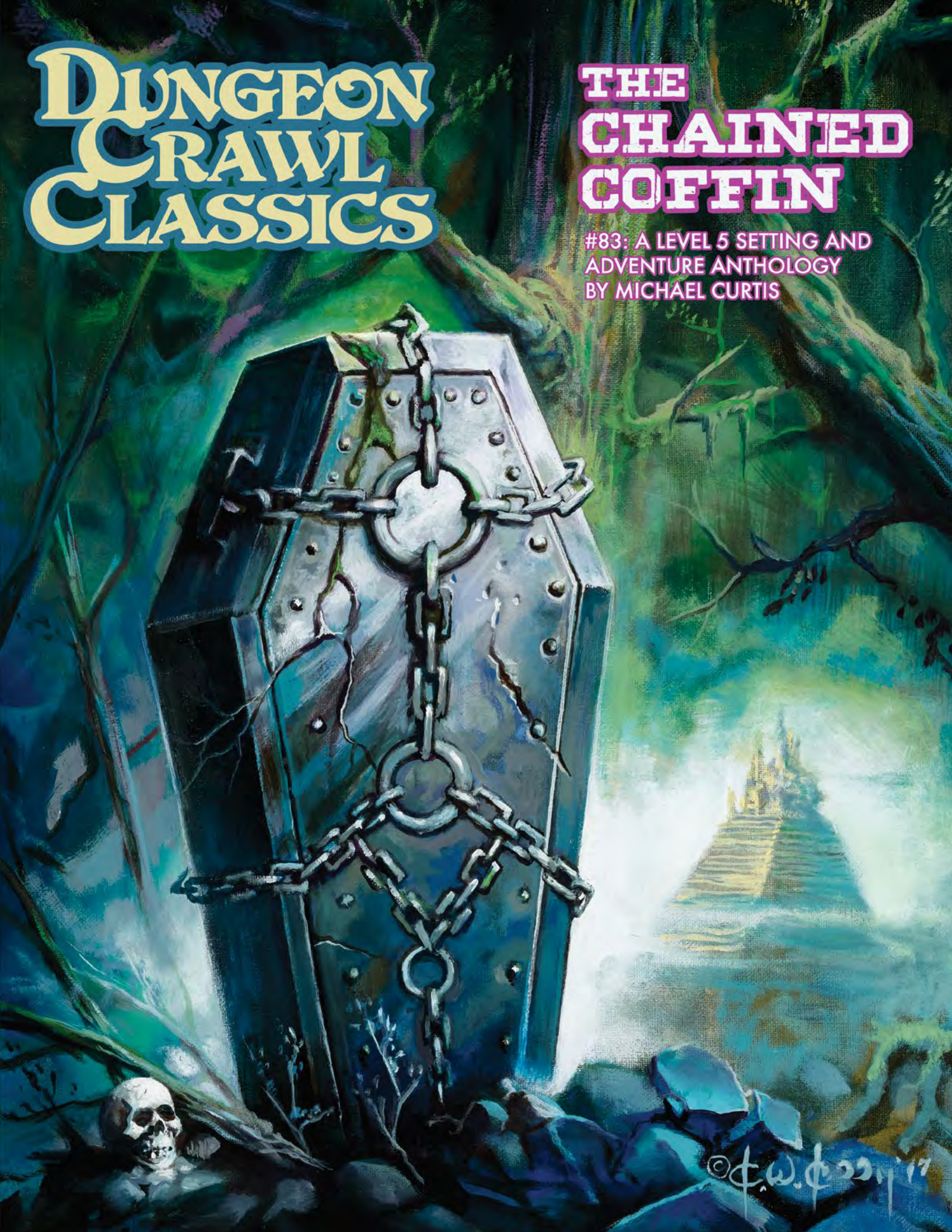


DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS

THE CHAINED COFFIN

#83: A LEVEL 5 SETTING AND
ADVENTURE ANTHOLOGY
BY MICHAEL CURTIS



© f.w. f. 2017

THE CHAINED COFFIN

A LEVEL 5 SETTING AND ADVENTURE ANTHOLOGY

Writer: Michael Curtis • Cover art: Ken Kelly (color), Doug Kovacs (foil)
Editor: Rev. Dak J. Ultimak • Interior Art: Chris Arneson, Doug Kovacs,
Cliff Kurowski, William McAusland, Bradley McDevitt, Peter Mullen, Stefan Poag,
Mike Wilson • Cartography: Mark Allen, Steve Crompton, Doug Kovacs, Stefan
Poag • Art direction and layout: Joseph Goodman • Layout: Matt Hildebrand

*Dedicated to Manly Wade Wellman (1903-1986), who taught us to love
and fear the old mountains.*

Special thanks to the Kickstarter backers who helped expand this module concept
exponentially. Additional thanks to Terry "Ohlsonovik" Olson.

Playtesters: Josh Agee, Susanne MacDougall, William MacDougall, James Daniel Newton,
and Stephen Newton; Todd Bunn, Richard Chang, James Hammock, Julia Paige Hammock,
Rick Hull, Kevin McDaniel, Marcos Sastre, Jim Wampler, and Niki Weber; Aiden Bean,
Alan Bean, Andrew Bean, Marv Breig, and Paul Luzbetak; Daniel J. Bishop, Heather Bishop,
Mike Bishop, Morgan Clayton, Garrett Oliver.

DCC RPG and this adventure are copyright © 2014 Goodman Games. Dungeon Crawl Classics is a trademark of Goodman Games.
DCC RPG is published under the Open Game License. Refer to the OGL in this work for additional information.

www.goodman-games.com

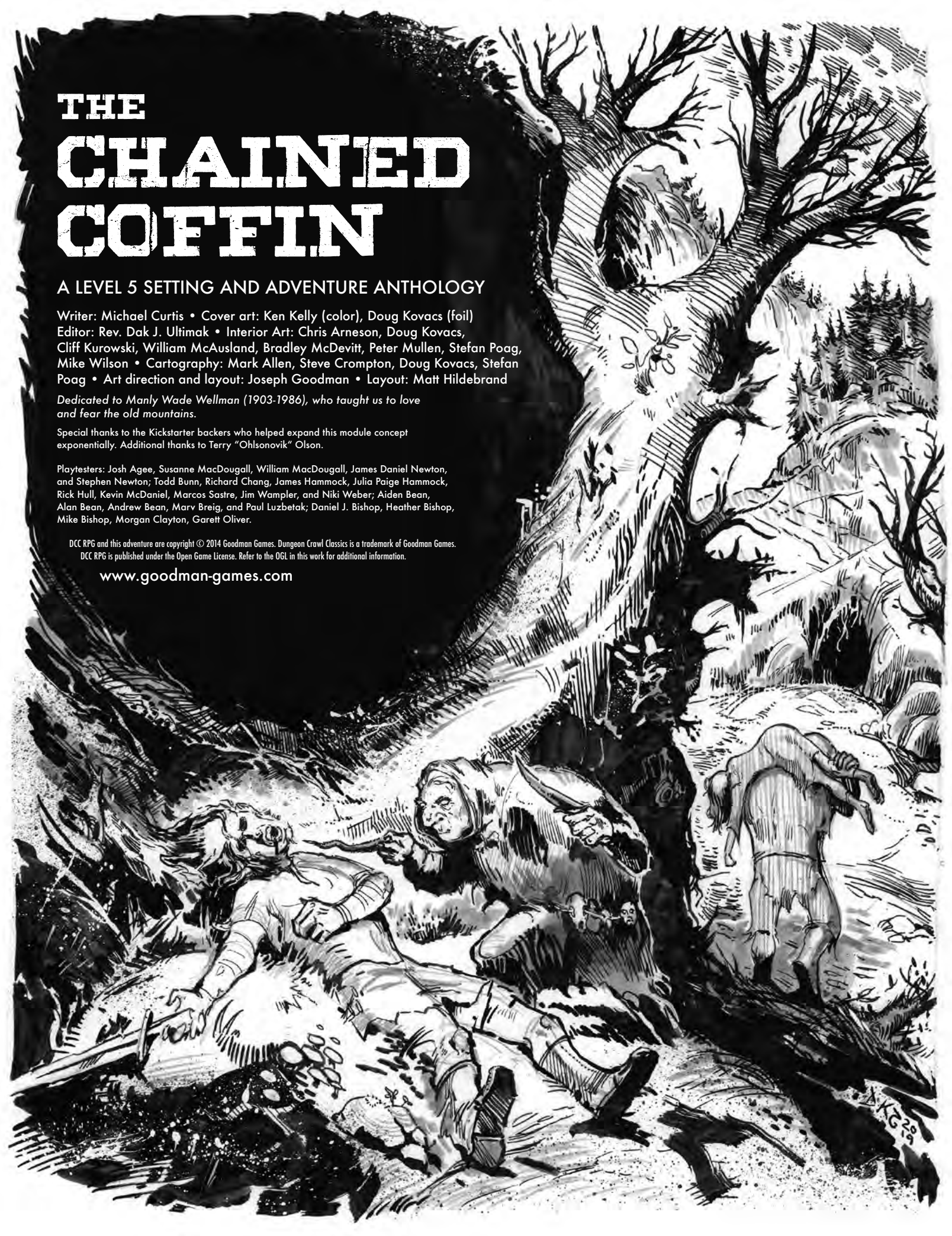
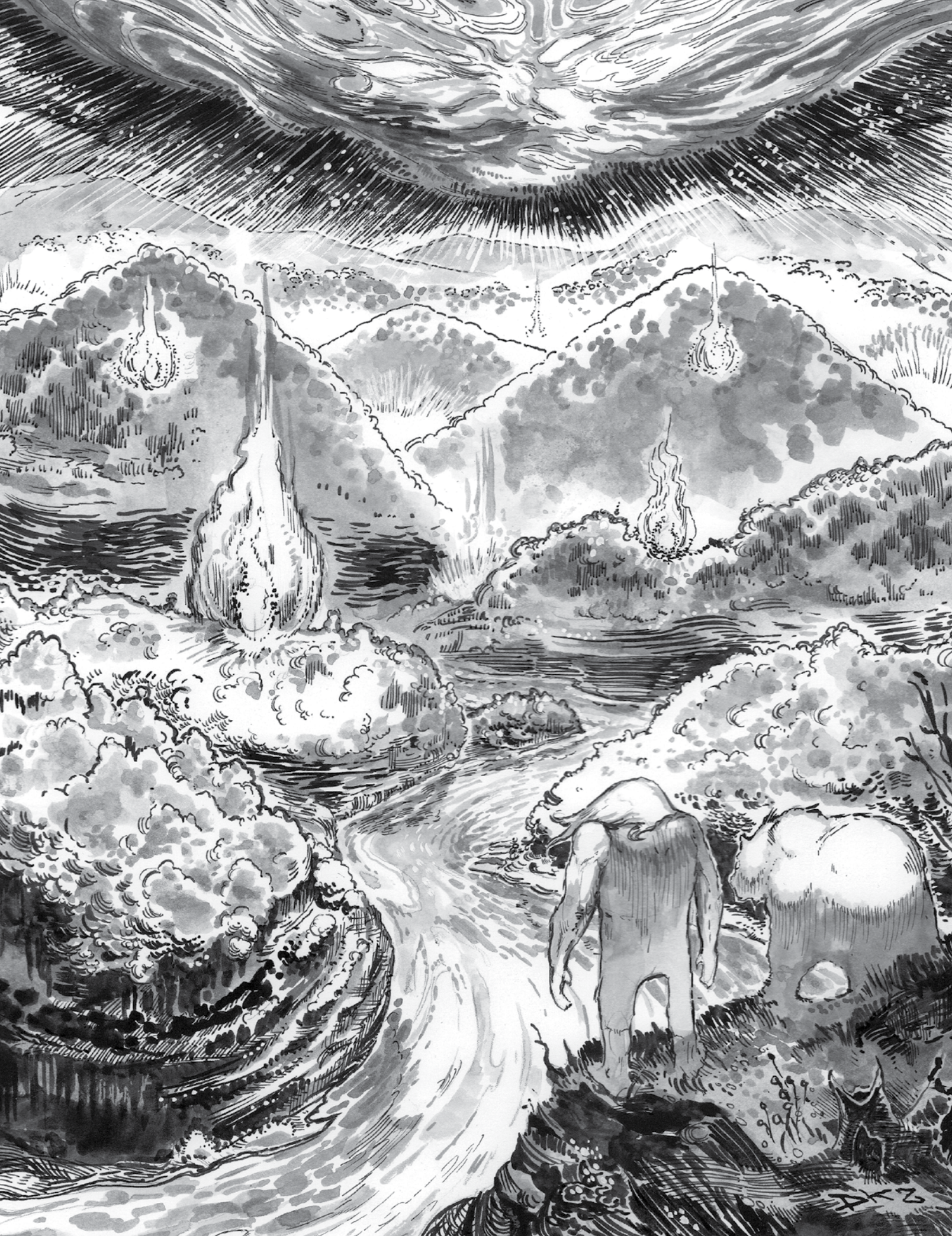




TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One: Returning To The Shudder Mountains.....	4
Introduction to the Chained Coffin Reprint.....	6
Chapter Two: A Land and People Wonderful and Strange	8
Almanac of the Shudder Mountains	10
Chapter Three: Ancient Secrets and Subtle Magics.....	22
The Chained Coffin Companion	24
Patron: Modeca	32
A Backwoods Bestiary: New Monsters from the Shudder Mountains. .	34
Additional Random Encounters for the Shudder Mountains	37
The Return of the Wild	40
Patron: Nengal the Wild One	41
Chapter Four: A Giant Comendium of Wisdom.....	44
Ma Bigginty's Book of Backwoods Wisdom.....	46
Chapter Five: A Place to Rest Your Feet for a Spell	58
Map: The Shudder Mountains	60
Buzzfolk Hollow: A Sample Shudfolk Settlement.....	62
Map: Buzzard Hollow	66
Chapter Six: Rambling though the Shudders	68
Sour Sprint Hollow: A Zero -level Funnel Adventure	70
Moonricket Bridge: A Level 1 Adventure.....	78
Moon-Eyes and Fire Flies: A Level 1-2 Adventure	82
Death Among the Pines: A Level 3 Adventure	92
Chapter Seven: Sights to Seek and Terrors to Behold.....	103
The Woeful Caves Under Yander Mountain: A Level 3 Adventure....	104
The Grave Pool: A Level 4 Adventure.....	112
The Witch-Man of Darkweather Mountain: A Level 5 Adventure....	116
Chapter Eight: The Story of the Chained Coffin.....	120
The Chained Coffin: A Level 5 Adventure.....	122
Appendix A: Time Tracker	143
Player Handouts.....	148
The Wheel	156
Chapter Nine: Further Stories to Harken To	158
Appendix N Inspirations: The Chained Coffin	160



CHAPTER ONE

RETURNING TO THE SHUDDER MOUNTAINS

*There's something about this place that keeps calling me back.
I dream of it whenever I'm away.*

I just wish I could say these dreams were always pleasant...



AKG
2017

INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAINED COFFIN REPRINT

by Michael Curtis

I cannot escape the mountains.



n fairness, I've never actually tried, because the call of those ancient giants is too powerful to abandon. My soul is never calmer than when I can feel bare rock beneath my feet, see the land vanish into the mist of distance below me, and feel the wind touch my face. The mountains are one of two places that I ever feel truly at home.

Anyone familiar with Manly Wade Wellman's John the Balladeer tales therefore understands why these stories resonate with me. Like the songs that John sings, these stories have their own unique music that speaks to the soul. They depict a land that feels both welcoming and foreboding, much like the mountains themselves; a place of laughter and shadow.

From the first time I read "O, Ugly Bird!" I knew Wellman was a kindred spirit. I've returned many times to the Appalachians he described, wandering along with John, that champion of good, as he confronted everything from conjure-men to demons to vampires, never tiring of either the plots or the way that Wellman paints the landscape with his choice of language. He remains to many the poet laureate of the Appalachians.

Exposure to Wellman's stories spurred me to explore the mountains beyond what he wrote. I acquired various books on Appalachian folklore and history, investigated musical genres native to the region, and studied the people who shaped the mountains—sometimes literally. This newfound knowledge merged with my firsthand experiences in New York's Catskill region, providing me with a vast storehouse of mental images and ideas. As that storehouse swelled, I knew something had to be done with its contents.

Finally, one day, a flash in my brainpan struck. I experienced a crystal clear mental vision of a band of people hauling a mysterious coffin, one bound in chains and inscribed with eldritch symbols, over a mountain ridge as a storm raged. It was from this image, which itself owes something to Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, that all this acquired mountain lore coalesced into a single gestalt concept. And from that concept, *The Chained Coffin* was born.

Luckily for me and for the adventure, *Dungeon Crawl Classics* is a game dedicated to re-exploring the Appendix N origins of fantasy role-playing. Wellman's inclusion on that

list gave me the leverage necessary to pitch the adventure to Joseph Goodman. I had no expectations about how he'd receive the idea of an adventure set in a fantastical version of America instead of the pseudo-Western medieval Europe landscapes that dominate the hobby. Joseph took a shine to the idea, however, and I got to writing.

The Chained Coffin remains one of the more memorable and fun adventures I've ever written. Every day saw new ideas percolating in my mental stewpot, more notions than I'd ever manage to squeeze into a 10k word count manuscript. In the emails between Joe and myself, I early on suggested that if *The Chained Coffin* turned out to be a popular module, I had plenty of material for a sequel or three waiting in the wings. And it was a good thing I did.

Shortly after the adventure was submitted, Joseph decided to Kickstart the module to see if people were willing to pay a little more for the spinning wheel puzzle featured in the scenario. Goodman Games had just come off an extremely successful Kickstarter for *Metamorphosis Alpha*, and was looking to test the idea of expanded adventures, modules bigger than the typical DCC release. The concept of a mini campaign in a boxed set was discussed and, as it often happens, I'd serve as the test pilot to see if the idea would stay in the air or not.

It turned out that people loved the idea of the mini campaign setting and that there was something about the Shudder Mountains that appealed to backers. The Kickstarter was a tremendous success, growing from a single adventure with a cool prop to a complete campaign set containing additional adventures, supplements, and a regional map. Some backers also received customized dice and a hip flask, as well.

Readers loved the module and the bonus material. To this day, people approach me at conventions or online to tell me they greatly enjoy the Shudder Mountains and its associated adventures. These people, pillars of humanity one and all, express how different the Shudders feel from your standard DCC RPG setting. That pleases me a great deal. One of the reasons I wrote *The Chained Coffin* was to demonstrate that not every DCC campaign has to be a "gonzo" place filled with blood gods, sorcerous robot villains, soul-chugging swords, and other zaniness. If DCC RPG's default setting is "metal" (something I neither agree with nor enjoy), then the Shudder Mountains are set firmly on "country and blues." The Shudders are the aperitif to cleanse the



palette after consuming too much gonzo, allowing one to savor the more delicate flavors of the game.

I'm greatly proud of this setting and the adventures that call it their home. I regularly rank the Shudder Mountains among the top five things I've produced for the role-playing hobby. People who live or grew up in the Appalachians have told me what a tremendous job I've done presenting something that feels authentic to the mountains while maintaining its uniqueness. And, for a New York boy, that's the highest praise I can ask for. I've always approached the Appalachian people and their culture with respect and tried to steer clear of stereotyping. I believe I've succeeded, allowing the richness of the mountains and the cultures that developed there to speak clearly for themselves.

Now, for the first time, all the Shudder Mountain material to date, plus some new information written especially for this reprint, are collected in one handy volume. For those of you already familiar with the Shudder Mountains and the tales of Manly Wade Wellman, this book is a homecoming, a chance to be among friends (one might even say a *Long Lost Friend*) once more. If this is your first trip to the mountains, Appalachians or Shudders, you're in for a role-playing experience seldom seen before. It is a place as rich as Middle-earth or Hyboria, but entirely its own. Whether you're here for the first time or the fiftieth, welcome to the mountains, my friend. If you're lucky, you won't want to leave either.

— Michael Curtis
September 28th, 2017