

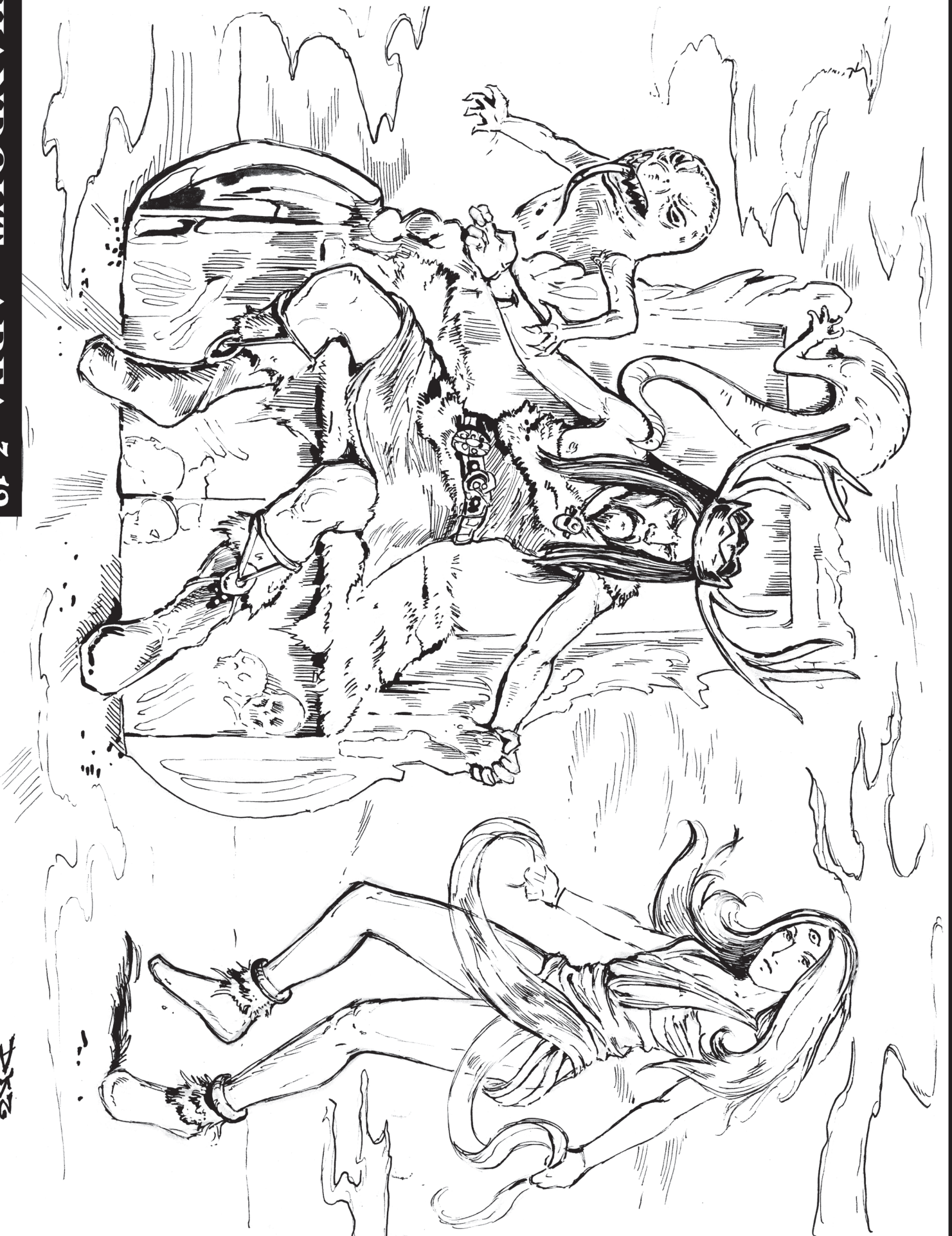
DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS

BEYOND THE BLACK GATE

#72: A LEVEL 5 ADVENTURE
BY HARLEY STROH



Plus: Crash of the Sky
People bonus adventure!



BEYOND THE BLACK GATE

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A LEVEL 5 ADVENTURE

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INTRODUCTION

Remember the good old days, when adventures were underground, NPCs were there to be killed, and the finale of every dungeon was the dragon on the 20th level? Those days are back. Dungeon Crawl Classics adventures don't waste your time with long-winded speeches, weird campaign settings, or NPCs who aren't meant to be killed. Each adventure is 100% good, solid dungeon crawl, with the monsters you know, the traps you remember, and the secret doors you know are there somewhere.

Beyond the Black Gate is designed for 6 to 10 5th-level characters. The adventure can also be attempted by a smaller party of 6th- or 7th-level characters and will prove no less challenging. The adventure rewards cautious play tempered with moments of brash courage. Those expecting to hack and cast their way to victory will need to be very lucky to survive. Stealthy exploration and thoughtful, creative play are the call of the day, for the terrible ice giants seek no quarter and offer none in return.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

In the mystic realm of the Thrice-Tenth Kingdom, the Horned King rules over dark, sullen woods and rugged peaks. On storm-ridden nights he and his black hounds sally forth, ranging across worlds on the Wild Hunt.

All this ended when the reign of the Horned King was brought low. Seduced by the daughter of the ice giants, now the king spends his days lazing atop his throne of bones. No longer does the Wild Hunt spread fear across the planes, and the black hounds bay in mourning for their lost king.

The Witches of Asur have hatched a plan to steal the Horned Crown from their love-struck master. A new Horned King must sit atop the chalky throne; the Wild Hunt must ride again.

Using all their arcane might, the witches draw the PCs into their clutches and bid them across the multiverse to the realm of the Horned King. There, in the icebound gloom of the Thrice-Tenth Kingdom, the PCs must pit their wits and brawn against the fearsome ice giants and their mighty thane. Stealing the Horned Crown from the brow of the king, the PCs must evade the ice giant's reprisal to win their way home.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The adventure begins with the PCs aboard the doomed ship *Morro* sailing north along a rugged coastline. The reasons for the PCs' travels are of little consequence during the adventure, for the witches' hex-wrought storm quickly dispels any hope of the PCs reaching their intended destination.

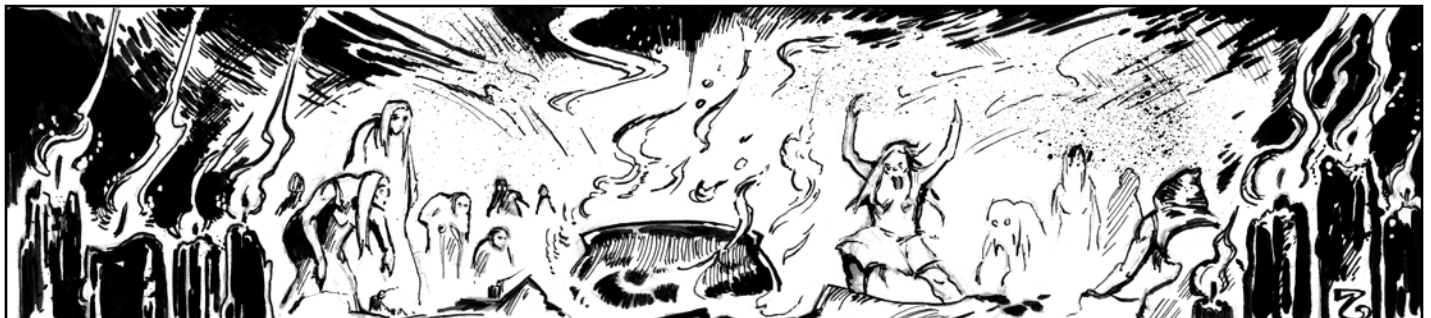
Judges should tailor the following adventure hooks to their own specific campaigns and PCs:

- A PC wizard has suffered a strange corruption: an azure thirteen-pointed star emblazoned on his forehead that flares whenever he casts a spell. The sigil marks the wizard as the property of the Witches of Asur, and only the dread crones can remove their mark.
- Rumors of an otherworldly power, the Horned King, begin to make the rounds in the circles of the city's underworld. Legend has it that the Horned King has died, leaving untold treasures for the taking. The rogue daring enough to venture through the Black Gate will return wealthy beyond belief.
- A PC cleric receives an ominous dream of strange portent. A once-mighty king lingers on the verge of death, corrupted by poison and vice. Hounds bay in the darkness, mourning their master, and looming, dark shapes circle the throne. Awakening, the cleric knows he has been sent this dream for a reason: to save the Horned King.
- A blackbird alights on the PCs' windowsill, a note tied to its leg. The note reads:

*wealth and power beyond compare
just reward to the brave
sail north to the land of dark forests
seek you the Witches of Asur*

RUMORS, LEGENDS, & SUPERSTITIONS

Depending on their training and social circles, PCs are likely to have heard intriguing bits of legend and folklore from the far north. Judges should roll 1d5 for each PC or tailor and exaggerate rumors to best benefit their home campaigns.



CRASH OF THE SKY PEOPLE

By Terry Olson • Editor: Rev. Dak J. Ultimak • Cartographer: Steve Crompton • Artist: Chad Sergesketter • Playtesters: David Baity, Jen Brinkman, Mark Collins, John Cooper, William Ferry, Jeff Goad, Thom Hall, Kristi, Matt, Emily Mundy, Rich Mundy, Stephen Newton, Phil, Maxwell Spann, John Stolp, Big Troy Tucker



his is an adventure for 4-8 level 3 PCs. It is designed to be run within four hours, and introduces a bit of “science fantasy” into the judge’s setting. The adventure features robots, rubbery constructs, a gravity-ball court, and a sky joust that rewards the victor with their own metallic wings!

BACKGROUND

The infamous winged sky-pirates from the planet Tahlmohl have crashed! Their ship was blasted in two by a defending craft, and the “bow” half has fallen near the PCs. The pilots died, but not before activating a distress beacon that extends a green column of light into the sky. Some of the ship’s robots and constructs survived the crash, and they wait to be rescued by those Tahlmohlians that will surely answer the beacon’s call. In the meantime, who knows what alien riches sit in the wreckage, waiting to be plundered?

ENCOUNTER TABLE

1	C	Guardian robots (5 or more)
2	T	Bridge door
3	C	Guardian robots (5 or more)
4	C/P	Ybmug Technicians (5 or more)
5A, 5B	P	Change gravity to acquire stun gun
5C	C	Gravity-ball robots (4)
6	C	Sky Joust!
7	C/P	Interrogator bot, combination vault

INTRODUCTION

A flaming ball appears in the sky and plummets downward with a high-pitched hum. The flames extinguish, revealing a copper-colored craft that tries, but fails, to level off before crashing into the ground. A mushroom cloud of dirt and debris rises into the air, split by a column of green light extending vertically skyward.

The ship is sufficiently cooled from reentry by the time the party arrives. There are two easily-accessible entrances, areas 1 and 3. If PCs manage to climb the ship’s curved side (DC 15 climb sheer surfaces about 20’), they find two large doors on the roof above area 6; these are practically impossible to open by mundane means. Although the ship’s outside is mangled, much of its interior was protected by internal force fields, and shows little evidence of external trauma.

Unless otherwise mentioned, the ship’s areas are artificially lit with glowing ceilings, and doors slide open when touched.

Area 1– Bridge Entry: *The ship has plowed a trench into the ground, and its bow is torn open. Ten feet up, a chamber is exposed, with protruding bent metal and loose sparking wires. Red-and-gold metallic humanoids patrol the wreckage, and see your approach. One shoots a ray of light from its chest, and scorches the ground ahead of you. It shouts in a strange mechanical voice, “FLEE!”*

The “humanoids” are robots from the ship guarding this entrance to the wreckage. They allow PCs one round (10 seconds) to flee, and attack those that do not comply. They lack diplomacy programming, so attempts to parley are difficult (DC 15 Personality check). During melee, PCs may notice a switch on the backs of the robots’ necks (one Luck check per melee combatant). Flipping a switch disables its robot (mighty deed of arms, DC 15 pick pocket, or AC 18 for those without the previous two options). For larger parties, have one robot for each PC.

Guardian Robots (5 or more): Init +2; Atk bash +2 melee (1d6) or chest ray +2 missile fire (1d4, range 60’) or rocket fists +1 missile fire (1d10+2 special, range 30’); AC 13; HD 3d8; hp 17, 14, 13, 11, 10; MV 30’; Act 1d20; SP rocket fists (once per encounter may shoot fists as single projectile, but may not bash attack for rest of encounter), immune to mental effects, vulnerability (switch on back of neck); SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +1; AL N.

Climbing to the bridge is easy (DC 7) because of the wreckage. However, climbers must make a DC 10 Reflex save or suffer 1 hp of damage from sharp metal.

Area 2– Bridge: This chamber’s door is trapped, so PCs must contend with it first if they approach from inside the ship (see below).

Four orange-skinned men sit dead in this chamber. Three are crushed against panels with crackling dials and shattered glass plates. The other is slumped over a wheel attached to a separate panel. He has retracted metallic wings attached to his fleshy back, but they are damaged beyond repair. From the ceiling, a three-inch, gray stone pyramid hangs from a thin chain, gently swinging back and forth.

The four Tahlmohlians tried to land the ship safely, but it was too damaged to do so. Each body has 3d6 Tahlmohlian triangular electrum coins (worth 10 gp each). A searching PC who passes a Luck check finds a strange key on one of the bodies; this fits the weapon rack’s lock in area 5B.

The stone pyramid (the crew’s “good luck” charm) is unidentifiable. If the person touching it knows how to cast arcane spells, the stone turns from gray to blue; otherwise it turns red when handled. PCs may note that the pyramid swings back in forth in precise 1 second intervals, like a