the delicate balance of power. Not the spark for a war.

For it became more evident to Ignis Zor-Fyr and Duke Kalasp, that their great contest of Palace-Building was drawing to an inevitable close. There was simply no room for new palaces, unless they should interrupt the lines and setting of another and so create an overall loss.

Here the Acid Barons, wearing thier Court-Forms and visting the Realm of the Iron Maze, *whispered*. As *friends* they warned Kalasp of the power of Zor and in secret conferences they warned Zor of the schemes and plots of Kalasp.

Puh-Gna, now a Queen of Fire in her own world, most brilliant, imperious, proud and loving of mothers, would not accept the diminishment of her children in any realm.

During the yearly burn, unknown to either Zenbestefunkh or Kobi, she crossed between Realms, bringing her children, her deepest friends and her most trusted advisors through Annihilation Gate and into the Isle of Palaces.

## THE ANARCHY

She emerged into a war.

At that exact time, Kayenta Kalasp, the Solum-Spouse of Duke Kalasp, one third of the first family of Kalasp, was murdered, apparently by one of the Legion of Delft-Sentinels which had survived the crossing of the Iron Maze so long ago.

The House of Kalasp began to annihilate all the surviving automata, but some said that these devices, mere machines, could do nothing on their own, they were *tools* after all...

lements of Zor resisted the purge. Intra-Noble violence broke out. A chaotic swirl of duels, murders, battles and assassinations swept across the Isle of Palaces. Both Houses suffered losses. Kaibab Kalasp, the Sister-Wife of Duke Kalasp fought and killed, Ignis Zor-Fyr, beloved husband of Lady Zor.

Kobi joined with their immediate siblings in an attempt to calm the war and stop the horror.

In the midst of this anarchy, Puh-Gna found Zenbestefunkh Zor. She was carrying their child in her arms.

Believing he was saving her life, and perhaps her culture, believing the solution would be temporary, Zenbestefunkh took Puh-Gna and raced with her to the Annihilation Gate.

He forced Puh-Gna, and her entourage, through the gate and disabled it.

In the chaos and confusion, Zemo, the Solum child, the pretended-male, remained with him.

But the humans forced through the Gate returned to their realm too soon.

The Crater was still burning, and they arrived in the centre of the fire, not at its edge.

Puh-Gna was protected by the magic of her ring and her two half-mortal children half Fire-Noble, also suffered little. They pulled their mother from the fire before she suffocated. But all they could do was watch as unprotected friends burned to death around her, writhing in agony and turning to ash.

## THE LONG SLOW FALL

In the Poly-Elemental Realm which is our world, Puh-Gna Zor, Empress of Fire, annihilator of the Ice Demons and saviour of humanity, brooded darkly on her Demon-Bone throne.

She ordered that the Crater never burn again. The two Realms would remain separate, now, and forever.

After a long life and strong rule, the Empress died in combat against the armies of the Ice Demons, dealing them their final defeat. In the world to come, Ice would have its times and its places, as treaty allowed, but no more.

And acid, that most loathly, and lowly, of substances, would be locked to churn within stomachs and drip in the veins of the earth.

Her tomb was delved where her body fell, and hidden, for the Fire Queen kept with her, her most dangerous foes, so that they might trouble the earth no more, guarded by her most loyal servants, to ensure they would never escape.

Of the Nobility of Fire, the Iron Maze, the shameful child and the Palaces of Fire, all passed from memory, dissolved by time.

While from the dark corners of the world the Acid Barons watched, and waited for the world to change...."



**NOTE FROM SCRAP** - Regarding the Solum; the initial idea of 3 genders of fire comes from Patrick and an entry in *The Psychoanalysis of Fire* by Gaston Bachelard. I came up with some more detailed concepts which he then developed into the final result. The conceptual process first took common concepts of masculinity and femininity, removed some core elements, then swapped bits and pieces over, and then adjusted until it seemed like a gestalt coherent & loud enough for D&D. The Solum were then created to exist between these two gestalts. Fulfilling vital roles, but ones that neither a Male or a Female Fire Noble would tolerate themselves performing for long.

The Solum should only be understood through the frame of. firstly; *Dungeons & Dragons*, and second; a fictional culture of magical fire people, and very much be understood as not a stand in for any particular culture's "third gender" nor as a stand in for the current contemporary use of "non-binary" as a **INTRODUCTION**

# Conventions of Play

## Introduction

The Fiasco  
The Body Field  
The Tomb  
Encounters  
Tomb Rooms  
R1-R4  
Lower Floor  
R5-R8  
Halls of Salt  
R9-R12  
Halls of Ash  
R13-R16  
Reducers Halls  
R17-R20  
Ice Demons' Prison  
R21-R24  
Acid Baron's Cell  
R25-R28  
Boreala's Halls  
R29-R32  
Shadow Engine  
R33-R36  
Spinster-Bone Cage  
R37-R40  
Gallery of Fire  
R41-R44  
Dancers' Halls  
R45-R48  
Artificer's Rooms  
R49-R52  
Fire-Queen's Arms  
R53-R56  
Rosetta Stone  
R57-R60  
Library  
R61-R64  
Lamp Philosopher  
R65  
Sloth Nest  
Appendices

## ◀ ADVENTURE CONVENTIONS ▶

**Dual-Page View:** This adventure is arranged by spread and not by page. It is designed for the book as it is held open before you. If you are using the PDF only then it's best to use dual-page view. Some entries and elements cross over pages in a spread but none should cross between spreads.

**Read it first:** You cannot run this out of the box. There are many possible paths in Demon-Bone Sarcophagus and a plethora of factions, NPCs and monsters. Every attempt has been made to make this information easy to absorb and remember. When you are dealing with any particular part then all the info you need should be easy to access, but you will still need a general global awareness of what is going on, so read it first.

## ◀ OSR CONVENTIONS ▶

**Armour:** this is given as 'as leather' or 'as chain'. Many OSR systems have slightly different numbers for Armour Class and can work slightly differently. Check the system you are using for the equivalent Armour Class.

**To-Hit Bonus:** The number added when something rolls to-hit is the same as its Hit Dice. A 5 HD creature adds +5 to its to-hit roll. A 1 HD creature adds +1. If this is not the case it will be specifically stated.

**Dual-Column Tables:** If a table has two columns and asks you to roll "2d6" then roll one die for each column. The first die tells you the entry in the first column and the second tells you the entry in the second column. Then combine the results to discover the nature of the encounter. This is usually "This Creature" in Column 1, performing "This Action" in Column 2.

**The Standard Human:** Non-specified creatures and people should be considered a "standard human", Unarmoured, 1 Hit Die, 4 Hit Points, Standard Move, Damage d2 or by weapon if they have one and Morale 7.

## ◀ STATS, DETAILS, RANDOM ENCOUNTERS AND LAIRS ▶

Almost all creatures in Demon-Bone Sarcophagus are mobile, or can become so depending on circumstances.

Everything you need to run a creature as a **Random Encounter**, including its stats, is located under its main entry, listed alphabetically, under "Encounters".

If a creature has a "lair" its stats and a description will be there as well.

More contextual information about the background of the creature can be found in some creatures' room descriptions.

## ◀ PLACING THIS ADVENTURE IN YOUR WORLD ▶

### IT'S IN A DRY AND DISTANT LAND

This adventure; *Demon-Bone Sarcophagus*, and the second part; *Frictionless Blue Glass* take place not too far away from each other. Demon-Bone Sarcophagus should be at least a day away from the nearest settlement and Frictionless Blue Glass, which contains an area called 'The Zone' should be roughly a day's hard travel away from the scene of Demon-Bone Sarcophagus.

Both adventures take place in an environment roughly equivalent to the American South-West. Baking sun, freezing nights, storms, lightning, few rivers and empty plains. They should be on the border of possible state control in a place, not necessarily consumed by anarchy, but hard to govern and little attended to. A place few people wish to go. The "Old West", the Borderlands, The Badlands.

### THE FRICTIONLESS BLUE GLASS MERCHANT COMPANY

A primary element of both this adventure and the second is "The Frictionless Blue Glass Merchant Company", a large and wealthy merchant combine with tendrils everywhere. It is secret(ish), has a very wide reach, many people are members though few know much about its workings.

### THERE IS A WONDER SUBSTANCE

Frictionless Blue Glass; very light, strong, translucent panes and shards, usually slightly rough on one side and utterly frictionless on the other. Not only useful, but in its rarity and for its other qualities a highly valuable form of currency. The source of the wealth of the Frictionless Blue Glass Merchant Company. They and they alone know the secret of its creation.

### THE LANGUAGE OF FIRE

A truly ancient tongue from a long-passed primordial empire. It left few descendants and its written form is lost, known only through ancient references in magical and ritual texts to still-more ancient events. Many Historians think it's just a metaphor for something.

# What Happens In This Adventure?

## DEAD BODIES IN THE DESERT!

The adventure begins as the PCs discover a field of dead bodies in the desert. The battle that seeded this ground with blood ended only moments ago. The cause of the conflict was that two completely different conspiracies stumbled into each other in the same place, at the same time.

## STRANGE HOLES IN THE EARTH!

What none of them knew; this disaster took place over a long buried tomb.

The battle has collapsed holes in the roof of the tomb and several key figures from the clusterfuck on the surface have escaped into it, hiding from, or pursuing each other through its corridors.

## INVESTIGATE THE BODIES

The PCs investigate the scene, looking at the bodies, encountering survivors and piecing together what happened.

### THE HEIST PLANS

Anaracket Bonvive, a treasonous employee of the Frictionless Blue Glass Merchant Company has spent a year inside the company working out exactly how to rob them of their most valuable treasures. She has compiled all this information into a single document, with the intention of selling it to a group of thieves. Now Assassins working for Frictionless Blue Glass, and the thieves, pursue her through the tunnels of the tomb, all seeking those plans.

### THE WEAPON SMUGGLER

A group of terrorists are meeting with the smuggler Wensley Shrive who is en-route with a cache of weapons for their cause. Hidden by magical means, only Shrive knows how to find the weapons. Now the terrorists and security forces pursue Shrive.

## ENTER THE TOMB!

The PCs enter the Tomb. They may need information, treasure or just shelter but hopefully they will have *some* reason to jump down there.

### DISCOVER ITS SECRETS;

(And treasure). The PCs encounter survivors from the battle above along with traps, imprisoned horrors and protective guardians, all arranged around the titular "Demon-Bone Sarcophagus", as well as a fair amount of treasure. It also contains, in various artefacts and records, a kind of history of the Queen of Fire.

## MEET THE CONSPIRATORS

Members of each faction chase each other through the corridors of the Tomb, each knows a fragment of what happened above and each has a different relationship to the Frictionless Blue Glass Merchant Company.

## ENCOUNTER THE GUARDIANS

The Tomb is guarded by a variety of spirits and constructs bound there to keep its secrets safe, each has its own nature, history, powers and vulnerabilities.

## FIND THE FIRE QUEEN'S SARCOPHAGUS

This is the final resting place of Puh-Gna Zor the forgotten Empress of Fire, her Sarcophagus is Demon-Bone and holds not only her mortal remains, but strange treasures.

## UNRAVEL THE THREAT OF THE ICE DEMONS

Too dangerous to destroy, too awful to free. Bound in secret at the Tomb's most northerly point along with many of their worshippers. Their whsipers call to the weak-minded. "*Set us free...*".

All this, the motives of the conspirators, the company they work for and the secret history found within the tomb are all intended to link up into one grand adventure split into three parts.

All of them together called "Broken Fire Regime".

## FUTURE PARTS IN THE TRILOGY OF "BROKEN FIRE REGIME"

**BOOK ONE** - Demon-Bone Sarcophagus. A dungeon crawl. This is that book.

**BOOK TWO** - Frictionless Blue Glass. A sandbox and a heist. The PCs go up against, or join with, the "Frictionless Blue Glass Merchant Company", a primary, though distant, potential antagonist of this adventure. Though playable seperately, this adventure can lead on directly from 'Demon-Bone Sarcophagus'.

**BOOK THREE** - Palaces of Fire. a courtly drama and possible Arthurian Tragedy in which the PCs reach the strange reality of the Plane of Fire.

In the Tomb of Demon-Bone Sarcophagus there are many statues, memories and strange ancient histories? Well, to the Fire Nobles, very little time has passed, your ancient history is their family drama, and it's still going on!

The PCs can try to save the Culure of the Fire Nobles from its terrible destruction, aid its enemies in forcing its collapse, do neither and try to make bank of both sides or just try to escape with their lives.

# Player Character Backgrounds

## ◀—ORIGIN PATH—▶

With thanks to the Fantasy Flight Games 2009 Edition of the 'Rogue Trader' RPG. This is a simplified adventure-specific hack of the Character Generation Origin Path concept developed in that book and works much the same way.

As they put it; "The chart ... helps to weave together the varied backgrounds of different characters ... giving them common ground and reasons to stand in defence of one another's interests."

The basic principle is for each player to start on one side of the page and draw lines connecting one box in this column to one box in the next and so-on. This represents the life-path of that character and their influences, all the way from birth to the point at which the adventure starts.

Where the paths of different characters intersect that suggests events or situations they may share. Where possible this should be read as being an actual location incident or adventure which those characters experienced together so that as play begins they may recognise each other from those events.

The Player can start on the left or right. The choices in the starting column are either open or random, but every choice after that one is limited by its placement on the chart. That is, each choice leads to the choice directly adjacent to it in the next column, or a choice one entry up or down.

This is a less hardcore version of the system used in 'Rogue Trader' so you should feel free to improvise with the rules if you desire.

There are a variety of ways you can choose to fill out the chart.

## ◀—A SIMPLE METHOD—▶

Give all the Players different coloured pens, or instruct them to write their character name, a number or a letter next to each line. Print out the chart and hand it round the players.

The first player rolls a d6, giving them a starting position in Column One - Origins, then draws lines connecting box-to-box, right-to-left until they reach Column Fire - Why Here? Why Now? This gives them a rough "story of their life" up to this point.

They then hand the chart over to the next player who does the same thing, connecting boxes with coloured lines.

This process continues until everyone has filled in the chart. The DM and Players then look over the result, note where characters' lines intersect and discuss and decide on what events and situations the characters share.

Then go round the table with everyone giving a brief "story of their life" and mentioning where and how they encountered each other (except for Column Three: Absurdist Interlude, the situations here are so ridiculous that Characters may be too embarrassed to mention them in public, though they still took place).

## EXAMPLE

Player O rolls a d6 and gets 2. They start with 'Line of Explorers'. From there they connect to 'The Kraken Gang'. This suggests someone whose life just keeps getting worse so they keep going down, connecting to 'Skeleton in Disguise'. Then they 'Lose It all to Frictionless Blue Glass' and their final entry is 'Looking for Work'.

O must be someone born to a reasonably wealthy family, but their parents' disappearance, followed by the interruption of the Kraken Gang left them open to the deceptions of the 'Skeleton in Disguise' and the trauma from that strange incident lead to them losing whatever remained to the Frictionless Blue Glass Merchant Company. Now they are destitute and wandering the desert looking for rumours of work.

## EXAMPLE INTERSECTIONS.

Now Player X rolls and gets 'Raised by Thieves'. They connect this right across to 'Acid Attack', suggesting they are scarred. Then they encounter the 'Skeleton in Disguise' an unusual incident in which they also met O. It may have been the 'Skeleton in Disguise' that gave them the 'Strange Doom' they currently labour under, one that looked like it was being fulfilled as they wandered 'Lost in the Desert' and desperate for water, when who should they bump into but 'O', someone they have not seen since that embarrassing incident with the Skeleton.

## MIXING IT UP

- Have the Players each fill in a sheet separately and then the DM tells them where they encountered each other.
- Allow a greater range of movement up and down the rows. Make EVERY choice random or make every choice a free one so the lines zig-zag everywhere.
- Do whatever you like, it's an OSR thing.

## IN ADDITION-TO NOT INSTEAD-OF

All of this is meant to supplement basic OSR BX-style Character Generation for Level One Characters.

Equipment is less of a bother than it might be for other adventures as the PCs are about to come upon a bonanza of "abandoned" adventuring supplies like rope and water, along with a variety of weapons, some magical doo-dads and potentially-friendly NPCs.

If you wish you could even try a 'Level Zero' approach with each PC having nothing but Hit Points, a Name and a History from the chart and basing their classes on whatever they interact with and how they behave in the opening scene.

## HOOKS

If you just want Hooks but not Backgrounds, try cutting out columns, starting with those on the left.