

LAIR OF THE FROGS

CHBLWP2en

An Advanced Fighting Fantasy adventure for 3-5
low-experienced adventurers in the Blackmoor Living World

For Directors' eyes only!



GALFIERO RISALITI



CHIMERAE

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We welcome your feedback about your Advanced Fighting Fantasy adventures in the Blackmoor Living World and about this humble publication. That is the main thing that pushes us to publish more and, if we can, better. Please contact us at: chimeraehobbygroup@yahoo.it

This adventure is dedicated to Stephen Rocheford.

This adventure is designed for the Blackmoor Living World campaign and is suitable for three to five low-experience adventurers, i.e. adventurers with 1-300 XPs.

Typical Blackmoor Living World adventures take a single gaming session of approximately two to four hours to be played and this adventure is not an exception.

The Director is invited to review carefully all notes on the character sheets before initiating the game, as some may be relevant for this specific adventure.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Ages ago, when the Elves were a young race, in the Great Dismal Swamp lived a sentient race of amphibians. Their civilization worshipped deities on stepped pyramids or ziggurats. In time, they changed the landscape around them by creating many sulphurous hot springs with their magic. As a consequence, the climate of the Great Dismal Swamp became notably warmer and wetter (and stinkier!) than the rest of the region. When Humans began developing, the amphibians enslaved them and taught them their cult. The only deity still known by name from that primordial times is Brr'bb't. When the amphibian civilization eventually collapsed for reasons now forgotten, some Humans kept worshipping in the remains of the ancient, stepped pyramids, that are progressively crumbling and being assimilated by the swampy jungle to the point that most of them are now unrecognizable. Part of the cult is about developing strains of aggressive, carnivore frogs or toads hoping for a comeback of the ancient amphibian race.

In more recent Blackmoor times, cultists from the swamps created lots of problems and were attacked several times, but their cults always came back, again and again, despite the many setbacks. The Blackmoorians living in the Great Dismal Swamp are now very aware of the risks and report immediately any sign of cultist activities, but this area of Blackmoor is very underpopulated and there are many other challenges to keep in check...

Not far from South Pim there is an ancient ziggurat that is in such bad state and overgrown with vegetation that it looks like a hill and a group of cultists is developing a strain of carnivore frogs there, after years of abandon. Recently, some Afridhi scouts have been found on the west side of the Great Dismal Swamp and all fit inhabitants of South Pim moved there, expecting an Afridhi attack, so there is nobody left to deal with the cultist. When the characters reach South Pim, an old fisherman finds a frog with teeth and everybody understands what is happening.

Will the characters help wiping out the cultist outpost before they organize themselves?

ADVENTURE HOOK

There is only one part of the Kingdom of Blackmoor that never freezes solid in Winter: the Great Dismal Swamp, known for having so many hot water springs that they make its climate milder. These springs let out sulphurous water, that stinks quite bad, but many adventurers prefer it to freezing. For this reason, you are travelling to South Pim, the second biggest settlement of the Great Dismal Swamp after Lake Gloomy, a place known as a good starting point for adventurers. South Pim can be reached through the War Road: there is a small track connecting it to the riverside of the Big Muddy, where you can find this small town. Along the War Road you meet a few other adventurers going in the same direction, so, as customary in Blackmoor, you decide to travel together.

Of course, this is the opportunity for the players to describe their characters and for the characters to shake hands with each other.

CHAPTER 1: GYPSY SAYINGS

You leave the War Road and follow the muddy, slippery track that goes to South Pim, but sunset is close, crickets and frogs already started their endless concert and you won't make it to the Big Muddy before night. On a higher and drier patch besides the road, there is a loud gypsy camp: a large campfire is burning furiously in the centre of a ring of five wagons. You see a wagon painted with the image of a fortune teller in front of a crystal ball, another wagon is painted with the words: "Come to the House of Mirrors!", another wagon bears the painting of bows, arrows and bullseyes, another wagon is painted with the images of many puppets. The people around the campfire weaves to you in a welcoming way. They are dressed colorfully and, while some of them is cooking on spits, they are mostly singing and dancing.

The campfire belongs to a small gypsy group travelling from South Pim to Vestfold (the opposite direction of the characters) and the characters may or may not decide to camp with them. If one character sheet bears the note "You spoilt the Circus", they will not be allowed to stay at the campfire, otherwise, if the characters approach, read the following:

As you approach, you are gently accompanied in front of the campfire. There you can see an old woman, the obvious leader:

Madame Rube. She is overly made-up and wears layer upon layer of colored veils and shawls decorated with stars, crescents and mysterious runes. On her head a turban is held together by a flashy pin shaped like a four-leaf clover, around her neck there is a pendant shaped as a heart inside a spiderweb. She plays all the time with a couple of very active children that may be two or three years old, probably her niece and nephew. You realize that the wagon painted a fortune teller represents her (as a much younger woman). Among the score of colorful Humans of all ages around the campfire, you notice a muscular Ogre as well dressed only with a loincloth.

Madame Rube's divination

If one of the characters asks Madame Rube to be told the future, she will ask for her palms to be crossed with gold (one gp will suffice) and she will take one character to her wagon, where she has a tiny room carved out for her divinations.

Madame Rube gestures in an overly exaggerated manner around her crystal ball. Maybe it is the deep blue decoration laced with arcane symbols, maybe it is the smell of incense, you have the impression you can see colored fog swirling in the crystal ball. Suddenly, her eyes flip, and you can see only her white eyeballs! Finally, her voice rises to an unnaturally high tone as she tells you: "All seekers of glory are leaving South Pim, but they won't find any. Do not follow them, as your challenge awaits for you nearby South Pim!" Suddenly, she shakes her head, regains her natural face and voice: "Hem.. fate is always unknown, but good luck will eventually come to you... you are destined to have a long life..." she looks shaken, but she doesn't seem to remember what she told you before. Eventually, she accompanies you outside: "I feel really tired... sorry, but no more divinations tonight..."

MADAME RUBE

SKILL 4, STAMINA 8, LUCK 12, MAGIC 6

Talents: Attuned, Learned

Special Skills: Magic - Minor (3), Magic – Priestly (Phellia) (2), Magic Lore (2)

Objects: love potion (AFF2, page 149), lucky charm (AFF2, page 149) pinned on her turban.

The Hall of Mirrors

If one or more characters ask to visit the Hall of Mirrors, read the following:

A young girl stands up, rubbing for a moment her tired eyes, and, with the smile of a consumed actress, she invites you to the wagon painted with the words: "Come to the House of Mirrors!" allowing you to enter only one at the time. Most of the wagon is occupied by a room with mirrors reflecting distorted images and difficult to see slabs of clean crystal where

you slam ridiculously more than once. When you get out of the wagon, the girl looks at you with a broad smile, clearly expecting a tip.

Invisible and silent, inside the same room is Ronde, once Madame Rube's beautiful and shy daughter, cursed by the Egg of Coot for rejecting Nemor. The curse turned her into a very sad, bearded woman and that is her day job. However, when she is not displaying herself for the public curiosity, she likes staying alone, after casting invisibility and silence on herself, in the Hall of Mirrors, hoping she can forget her twisted image. She will avoid getting in contact with the characters, but she will only observe them, unless there is some obvious reason like cursed objects or similar. Please note that one of the mirrors is a Crystal Mirror (Ronde uses it to see the true nature of visitors, if they are using magical disguises or similar -see AFF2, page 148).

RONDE

SKILL 6, STAMINA 12, LUCK 7, MAGIC 6

Talents: Light Sleeper, Hawkeye

Special Skills: Awareness (3), Acrobatics (3), Thrown (2), Magic – Minor (3), Sneaking (2), Dodge (2), Con (1), Second Sight (2)

Objects: Girdle of Silence, Ring of Invisibility (AFF2, page 147), a little bag of Dehydrated Mist from the Bleakwood (see Dehydrated Mist from the Mithrir Forest in AFF2, page 143) that she will use in case of violence in the camp to cover an escape.

Archer's Arrows

If a character enquires about the wagon with bows, arrows and bullseyes painted, read the following:

A weathered, middle-aged man approaches you with a gentle smile: "Do you want to take on the challenge of the Archer's Arrows? Using this bow and these three arrows you need to hit that three bullseyes! If you hit them all, you will win a magic arrow! It will cost you just one gold piece for your first attempt and subsequent attempts will cost every time the twice as much as the previous." He winks.

The challenge is straightforward: the character needs to roll vs. SKILL + Bows Special Skill thrice, the first time with a -1 penalty, the second time with a -2 penalty and the third time with a -3 penalty. The first character that will hit all three targets will receive a colorfully painted magic arrow with a +2 bonus to hit (single use). Subsequent characters will receive normal arrows, although painted exactly the same way.

ZELAC, THE ARCHER

SKILL 9, STAMINA 14, LUCK 11

Talents: Crack Shot

Special Skills: Bows (4), Dodge (3), Climb (2), Sneak (2)

Zampanok's challenge

If a character asks about the Ogre, an adolescent girl in a flashy costume comes forward:

"Welcome, travelers! You have the privilege to see the mighty Zampanok! He is incredibly strong! See: I am binding him with three strong chains and he will break the bind!" The Ogre struggles for a while, perhaps faking to keep the suspense high, and, eventually, he breaks the chains, one by one. "If you think you can do the same, one of you can bet one gold piece and, if you succeed, you will get five!"

The challenge is straightforward: the character needs to roll vs. SKILL + Strength Special Skill thrice, the first time with a -1 penalty, the second time with a -2 penalty and the third time with a -3 penalty. Each attempt will cost three points of STAMINA due to fatigue. The first character that will break all three chains will receive five gold pieces. Maximum one character will win, then the girl will not take any more challenges.

ZAMPANOK: use the Ogre statistics from Out of the Pit, page 90. Zampanok secretly loves his young mistress, but she never noticed it and is still too young to understand love.

The Puppets' Show

If a character will ask about the wagon with painted puppets, read the following:

A short and stout man, with long mustaches, stands up and bows politely with his domed hat: "Ladies and Gentlemen, let me invite you to the Puppet Show!" he makes way to his wagon, where there is a puppet-sized, little theatre. He quickly summons, with his puppets, his voice and a clockwork music machine, a strange story about three sisters princesses that don't want to get married and the machinations of their parents to convince them that they were kidnapped by a witch and later saved by courageous, dragon-slaying knights, that their parents hope the princesses will happily marry. Eventually the princesses discover the plot, the knights are almost eaten by the dragon, the princesses save the knights and, eventually, fall in love with them. A silly, strange story. As you exit his wagon, the Puppet Master is there, with his upturned hat.

PUPPETS

SKILL 6, STAMINA 18, ATTACKS 6

The puppets take "life" during the night, in their wagon, when there is no spectator around. If they are disturbed during that time by unwelcome visitors, they do attack collectively, trying to hold on to them as a single creature until the Puppet Master comes (1-6 rounds).

MEISTER CYRWEL, THE PUPPET MASTER

SKILL 8, STAMINA 12, LUCK 10

Talent: Crack Shot, Light Sleeper

Special Skills: Thrown (4), Con (2), Dodge (4), Sneak (3)

The Puppet Master owns a small bag of sparkling red powder that, hurled on a person (on a normal roll to hit), turns her immediately into a puppet (test of LUCK to avoid it) for the current and the following tenday. He will use it only on unwelcome visitors to his wagon and he will make them work as puppets to teach them a lesson, until the magic wanes, then releases them unharmed. Characters going through this strange experience won't have hard feelings towards the Puppet Master (it is part of the enchantment).

The Jig

If the characters don't show any more interest on the previous attractions, read the following:

While four young men play one drums, one flute and two violins, a young woman with long, curly, black hair and flaming eyes starts dancing bare foot around the raging campfire. She wears many bangles around her wrists and ankles and, as she dances, they make a rhythmic sound that is almost hypnotic. As you look, transfixed, she signals with her hand to join her in her dance. Various gypsies do join her as well.

If one or more characters do join her dance, the effect on them (only the ones that join the dance) is exactly like the JIG (1) Sorcery spell (the flute player is secretly a Sorcerer and uses his magic very carefully and only to enhance the dancing experience). the characters that decided to join the dance can decide if they want to oppose the effect (taking the test of LUCK) or not. The characters that are eventually affected by the spell will happily dance until they drop asleep (like the other gypsies that joined the dance) and they will not be able to take any further action until the next morning, when they will wake up deeply relaxed and in high spirits after a great night of sleep.

THAWNIE, LEASH, TAMAZ (three brothers musicians)

SKILL 7, STAMINA 16, LUCK 10

Talents: Fleet Footed

Special Skills: Musician (3), Throws (2), Dodge (3), Con (2)

RHAWNIE (sister dancer)

SKILL 7, STAMINA 12, LUCK 11

Talents: Silvertongued

Special Skills: Dancer (3), Con (3), Throws (1), Dodge (2), Healing (2), Evaluate (1), Awareness (1)

BRISSHAN (brother musician-sorcerer)

SKILL 6, STAMINA 18, LUCK 9, MAGIC 4

Talents: Arcane

Special Skills: Magic – Sorcery (3), Musician (1), Secret Signs (2), Throws (1), Disguise (2), Awareness (3)

Exchanging Tales

After the above-mentioned dance is over, read the following:

The meats on spits are well roasted now, and the gypsies invite you to join them. They happily share their food and their wine with you. Madame Rube smiles: "In our tradition, we honor our guests with our arts, our food and we exchange tales with them. I will tell you my tale, then maybe you will be happy to share one tale of yours.

Many years ago, in the middle of the Black Sea, an ungodly land emerged: it is the land of the Egg of Coot, the Master of the Thralls. It is an extremely strange, unholy creature, or, as someone says, a deity... arcane students will tell you that this dark entity feeds out of magic. It never leaves its lands, but sends its thralls out, kidnapping mages and stealing magic items... people says that its thralls are spying everywhere!

I found this out the hard way. Few years ago, a bard joined this group. He said his name was Nemor, he played well and talked well... and asked many questions when somebody mentioned magic items or particularly good mages... and all he learnt, his Master learnt as well. My daughter eventually discovered his true nature and he cursed her, before running away. My son Robeir went after him, to remove the curse on his sister, and he never came back. Maybe you will meet him during your adventures: please tell him his mother and his children are missing him terribly. The evil that lurks in man is always present. My last days are now so hard to bear... They say that usually the thralls have light blue eyes with no white, but it wasn't the case of my ungodly guest. Be aware of them and be aware of magic teleporting: they say that the Egg of Coot can reach you while you are magically suspended between lands... but maybe it is just a legend.

Another legend says that the foul being is in search of a worthy bride to generate a new age of evil darkness for Blackmoor. They say it is not looking for the fairest beauty, but for the highest intellect. The Gnomes say that the highest female intellect is the

daughter of Mieroc, the Machinist, and for this reason she lived all her life hidden behind the most effective locks that Gnomish intellect can generate. That which is valuable is well guarded.

Now that you know my sad story, maybe you want to share yours, hoping it will be funnier... maybe you will tell me a true story, maybe just a fantasy. It doesn't matter to us, as long as you share a little piece of your heart.

Depending on how well the characters will reply, they will have an impact on their *current* LUCK. They may have an extra point (even above their *initial* LUCK, until the end of the adventure) or no change, or one point removed (and the party spoiled). Anyway, the gypsies will behave politely, even if the characters won't be nice. Worst case they will ask the characters to leave the camp, but the gypsies will do what they can to avoid violence. In total there are 25 gypsies in the camp and, apart from the ones that have been previously described, the rest can be evenly split between children and normal Humans with SKILL 6, STAMINA 8 and LUCK 8, that are generally armed with quarterstaves and throwing knives.

Sleeping in the camp

After all exhibitions and all tales, eventually everybody will go to sleep, women and children in the wagons and men around the campfire, in heavy blankets and will take turns guarding the horses that they use to pull the wagons, that are bind all together on a side.

Potentially, the characters could try breaking into the wagons during the night. In this case, the gypsies will defend themselves, but prefer avoiding violence and escaping. If the characters will behave in an unfriendly way, add to their character sheets the note: "You spoil the Circus", that will prevent them to deal with gypsies in the future.

On the morning, the gypsies will say goodbye and go on their way. The characters will reach South Pim without any more encounters.



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CHAPTER 2: IN SOUTH PIM

When you finally reach South Pim it is almost lunchtime and the sunshine struggles to find a way through the mist. South Pim is surrounded by a stout palisade topped with thorny vines that from a distance make it look like a struggling copse of swamp trees, but what's more remarkable is that the only gate is made of a huge skull of some giant swamp monster! As you approach, the gate is closed, but, when you ask permission to enter, it is quickly raised, letting you in under its great fangs, and then shut down again, as if you were eaten alive by the great beast in one bite! The guards saluting you wear bone armours, shields made from giant turtle shells and swords made with giant fangs. They also seem all very young, apart from their Sergeant, that walks on a wooden leg... As you get in, you realize that South Pim is a strange small town. The smell of sulphur is particularly acrid, and everything is muddy and mouldy as if the swamp was not kept outside of the palisade but was an integral part of the town. The inhabitants seem to use many natural elements like bones, spines, claws, fangs, thorns for their tools and weapons. There are shops and crafts, but they are all closed right now, and there seems to be very few people around. Luckily, the only two places where you can stay and eat are open: The Gators' Maw Tavern on the west side of the town, not far from the gate, and The Swamp Dragon Inn at the north side of the town, a short walk away.

The characters can have a look around in the town (see Appendix 1 for more detail), but, fundamentally, everything is closed, and no able bodies can be seen around. There is not much else to do than pick a bar and take a sit (the only available items are: a ceramic mug of ale at 3 sp, one wooden bowl of catfish soup with breadcrumbs at 2 sp, a little bone cup of Mesok, a swamp liquor made with the honey of giant bees at 5 sp, single room for one night at 4 gp and a place in a shared room for one night at 15 sp).

The young girl that takes your orders seems surprised to see you: "I thought all adventurers in town were marching west..."

If the characters ask about her phrase or about the apparent lack of able bodied people in town, they will learn that several Afridhi scouts were spot near the river Misauga and everybody is expecting a sneak attack! For this reason, all able bodies of South Pim enrolled as militia and moved to the west side of the Great Dismal Swamp. The wench may suggest them to go as well... but if the characters decide to go west and help repelling the Afridhi invasion everybody is expecting, go to Conclusion A, otherwise, carry on reading below.

You are waiting for your drinks to be delivered, when an old fisherman without a leg, covered in mud, enters and drops on a table the body of a big frog, clearly bigger than your hand,

without counting its legs. You look carefully and notice that the frog has wicked, pointy teeth in its mouth! "You know what it means." He says to all the patrons present. They are speechless. "I found it in the Big Muddy, right in front of the town. If we don't deal with this quickly, they will get well established and we will be in big trouble... but all young and fit of us are chasing the Afridhi scouts on the west side of the Great Dismal Swamp and we don't have adventurers in town to take care of this issue..." he shakes his head, and everybody sighs, worried.

If the characters ask about it, they will be told that every now and then a new cultist ring comes back into activity in some forest hideout and tries developing strains of carnivore, intelligent frogs. If the cultists aren't dispatched with quickly enough, they manage to develop stronger and stronger carnivore frogs, build up strong defences around their lairs and get more and more people converted to their cult.

The characters may decide this is not their job (in which case the adventure is over, and you can go to the wrap up sections – somebody else will eventually take care of this issue) or they may decide that they want to offer themselves to deal with the issue. They can borrow some small rowing boat (one or two persons in each boat, max) from the local fishermen: South Pim doesn't have a proper riverport, but they drag their shallow boats ashore along the low sides of the Big Muddy river and tie them to the trees. They will have to decide if they want to explore the Big Muddy right in front of the town, or if they want to go upstream or downstream. The characters will also receive as a gift a vial of scorpion venom, with the suggestion to throw it in the frogs' breeding well or pond.

Rowing right in front of South Pim

The Big Muddy river is not ideal to see if there are big frogs swimming underwater or not, but with a successful Awareness test every hour or so, a big frog with pointed teeth can be found. These frogs, when they are isolated, as in this case, they are not dangerous. If the characters pass too much time in front of South Pim and don't row neither upstream nor downstream, you can prod them with an encounter with some Snapperfish (OotP, page 107).

Rowing downstream

If the characters row downstream they will not be able to spot any big frog with pointy teeth, but first they will be attacked by a Crocodile (OotP, page 31), then, if they insist, they will notice a group of strange humanoids building a muddy hill on the riverside, in a heavily forested patch. They are a group of Gatormen (one for each character, use the characteristics of normal Lizardmen, as per OotP, page 77, but their melee attack is a medium bite and their ranged attack is a spear). They

are building a suitable mud hill nursery for a small lizard-like baby creature that is actually a Changeling (OotP, page 27) that they believe will grow up to be the next Swamp Monster, like the semi-divine one that provided the skull for the gate of South Pim and are taking care and feeding him as best as they can. For this reason, the Gatomen will fight to death to defend the "little one". Of course, this is a wrong option with no treasure awarded and there is nothing else of interest in this direction.

Rowing upstream

The right option is obviously rowing upstream and a few big frogs with pointed teeth will be visible, here and there, even without Awareness tests. They seem to come from the direction of a small hill on the riverside (a successful Awareness test will also reveal a faint stream of smoke going up in the sky). The hill is actually an ancient ziggurat so damaged and overgrown by vegetation that nobody could imagine it is not a small hill (see the maps in Appendix 2). The swamp bushes that cover it are tall enough to barely cover a crouching man, but there are two tall trees on it, one near the top of the hill and another at its foot. They are two Gnarled Oaks (BtP, page 56) guarding the entrances to Level 1 and Level 3 and the cultists know the way to enter while staying just at arm's length from them.

If the characters stop and observe, apart from a few pointy toothed frog escaping, during the day they will eventually see a cultist coming by boat, hiding it in the undergrowth along the river and leading a pig to the entrance to Level 2. During the night some cultists will come and some other will go, all sneakily, from the entrances to Levels 1 and 2. If the characters look for tracks and pass an Awareness or Hunting test (two points of penalty if they look for tracks during the night, one at dawn or sunset), they can spot the tracks going safely (i.e. narrowly avoiding the Gnarled Oaks) to the entrances of all three levels: many tracks to Level 2, fewer to Level 1 and just one to Level 3.

Level 1 is described in Chapter 3, Level 2 is described in Chapter 4 and Level 3 is described in Chapter 4, always referring to the map in Appendix 2.

CHAPTER 3: THE LAIR – LEVEL 1

This level is relatively dry and clean, the walls are made of stone blocks and the doors are all functional. There are quite a lot of muddy tracks going from the main entrance to the spiral staircase going down, but no frogs jumping around. This level is dedicated to housing the cultists that provide support and guard services (and their families), rather than the cultists that actually take care of the frogs. Overall, it is decent, normal people that didn't witness anything weird and just worship Brr'bb't instead of some other deity.

Room 1-1: Entrance Hall

During the day there is enough light coming in to provide sufficient visibility without torches or similar. In this area there is a number of Cultist Guards (see Appendix 3) equal to the number of characters. As they see somebody approaching from outside, they tell them that this entrance is not for worshippers and they should take the Level 2 entrance instead. They are not bullying or threatening at first, believing that the characters are just some other new worshippers. Further away from the entrance, during the day there are twice as many Cultists (see Appendix 3) cooking, mending cultists robes etc. accompanied by the same number of Cultist Kids (see Appendix 3) running around. During the night, Cultists and Cultist Kids sleep in room 1-4. The Head of this shift of the Cultist Guards has a key for room 1-5.

Room 1-2: Armoury

In this small room are stored extra weapons for Cultist Guards: six Spears, twelve Throwing Knives, ten Slings.

Room 1-3: Sleeping Room 1

Here a number of Cultist Guards (off shift) equal to the characters are sleeping on bedrolls with their families (twice as many Cultists and Cultist Kids). Their weapons are hanging on the walls. The Head of this shift of the Cultist Guards has a key for room 1-5.

Room 1-4: Sleeping Room 2

This room is similar to room 1-3 but it is for the on shift Cultist Guards, so during the day it is empty and during the night is occupied only by their families.

Room 1-5: Storage Room

In this room there are some personal objects of the Cultist Guards and their families. The two Cultist Guards Heads of the two shifts have the keys to open the doors (locks can be picked normally). There are twenty blankets and sixteen backpacks with forty iron rations, three coils of rope and, in total, 123sc, 38cc and 62gc.

CHAPTER 4: THE LAIR – LEVEL 2

This level of the lair, still fully made of stone blocks, is dedicated to worship: the entrance is not guarded by Gnarled Oaks like the others, but just by Cultist Guards (see Appendix 3) welcoming the worshippers. As the side of the hill is muddy and there is a fair footfall, the floors are quite muddy, with many tracks going from the entrance to the Temple and to the Sacred Well. There are quite a few frogs with pointy teeth jumping around, escaping outside and the Cultists (see Appendix 3) carefully avoid hurting them, ensuring Cultist Kids (see Appendix 3) do the same. There are torches keeping the full level with decent visibility night and day. The doors were all removed as they were rotten. In all this level the terrified oinks of a small pig can be heard (they come from the Sacred Well, room 2-8).

Room 2-1: Level Entrance

In this area there is a number of Cultist Guards (see Appendix 3) equal to the number of characters. They are welcoming, but also very careful not to let in the wrong people, so they can ask questions and make body checks, especially if there are worshippers that are not Thonians. Well known worshippers already wearing robes are invited to go left, directly to room 2-5, and newcomers are invited to go right, to room 2-2, and wear their robes.

Room 2-2: Changing Room

A number of Cultists (see Appendix 3) equal to the number of characters helps the worshippers to leave behind backpacks and cloaks and wear worshippers' robes. During this operation they may get suspicious about the characters and raise the alarm. In the room there are twelve backpacks with a blanket, a waterskin and two iron rations each.

Room 2-3: Pilgrims' Rest

In this room there is an alcove with a small clay statuette shaped as a humanoid frog. A number of Cultists and Cultist Kids equal to thrice the number of characters is resting here after the long trek.

Room 2-4: Pilgrims' Rest

Same as above.

Room 2-5: The Temple

The Temple, smelling strong incense and lighted by candles placed a bit everywhere, is dominated by the statue of a humanoid frog just taller than a fully grown human. The statue was broken and obviously repaired recently. A Cultist Acolyte leads the celebrations day and night in front of variable a number of Cultists and Cultist Kids (five times as much as the characters during the day

and two times as much as the characters during the night). The worshippers threw at the feet of the statue offers for 34cc, 86sc and 28gc. Behind the statue and the altar there are stairs going down to Level 3 and two Cultist Guards ensure nobody goes down there uninvited.

Room 2-6: Sleeping Room

A number of Cultist Guards (off shift) equal to the characters are sleeping on bedrolls with their families (twice as many Cultists and Cultist Kids). Their spears are hanging on the walls.

Room 2-7: Staircase

In this room there is a number of Cultists equal to the characters, waiting for their turn to have a quick look at the Sacred Well (room 2-8). The terrified pig can be heard really loud. The density of the frogs is higher than in the rest of the level, but they are harmless.

Room 2-8: The Sacred Well

A Cultist Acolyte with two Cultist Guards are taking care of an underground well that is used for breeding the frogs with pointy teeth. There is a small pig bound and the frogs bite it cruelly, making it oink in terror and pain. There are bones from other pigs on the floor. Small groups of two or three Cultists take their turns to visit the well and, occasionally, they cut themselves and drip feed their blood to the frogs. This room is the ultimate objective of the adventure (see Conclusions B and C, depending on the achievements in room 3-8) and the frog menace can be neutralized with the vial of scorpion venom that the characters received in South Pim or by killing them all with weapons (see The Froglings Horde, in Appendix 3). Of course, Cultist Acolytes and Cultist Guards will react and fight, while normal Cultists will scream and cry, shocked by the senseless cruelty of the characters: they are in fact normal, decent people that can't understand why the cult of Brr'bb't, an ancient deity, is so cruelly and unjustly dealt with in Blackmoor: after all they were doing nothing wrong here.

CHAPTER 5: THE LAIR – LEVEL 3

This level of the lair is unlit and particularly stinky. While the ceilings and most of the walls appear to be made of the same stone blocks of the levels above, the floor is made of deep, caky mud (it is in fact unmade ground). Most doors were removed and the few still present are stuck closed (test of Strength with 2 points of penalty to open them or physical destruction with an axe or similar). It looks like this level is routinely flooded by the Big Muddy river and the walls show the signs of the levels of the inundations. This is where the evil Cultist Priest and his ungodly secrets are hidden. In this level it is not uncommon finding frogs with pointy teeth, escaping to the Big Muddy river, but they are harmless.

Random encounters in this area (1d6): with a (1) a Poisonous Snake ambush (OotP, page 106), with a (2) a Phantom with amphibian features (OotP, page 92), with a (3) to (6) none.

Room 3-1: Changing Room

This small cave is just below a Gnarled Oak and is excavated directly in the muddy soil, with the roots providing an impressive ceiling. Hanging on a wall are a couple of sets of cultist robes and some normal clothes, all covered in mud.

Room 3-2: Levers Room

In this niche there are twelve levers on the wall, all of them looking the same and all in the “up” position. Lever six causes the cave in of the passage between Room 3-1 and the rest of Level 3, while the other levers are all fake: they are made with hard wax and look exactly like to the only functioning lever, but inside they hide a blade. If somebody tries pulling down one “fake” lever, the attempt will cut very deeply their hand (STAMINA damage like a sword and also one point of SKILL damage).

Room 3-3: Main Hall

Two Cultist Guards (see Appendix 3) make sure nobody walks around on this level, apart from Cultist Priest and Acolytes. If they can hear a noise, they will move all over the level to investigate it. If they find intruders, they will promptly raise the alarm.

Room 3-4: Armory

In this small armory there are the following weapons: twelve spears, six knives, two maces.

Room 3-5: Empty Room

This room has been closed for ages and stinks consequently, but it is empty.

Room 3-6: Deposit

This room is used for storing some strange glass jars, carefully closed and sealed with wax. There are several small, translucent eggs floating in a liquid (of course frogs’ eggs of various kinds) and a couple of jars labelled “ANTSEGGS” (if you eat them, they cause a mutation as per Random Mutation Table in Heroes Companion, page 27). These items are part of the experiments to mutate the frogs into the ancient amphibian race that ages ago dominated the Great Dismal Swamp.

Room 3-7: Clay Golem

In this room there is a Clay Golem (see BtP, page 60) that was stuck here for ages. It will attack with its fists whoever is not wearing cultist robes or is not looking like an amphibian.

Room 3-8: The Priest’s Room

In this room there are a humble bedroll, dirty with mud, and a clay statuette of a frog in the niche. This is where the Cultist Priest rests during the day and passes also most of the night thinking about the best way to please Brr’bb’t. Dispatching the Cultist Priest is a nice to have objective of this adventure (see Conclusions B and D, depending on the achievements in room 2-8).

Room 3-9: Priests’ Changing Room

In this room there are the grand priestly robes that are used for the ceremonies upstairs.

Room 3-10: Candles deposit

In this area there are about 50 white fat candles to be used in the Temple on the level above. Under them there is also one Blue Candle (see AFF2, page 146 – useful against the Phantom random monster).

Room 3-11: Onyx Statuette

This room has been closed for ages and it stinks terribly. Inside there are some candles, some incense stick, something that must have been flowers or similar vegetables and a white onyx statuette representing a beautiful woman. The statuette can be sold for 10 gp at a normal market, but to arcane experts, such as somebody from the Wizards’ Cabal, or to some researcher of The Pygmalion, can fetch up to 200 gp.

CONCLUSIONS

Before dealing in detail with the various conclusions, please notice that, after staying a few days around South Pim, all metals lose their shine and get some slightly rusty spots: this is the effect of the moist environment and of the sulphurous smokes in this area. The weapons and armour will be still functional, but the Social Status will be penalized by one point and will never reach above 3 until the weapons will be dealt with by a good blacksmith in some other place (it will cost just 5sp per metal weapon and 1gp per metal armour).

Conclusion A

You decided to help repelling the Afridhi invasion that everybody in South Pim is sure will come soon, so you join the many adventurers and militians coming from a bit all western Blackmoor. You chase scouts until the end of the tenday, but you can only find traces, then you carry on patrolling for another tenday. Eventually, no Afridhi invasion materializes. Perhaps they changed their mind, seeing how quickly the Blackmoorians responded, perhaps they never thought about invading on this month... but sooner or later they will make another attempt...

The characters get 0 Experience Points from this adventure and waste two tendays.

Conclusion B

You managed to neutralize the Breeding Well of the froglings and dispatched the Priest of the Cultists, preventing a major evil to befall on South Pim.

The characters get 50 Experience Points, one point of Social Status (up to level 4 maximum) and the following notes on their character sheets: *The Gratitude of South Pim* and *The Wrath of Brr'bb't* (see below what this means).

Conclusion C

You managed to neutralize the Breeding Well of the froglings, preventing a major evil to befall on South Pim.

The characters get 35 Experience Points, one point of Social Status (up to level 3 maximum) and the following note on their character sheets: *The Gratitude of South Pim* (see below what this means).

Conclusion D

You dispatched the Priest of the Cultists, preventing a major evil to befall on South Pim.

The characters get 30 Experience Points, one point of Social Status (up to level 3 maximum) and the following note on their character sheets: *The Gratitude of South Pim* (see below what this means).

Conclusion E

You did your best but couldn't terminate the plague of the frogs with pointy teeth and the cultists. The inhabitants of South Pim apologize for sending you to a quest bigger than your strengths. Some time later, you learn that another group of young adventurers, called the Company of the Yellow Flower, managed to deal with the issue.

The characters get 10 Experience points for trying, but they lose one point of social status (down to one point minimum). Add also the following note on their character sheets: *Bested by the Yellow Flower* (see below what this means).

All surviving characters, whatever conclusion they reached, can restore their LUCK, STAMINA, MAGIC and MAGIC POINTS scores to their initial levels before taking on new adventures.

CHARACTER SHEET NOTES

Here are the consequences of each note added to the character sheets.

Baby killer

It took a while for the news to spread, but on a well-known occasion, you killed or anyway harmed severely some harmless children, although while on a quest to do something good. This gives you recurrent nightmares that don't let you sleep well (every night roll 1d6 and, with rolls of 1 or 2, you can't recover your STAMINA as normal during the night, you can't replenish your MAGIC POINTS, and, on a Director's call, your deity may not give you priestly powers anymore). Your social status permanently goes down to zero, as it is normal for all bandits, and no well-reputed settlement or non-playing character will welcome you anymore. You can go back to social status 1 (and progress again, starting from there) only after three months of atonement in a well-known sanctuary or monastery of a suitable deity.

Nightmares

During a quest to do good, you killed some people that was in the wrong place at the wrong time, but in good faith. Nobody openly accuses you of this deed, but nonetheless you feel guilty. This gives you recurrent nightmares that don't let you sleep well (every night roll 1d6 and, with rolls of 1, you can't recover your STAMINA as normal during the night, you can't replenish your MAGIC POINTS, and, on a Director's call, your deity may not give you priestly powers anymore).

The Gratitude of South Pim

The inhabitants of South Pim, grateful, let you stay in their town for free until the end of the tenday, covering entirely for your food and accommodation. They also give you a vial of anti-poison, just in case some snakes bite you.

The Wrath of Brr'bb't

The ancient deity Brr'bb't took notice of your puny existence, in a malevolent way. From now on, if you will fight against amphibians, all your rolls will be penalized by one point and, if you will fight against Brr'bb't's cultists, you will be penalized by two points. This curse can be removed only by a Blessing priestly power + a successful opposed roll by the blessing priest vs. fixed target 15.

Bested by the Yellow Flower

On a well-known, public occasion, a group of adventurers known as "the Company of the Yellow Flower" did so much better than you, causing a public humiliation.



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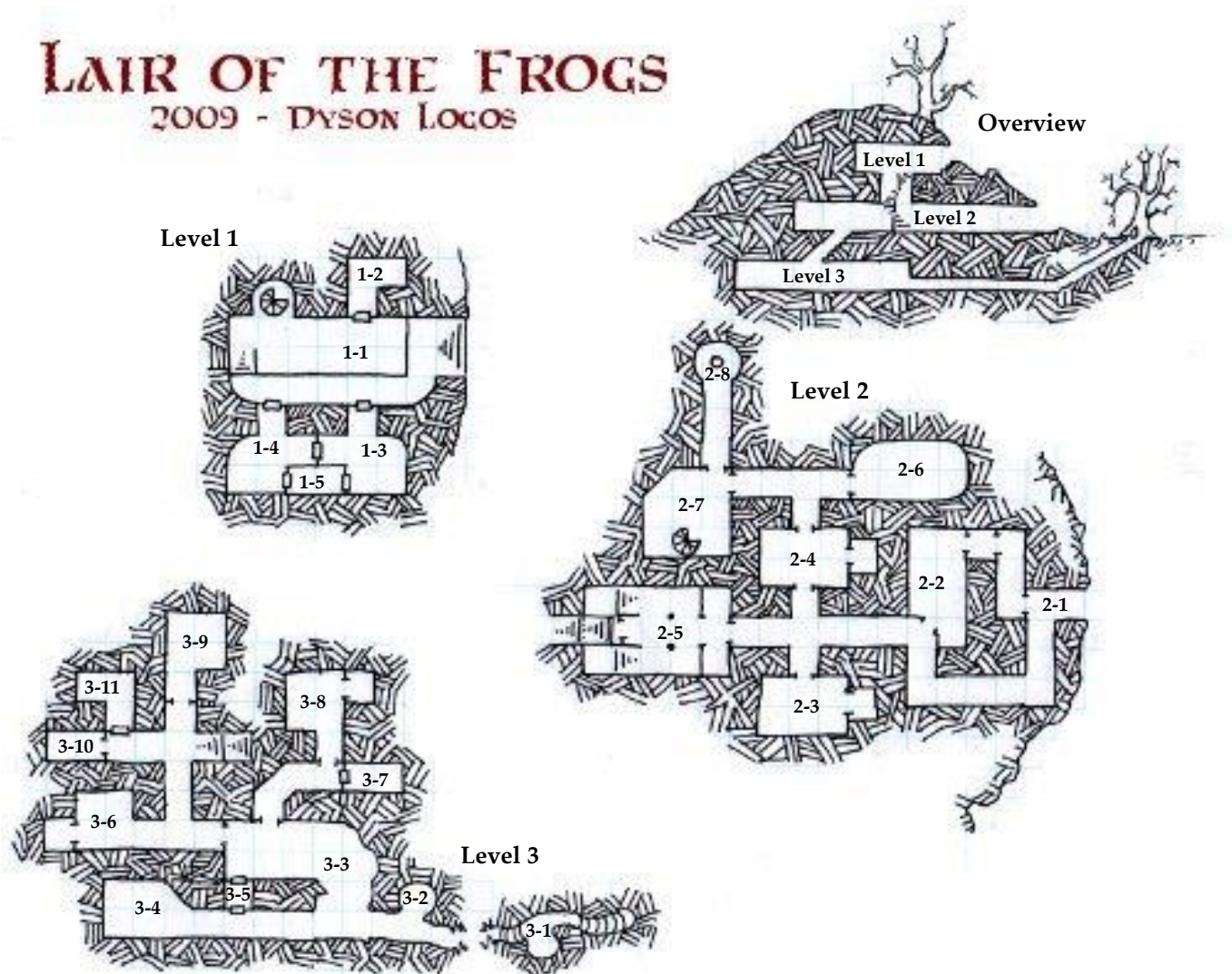
Appendix 1: South Pim

South Pim is the second most important settlement of the Barony of the Lakes, after Lake Gloomy and it is a small town with about one thousand inhabitants, along the Big Muddy river. The main local authority is the Captain of the Guard. Three quarters of the inhabitants are Thonians, but there is a significant Gnome community of about 150. In this area there are quite a lot of snakes, so there are several alchemists' shops selling antidotes.

South Pim is in the middle of an extended swampy region and, while it is surrounded by a stout palisade topped by spikes and thorny vines that work well as camouflage as well, its borders with the swamp are not so well defined and mud and sulphurous smells permeate the town as well as its surroundings with continuity. On one side the town faces the Big Muddy River, but there is no riverport, as it is too shallow for proper ships and more suitable for tiny rowing boats for catching catfish, on the other side there is a single gate on a slippery road going north, eventually reaching the War Road. The gate is perhaps the most remarkable feature of South Pim, as it is a huge skull from a giant crocodile. Metal rusts quickly in South Pim, perhaps due to sulphurous waters, so its inhabitants often use bones, teeth, claws, spines and other natural materials for their tools and weapons.

You can find a nice map of South Pim by *Havard* at *The Comeback Inn* website: https://c3.staticflickr.com/8/7653/27198344850_9abaef3eb3_o.jpg

Appendix 2: map of the Lair of the Frogs



Cartography by *Dyson Logos* from: <https://rpgcharacters.wordpress.com/2009/06/26/thursday-map-lair-of-the-frogs/> used in a non-exclusive, non-commercial way that does not support other commercial endeavours, but as no-profit, amateur fan fiction. The numbers on the various rooms were added to *Dyson Logos* cartography to provide references to the Directors.

Appendix 3: encounters in the Lair of the Frogs

CULTIST GUARD

SKILL 7, STAMINA 12, LUCK 8

Talents: 40% Hawkeye, 30% Ambidextrous, 30% Strongarm

Special Skills: Awareness (2), Dodge (1), Thrown (1), Polearms (1)

Weapons and objects: Spear, Sling, Throwing Knife, no Armour. All weapons are made of wood and bone – no metal.

Background and behaviour: most of the Cultist Guards have been followed by their family and they are not keen on violence, but they know that most Blackmoorians hate their cult and won't hesitate to kill them, although the cultist don't understand why people hate them so much. They behave friendly and politely with all visitors, but, once violence starts, first of all they ensure that harmless Cultists and children can escape, and they will fight to death to protect them. Once they are safe, the Cultist Guards are OK to withdraw in good order, unless the Temple is being attacked, in which case they will fight to death.

CULTIST

SKILL 5, STAMINA 8, LUCK 8

Talents: Animalfriend

Special Skills: Healing (1), Sneaking (1)

Weapons and objects: Knife made from a giant crocodile fang.

Background and behaviour: this people are here to worship Brr'bb't, a traditional deity of their land. While they are at the Lair, they also cook for other worshippers, take care of their kids and relatives, sleep... in general, they do nothing terrible or evil. The worst thing ongoing in the full Lair is pigs being eaten by the frogs: nothing particularly evil compared to other widely accepted cults. They know that many Blackmoorians would like to see their cult abandoned and the cultist killed, but they don't understand why, as they believe all accusations were actually fabricated. For the characters, facing the Cultists and their Kids should be a strong moral dilemma. If they kill or severely harm one of them, add to their character sheets the note: *Nightmares*.

CULTIST KID

Background and behaviour: these kids are in the Lair with their parents. They play, run and shout as all kids do all over the place in Levels 1 and 2 (where there is quite a strong family atmosphere), while they are prevented to enter Level 3. Facing them should be an even bigger moral dilemma for the characters. If they kill or severely harm one of them, add to their character sheets the note: *Baby killer*.

CULTIST ACOLYTE

SKILL 7, STAMINA 12, LUCK 8, MAGIC 4

Talents: Blessed

Special Skills: Magic – Priestly (Brr'bb't) (1), Con (2), Religion Lore (1), Etiquette (1); Sneaking (1), Breeding Frogs (2), Swimming (2)

Weapons and objects: Sling, Knife made from a giant crocodile fang.

Background and behaviour: these young students of the Cult of Brr'bb't are mostly used to take care of the mutant frogs with pointy teeth and are fully subservient of the Cultist Priest. They are beginning to see the cruel plans of the Priest and they are developing some doubt, but right now they are too busy taking care of the froglings to develop any further their doubts. In a violent situation with the characters, they will try telling them that they have no right to murder innocents just because of their religious beliefs and that nothing worrying is happening in the Lair: just free worshipping and breeding a harmless, endangered species of frogs. They will use violence (and their priestly powers) as a last resort.

CULTIST PRIEST (BROTHER KRAIK)

SKILL 7, STAMINA 18, LUCK 8, MAGIC 7

Talents: Holy, Blessed, Dark Seeing

Special Skills: Magic – Priestly (Brr'bb't) (3), Second Sight (2), Con (3), Religion Lore (3), Etiquette (2), Sneaking (2), Breeding Frogs (3), Swimming (3)

Weapons and objects: Staff, Knife, Sling, Vial of the Chthonian Trapper (if broken over unmade ground, a Chthonian Trapper -see BtP, pages 34-35- springs from underground and grabs whoever stands there). All weapons are made of wood and bone – no metal.

Background and behaviour: Brother Kraik comes from a family that is very devout to Brr'bb't and during his life he escaped many ambushes by Blackmoorians willing to terminate the cult (and he will escape again, if things turn bad). While he always proclaims that all the attacks are driven by ignorance and prejudices, he knows that the ultimate objective of the cult is to bring back by ungodly means the ancient, amphibian race that ages ago built the ziggurats dedicated to Brr'bb't, so that they can enslave once again the Human race.

Brother Kraik passes his time in Level 3, sleeping during the day and working on his project during the night. He goes to Level 2 only briefly once a day for a grand celebration in the Temple (2-5) and to the Breeding Well (2-8), to double check how the froglings are developing (never well enough, for him).

If attacked, he will not spend many words, but will use his Vial or his priestly powers to cause as much damage as possible and then he will withdraw, hoping to start a new Lair somewhere else in the future.

THE FROGLINGS HORDE

SKILL 5, STAMINA 12, ATTACKS: 5

Weapon: Small Bite

Armour: none

Reaction: Neutral

Intelligence: Low

Background and behaviour: lone frogs with pointed teeth are harmless, but in the Breeding Well (room 2-8) there are so many that, if attacked, they can fight back all together as a single creature, biting all living creatures in the area. At zero STAMINA they are too few to keep attacking (and making damage), but to kill all the froglings their STAMINA must be reduced below -4 (otherwise they can generate new froglings and recover).



There is only one part of the Kingdom of Blackmoor that never freezes solid in Winter: the Great Dismal Swamp, known for having so many hot water springs that they make its climate milder. These springs let out sulphurous water, that stinks quite bad, but many adventurers prefer it to freezing. For this reason, you are travelling to South Pim, the second biggest settlement of the Great Dismal Swamp after Lake Gloomy, a place known as a good starting point for adventurers.

Who knows what adventures are waiting for you in the Great Dismal Swamp?

