

DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS

IMPRISONED IN THE GOD-SKULL

#98: A LEVEL 6 ADVENTURE
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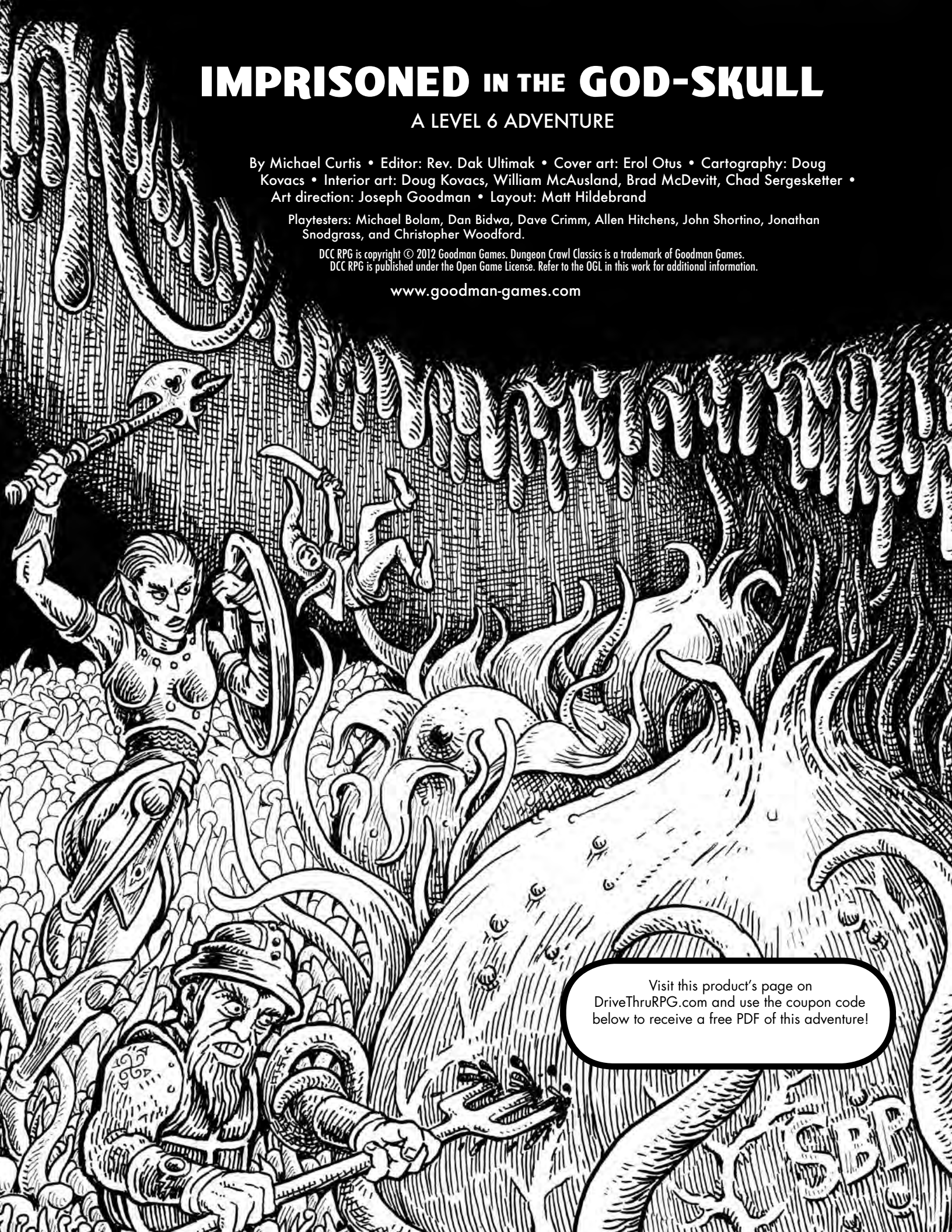
A LEVEL 6 ADVENTURE

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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.

Imprisoned in the God-Skull is a *Dungeon Crawl Classics* RPG adventure that takes the party from the confines of their earthly home to an ancient prison drifting in the Void of Stars high above it. Within the confines of this divine cranium, an antediluvian horror lies imprisoned, watched over by a staff of maggoty keepers. As if this situation wasn't thrilling enough, the adventurers arrive in time to discover a new threat—one born in the cold hell of night—has come to the God-Skull, intent on conquest!

Imprisoned in the God-Skull is intended for a group of six to eight 6th-level PCs and will challenge even these mighty heroes. Potent new magical treasures, terrible horrors, and world-threatening calamities await the adventurers in orbit above their humble world...

BACKGROUND



In ages long past, when magic was new and the world yet raw and savage, a terrible sorcerer-king arose in the brutal kingdoms on Men. This tyrant, Ubrul the Destroyer, delved into the depths of sorcery, caring nothing for what the arcane forces did to his mortal form. He became a terrible, twisted thing, a monstrosity that no longer resembled humanity at all. So voracious was Ubrul's desire for sorcerous power was that he was willing to destroy the very world he inhabited to claim magical might for his own.

A plea went up to the heavens from the mortals who lived in fear of Ubrul and the Scions of Law intervened. Ubrul needed to be confined lest the Cosmic Balance fall forever in Chaos' favor. The god now known as Njoat the Martyr saw that Ubrul was too powerful to be destroyed outright, as the battle between gods and unholy sorcerer would devastate the world they sought to save. Instead, Njoat made the ultimate sacrifice, slaying itself so that its dying divine power would entrap Ubrul in a prison fashioned from its godly form. The Scions saluted Njoat's devotion to Law and, in the act of self-destruction, Ubrul the Destroyer was engaged within the divine skull of Njoat.

The Scions set the God-Skull in the Void of Stars above the material world to drift forever out of the reach of mortals. Curiously, as the celestial skull began to decay, new life spontaneously arose from the rotting god flesh. These maggot-like creatures demonstrated great intelligence and devotion to the flesh that birthed them. The Scions appointed these creatures, whom they called the Keepers, to dwell within the God-Skull and keep watch over the prison.

Eons passed and the God-Skull remained unknown to Men. But its secrecy was broken when it was discovered by the Lama Dawa. The Lama, a mystic adept, was traveling the Void of

Stars in his astral body when he chanced upon the God-Skull. His curiosity piqued, the Lama Dawa projected himself within it and encountered the Keepers. A shared curiosity of each other's unusual physical forms and a mutual devotion to the forces of Law resulted in an unusual friendship between the Keepers and the Lama. Eventually, after many conversations and sharing of wisdom, the Lama proposes that the Keepers allow his monks to visit the God-Skull and better meditate upon their place in the cosmos, undisturbed by worldly matters. The Keepers agreed.

The monks of the Lama Dawa's monastery created a walking labyrinth within their sanctuary that allowed initiates as yet unversed in the art of astral projection to reach the God-Skull and the Keepers created cells and meditation spaces within the divine cranium for their use. The arrangement suited both parties and all was well. Meanwhile, Ubrul continued to fester within his cell, swearing vengeance on all his enemies should he ever escape.

In addition to serving as Ubrul's prison and the meditation cells of the monks, the God-Skull would serve a third function: a vault for objects best secured against the possession of those unwise enough to use them. In their search for higher wisdom, the Lama's monks encountered a number of powerful magical items that the Lama and his successors deemed better locked away rather than tempt others to claim them. The God-Skull was deemed best suited to secure the artifacts and a vault was set aside within the orbiting cranium for this purpose.

And so things continued until recently when yet a third party discovered the God-Skull, a most unexpected and uninvited guest.

From out of the depths of the Void of Stars came the Wormwood, a gnarled mass of otherworldly vegetation. The Wormwood was not only a mass of alien plant life: other creatures traveled within it, a protean species who called themselves the Thruul used the Wormwood to seek out new vistas and life forms to mimic. The Wormwood arrived with a crash, slamming into the God-Skull and boring into it with writhing ebony tendrils. The collision sent shockwaves through the prison and the explosive force was transmitted to the world below, erupting from the labyrinth within the monastery. The concussive force rocked the monastic sanctuary, killing most of its inhabitants, including the current Lama.

The Thruul rushed into the God-Skull, devouring and mimicking the physical forms of the monks, and birthing new shapes to occupy the divine prison. Drawn by the powerful magical auras within the vault, the Thruul breached it and equipped themselves with forbidden artifacts. Some of the Keepers survived, hiding themselves away in a secret chamber and debating what to do. All the while, the Thruul are preparing themselves for yet another conquest—the glittering blue-green world they can see below the God-Skull.

And, still secure in his cell, Ubrul senses his incarceration may soon be ended...



STARTING THE ADVENTURE



imprisoned in the God-Skull is intended to be an interlude within an ongoing campaign. Higher level PCs likely have multiple plots they're pursuing, numerous enemies they've made in the adventuring careers, and larger goals than when they were just beginning their exploits.

The best way to introduce the God-Skull and the dangers and treasures it contains is to make it necessary for the party to seek out the Dawa monks while dealing with another problem in their lives. If an evil demonic army is massing on the borders of their favorite kingdom, their research uncovers that the Dawa monks possess an artifact said to defend against demon magic, for example, or a rival sorcerer's true name is encoded within moldering scrolls in the monastery's library. Once they arrive at the monastery, now blasted by the concussion of the Wormwood's collision with the God-Skull, they'll be rapidly drawn into the adventure.

Higher level characters who've somehow become as powerful as they are without entangling themselves in large problems can be introduced to the adventure through other means. Greedy or magical power-mad seeking PCs may know the legends that the Dawa monks possess a number of mighty magical objects in their keeping. Adventurers serving a patron, be it mortal like an emperor or magical like a demon, might be sent to the monastery to seek out a piece of ancient wisdom or steal a relic.

If the judge intends to run *The God-Skull* as a one-shot adventure, the following premise can be used to start the module:

Your party, having acquired much renown throughout the realm for your daring deeds and many triumphs over terrible foes, is tasked with traveling to the Dawa Monastery in the lofty Peaks of Pashoon by King Phulmek III of the Kingdom of Fryn. It is said that the monks of that mountainous sanctuary once treated the king's grandfather, curing him of a malignant sickness that threatened his life. The king's son now lies stricken with the same sickness and the monarch is desperate that you acquire either the medicine to treat this disease or convince one of the monks to come back to the kingdom with you and serve as royal physician. A fortune in jewels, land, and titles all await you back in Fryn if you are successful. After gathering your supplies and preparing for the journey, you depart the Kingdom of Fryn on your long journey to the distant Peaks of Pashoon and the sanctuary of the mystical Dawa monks who dwell there.

WHAT THE CHARACTERS KNOW



As higher-level PCs, it can be assumed the party has heard many stories, read hoary tomes, delved into their temples' archives, and traded underworld tales over the course of their careers. At the start of the adventure (or in sessions leading up to it if playing as part of a campaign), give each PC one or more pieces of information about the God-Skull or the Dawa monks based on their ability scores and class as shown below. Each PC automatically knows these tidbits of lore without the need to seek out sages and scholars.

Each rumor or bit of lore can be determined randomly or chosen based on the character's class or occupation. A legend appropriate to a particular class or occupation is marked with that classes' name in parentheses. These are only guidelines, how-

ever, and any character may have learned one or more of these rumors. Each PC knows a number of legends equal to 1 plus his Intelligence or Personality modifier (judge's choice), with a minimum of 1 legend per character.

LEGENDS AND RUMORS

(Roll d12 or choose as desired)

1. The Dawa monks are a mystical sect said to possess vast mental powers earned from a lifetime of study and self-improvement. They are devout servants of Law and are known to have claimed several artifacts the forces of Chaos would love to possess and secreted them away somewhere. (Clerics, Wizards, Elves)
2. The Dawa Monastery is said to house several priceless relics the monks hid away from "less enlightened" creatures. Rumor is they're in an impenetrable vault somewhere. (Thieves)
3. The greatest criminal masterminds once pooled their resources to hire a warlock to divine the location of the vault. The sorcerer's efforts revealed that the vault lies not within the monastery but somewhere high above the world, cloaked in blackness and unreachable by man. (Thieves, Wizards)
4. The Dawa monks are formidable warriors, totally devoted to developing their bodies to perfection. Some warriors from the outside world have trekked far to the Dawa Monastery seeking instruction. Most were turned away, but those who were accepted by the monks, never returned to the outside world. (Warriors, Dwarves, Elves)
5. In the ancient days when magic was raw and boundless, a sorcerer-king known as Ubrul the Destroyer arose and threatened the world. The gods of Law intervened and entrapped the much-corrupted sorcerer-king, removing him from the world entirely. (Wizards, Elves)
6. The Dawa monks are said to have hoarded away a number of magical artifacts to purportedly protect the world from them. Many argue that magic is merely a tool and that no one—especially religious mystics—should keep worthy wizards from using tools as they are intended. (Wizards, Elves)
7. Centuries ago, the Dawa monks hired dwarven masons to construct a knotted pathway of rare stones within their monastery. The monks claimed that walking this pathway, which they called the Labyrinth of Rising, helped the walker "rise to a higher state." (Clerics, Dwarves)
8. The dwarven clans once fashioned a crown of iron and mithril for an ancient king. Known as the Crown of Nine Spires, the coronet was further enchanted by the king's wizards. Their magical meddling ruined good dwarf work for it is said the Crown of Nine Spires acquired a dreadful curse and drove the king mad. The Dawa monks are believed to be in possession of the Crown, hiding it away for safety. (Dwarves, Elves)
9. Long ago, a human sorcerer known as Ubrul delved too deeply into the art of magic and became terrible in both power and appearance. Ubrul threatened to tip the Cosmic Balance irrevocably towards Chaos and the Scions of



AKC 2018