

~ SLY FLOURISH'S ~
FANTASTIC LOCATIONS

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Our fantasy roleplaying games require a lot of elements to become truly fantastic and entertaining, both for our players and for us as GMs. Interesting story seeds, deep NPC personalities, thought-provoking investigation, awesome monsters, and powerful action all blend together to make our games great.

Some of these elements are easier to manage than others. We can find useful foes in any of the monster books that accompany our games. Deep and interesting NPCs require little more than borrowing cool characters from our favorite books, movies, and TV shows. However, a few key elements are harder to assemble. We often can't come up with all the important features of a setting right at the table. To make a game interesting, we need a physical background that can take our imaginations into a higher plane of thinking. We need a place to house our interesting NPCs and dangerous monsters, as well as the lost secrets our PCs choose to investigate, and we need that place to seem as real as the world we inhabit.

WE NEED FANTASTIC LOCATIONS.

In this book, you will find a fifteen fantastic locations. Each has been designed to inspire your imagination and give you the details you need make a location come to life at your table. Each is ready to be filled with your own stories, your own clues, your own threats, and your own devious villains.



HOW TO USE THESE LOCATIONS

These locations are meant to aid you in building your own deep adventures, shaped from the stories developed by you and your players. This book does not contain complete adventures unto themselves. Instead, these fantastic locations are designed to be populated by your own monsters and villainous groups, seeded with your own clues, and wrapped within your own world. They're designed to be universal enough within the realm of high fantasy that you can place them in many campaign worlds without having to twist your story too far away from your intention.

Think of this book as something like a bestiary for locations. As with a monster book, you can use this book in a number of different ways. If a location catches your attention, you can make it the cornerstone of an encounter, an adventure, or an entire campaign. Alternatively, you can just keep the book handy for that moment when the campaign goes off in an unexpected direction and you need to pull out an interesting location in a hurry.

INFINITE EXPANSION

Each location is intended to serve as the foundation for a short adventure. However, each can just as

easily be expanded to suit a small campaign if you so desire. Because all these locations have been designed to be open-ended, you can add to them as you like, letting them grow as your adventure expands. Every dungeon is a potential megadungeon in this way, and there is no end to the caverns, tunnels, chambers, and passageways that might lie beneath these locations.

WHERE ARE THE MAPS?

Many of these locations don't have fixed maps, but we didn't simply forget them. Rather, we wanted to ensure that you could fill out any location to suit your needs and the desires of your players. These locations contain many blank spots—areas you can fill in yourself or with which you can create connections to other places in your world. Alternatively, you might just want a focused and limited location for a quick single-session game. Either way, you can place these locations anywhere in the world you want and change their environments however you wish.

Depending on what sort of adventure you're going to run, you can quickly sketch out a set of passages, halls, or other connections that tie the chambers in these locations together. If you want a more linear adventure, this might just be individual halls connecting different rooms. A more open adventure might feature dozens of halls and smaller chambers



that connect to the larger chambers of these locations. You can plan this out ahead of time or leave it open, building the connections between chambers while the game unfolds at your table. Fill connecting hallways or passages with interesting features such as mosaics of ancient history, devastating traps, or the bodies of adventurers who passed this way before.

REALMS OF MULTIPLE USES

Each of these fantastic locations includes a description of its history but little information about how the location is being used now. As with the blank spots talked about above, we don't know how you'll use these locations so we left their current status for you to decide. A location might be a lair for a villain the PCs are currently hunting. It might be the site of a lost artifact or a collection of relics the characters require. It might have been taken over by a band of gnolls who now use it as their headquarters.

RESKINNING FANTASTIC LOCATIONS

Though these locations are described mostly within a realm of high fantasy, they can be easily reworked for use in other fantasy roleplaying settings. With a little adjustment, they might make great locations for science fantasy settings. We've kept a wide range of worlds in mind while writing these locations, and because these locations are all system agnostic, you can use a location just as easily in whatever system you choose to run.

Whatever your world, whatever your system, you are hereby given full authority to rip these locations apart, repaint them with garish colors, or hang lightsabers from the walls. Do whatever you want to make these locations your own, and to fit them into the story you want to tell. Perhaps the Dark Abbey is better in the desert, or the Ziggurats of the Doom Priests are actually found deep underground. Every location and detail in this book is yours to use however you want to use it, to make your life easier and your game great.

POTENTIAL INHABITANTS AND AREA ASPECTS

Each fantastic location includes a list of potential inhabitants and area aspects. These can help you decide where the location might be found, and who or what might be found in it. Doing so makes it easy to fit a location into your own adventures.

The "Potential Inhabitants" section describes the types of creatures that might inhabit a location, and can help you decide what sorts of creatures make sense to run at that location. These creature tags can also help you determine which locations would work well with existing creatures you plan to use in your campaign.

"Location Aspects" and "Area Aspects" give you and your players a quick reference of the most important features of a general location or specific area. Drawn from the roleplaying game Fate Core, aspects are tools that you and your players can incorporate into the scenes that take place in a location. If you like, you can write down these aspects on 3×5 note cards or on a dry-erase battle map so that you and your players remember to bring them into the game.

You can wrap these aspects within the mechanics of whatever roleplaying game you choose. How you choose to use these aspects is completely up to you.

CONNECTORS

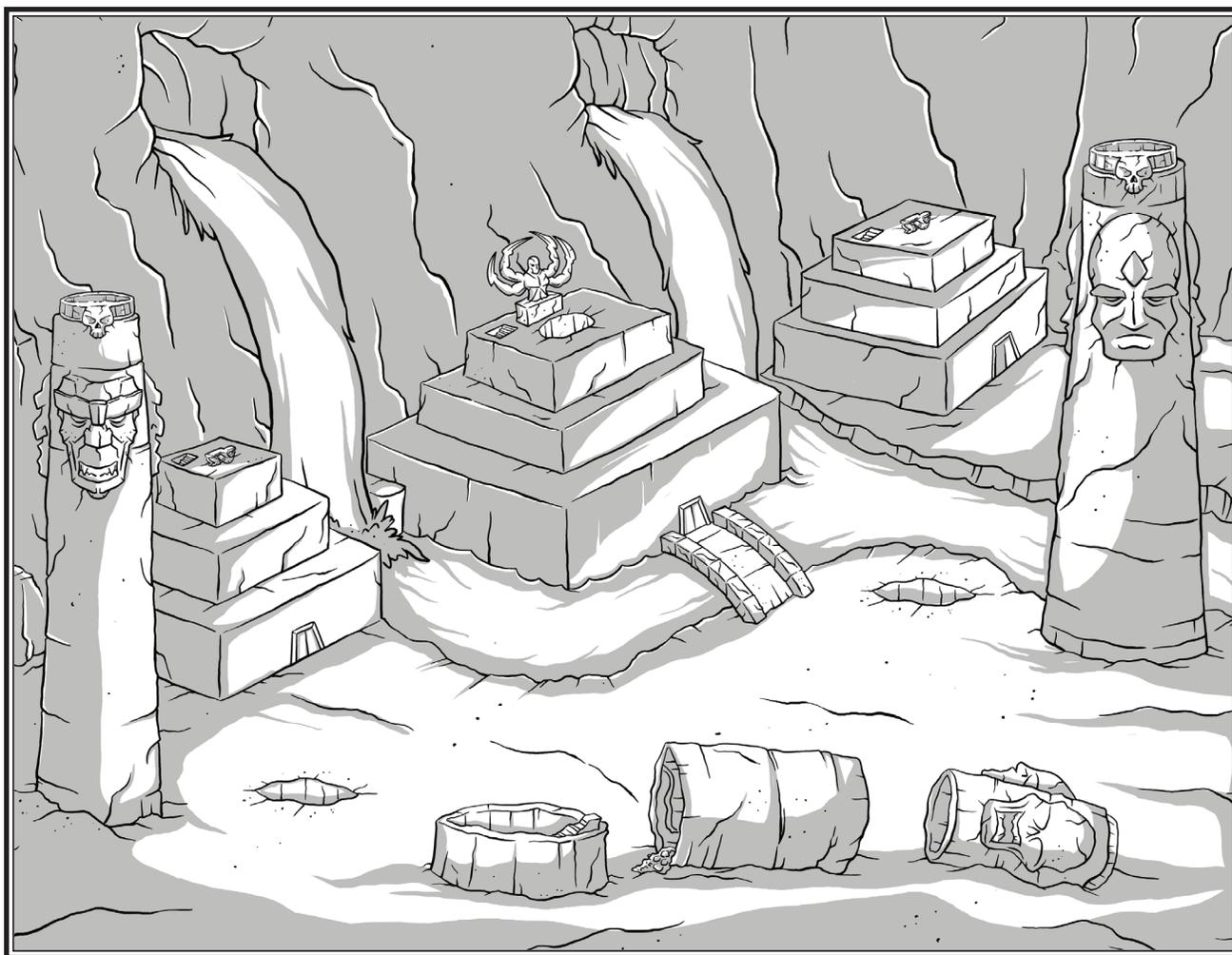
Many fantastic locations include sections describing the potential connectors between chambers. We've included read-aloud text you can use to describe these connectors, and to set up the ways that adventurers will move from place to place. But as with everything in the book, you are free to describe or reskin connectors however you wish. Add your own traps, encounters, artwork, and other clues to drive the story you and your players create.

DESIGN NOTES

A number of locations also feature a section titled "Design Notes." These notes offer thoughts and suggestions on how particular locations might fit into your game. A design note might suggest ways to reskin a location or an area to fit into different types of games. Another might offer thoughts about potential directions for open-ended designs.

These fantastic locations are written specifically to leave blanks for you and your players to fill out during the game. There is no canon here, and no right or wrong way to use them. These are big bags of building blocks, from which you can quickly and easily form your own memorable settings and encounters.





THE ZIGGURATS OF THE DOOM PRIESTS

Built into the cliffs of a steep mountainside, the ruins of three ziggurats rise above the jungle surrounding them. Twin waterfalls flow from caverns deep in the cliff walls between the three ziggurats, tumbling into rivers that form a natural moat around the central ziggurat. A crumbling stone bridge spans the moat, leading to a set of sturdy stone doors in the central ziggurat. Two huge pillars stand before the ziggurats, while a third has collapsed into rubble. Massive carvings of dead gods decorate the stonework of the ruins.

Thousands of years ago, the worshipers of merciless gods forced slaves to build these massive stone ziggurats and their accompanying towers. The focused zealotry of the jungle tribesfolk solidified the power of rulers known as the doom priests, creating dynasties that lasted for centuries. Ancient tombs, hidden treasure

vaults, sacrificial altars, and devastating traps now fill the ruins of the ziggurats. An expansive network of caves and passageways connect the towers, ziggurats, and pits to the mountain behind them.

Potential Inhabitants: Undead, humanoids, monstrous humanoids, unintelligent monsters, constructs

Location Aspects: Isolated old ruin, hidden temple, haunted catacombs, forbidden towers

Forbidden Ziggurats Buried in the Jungle

It took centuries of rebellion and infighting to destroy the power base of the doom priests who ruled the ziggurats. Over time, the area has taken on a dark reputation that keeps local folk away. Some whisper





that the site is still cursed by the priests who died there. Others claim to hear the voices of thousands of dead slaves still screaming from the pits where they fell. The darkest rumors claim that an ancient god sleeps within the lost chambers of the central ziggurat, waiting to be woken. Whatever truth might lie behind the myths, countless souls and an ocean of blood have bathed the temples over the years, soaking into the unhallowed earth below it.

A History of Sacrifice, Slavery, and Dark Worship

For centuries, the doom priests ruled with claims of divine blood, inherited from a god demanding endless sacrifice. Inbred over centuries, the families of these doom priests were kept separate from the slaves who served them. A single king or queen ruled over the land, with a council of high priests in attendance. When the king or queen died, the high priests would select a new monarch by the same secret process by which new priests ascended to the council. This ensured a stable and insular ruling class presiding over a slave nation.

Thousands of sacrifices were conducted over the years. In addition to drawing on their slaves, the doom priests would often select sacrificial victims from their own ranks, based on political differences. Priests who opposed the will of the council would sometimes see their children marked for sacrifice, ensuring that their family lines would be ended. Elaborate machines of execution were constructed that could eviscerate dozens of people at once. The screams of the dying could be heard across all lands controlled by the doom priests, and the bodies of the dead filled endless numbers of sacrificial pits.

CONNECTORS: THE ZIGGURAT HALLS

Faded paint on crumbling stone walls depicts ancient ceremonies and rites. The smell of dust and decay fills the humid air in a 10-foot-wide, 10-foot-high corridor. A number of large wall blocks have been pushed inward by thick roots and vines.

Area Aspects: Dust in the humid air, thick roots breaking through the walls, faded paintings on the stones

These halls have succumbed to the decay of the temple. Ancient traps powered and reset by water flowing through the temple still remain operational.

THE HOLLOW PILLARS

Each of the two standing pillars reaches some two hundred feet into the sky. The third, lying in ruin, reveals that the pillars are hollow and filled with a network of chambers. The ruins of the third pillar have been picked clean over centuries, leaving nothing but stone behind. The large and gruesome faces of gods both humanoid and bestial decorate the highest reaches of the surviving towers. Though hollow, no visible entrances appear on the outer surface of those pillars. However, thick vines have worked their way into the cracks between their massive stone blocks.

Area Aspects: Grotesque stone heads, crumbling stone walls, thick vines

Though they have stood for centuries, the weakened walls of the pillars could crumble under a strong force, exposing their inner chambers. Those chambers show signs of having been both a decadent lair and a prison. Warm water heated by the sun outside flows into large and beautifully carved sunken baths. The rotted remains of large beds, painted wooden chests, and children's toys can be found intact within these chambers. Wooden racks hold parchment and vellum scrolls, many of which have rotted away with age and humidity. Paintings on the walls of the chambers in the pillar depict the lives of royal families from birth through death. These rulers lived wholly within the chambers of the pillars, the enlarged pupils of their eyes having never being exposed to daylight.

Massive statues guard the spiral ramps and heavy stone doors that connect the different levels of each pillar. A narrow stone staircase leads into the catacombs beneath each tower, appearing to be the only way in or out.

The upper chambers of each tower feature an altar still stained with dried royal blood, and presided over by a grotesque statue of a half-bestial god. The outside roof of each pillar holds a large iron brazier, along with chains and shackles that would once have held prisoners for sacrifice. The fires of these braziers must have made the pillars visible by night for miles around.



THE BURIAL CHAMBERS

The smell of rot and decay flows out from the cracked stones of the smaller ziggurats. The roots of nearby trees have pierced through the walls of these crumbled ruins, and decayed corpses tumble from the remnants of stacked crypts. Small, dark passages lead farther into these burial chambers.

Area Aspects: Crumbling stacked crypts, invading roots

The two smaller ziggurats contain the burial chambers of the doom priests, along with their earthly treasures. Shattered sarcophagi and stone chests speak to years of looting. Skeletons wrapped in the remains of elaborate costumes are chained to the walls, appearing to be servants, concubines, spouses, and children buried alive along with their dead lords. A few large stone doors flanked by armed statues appear strangely untouched.

THE SACRIFICIAL PITS

Foliage almost completely covers these deep pits, as though the world itself wished to swallow up their existence. Crumbling dirt and slick mud ring the edge of each pit, threatening a fall to any who stand too close. Skeletal hands frozen in death reach up from the darkness below, while agonized skulls, jaws agape, seem to seek any light from above.

Area Aspects: Hidden deep pits, dangerous edges

These sacrificial pits are scattered throughout the ruins. Some are easy to spot, while others are heavily obscured. Small tunnels at the bottom of these pits connect with tunnels leading to the pillars, the ziggurats, and other deeper caves. More than a few recent digs contain the remains of would-be treasure hunters. Hoping to find lost relics within the tunnels, they instead found only their own violent deaths.

CONNECTORS: THE TUNNELS OF THE DAMNED

Stinking of rot and death, these narrow dirt tunnels extend throughout the ground underneath the temples. Strange symbols have been carved into the dirt with bleeding hands, showing that those who once dwelled here continued to worship the dark gods responsible for their fate.

Area Aspects: Narrow dirt tunnels, bloodstained symbols

These tunnels extend for miles around the ziggurats, and often connect to the deep sacrificial pits. More distant tunnels extend into the caves behind the waterfall, and some might even connect to the lower chambers of the pillars and the ziggurats.

THE FALLS

Tall waterfalls spill out from caves high up on the cliffs behind the ziggurats, flowing into the moat surrounding the largest ziggurat. Driven by the water, the rumble of grinding stone pulses through the stonework of this ancient site. Water also flows out from the temple, returning back into the river.

Area Aspects: High waterfalls, loud rushing water, slick stone rocks, hidden water catches

Large catches use the flowing water of the falls to feed into pools, fountains, and water-powered machinery within the main ziggurat. Some of these catches continue to operate, while the passage of time has left others in ruins. The water that emerges from the ziggurat appears oily and dark, as though something within the ziggurat has tainted and poisoned it.

Hundreds of caves high up on the mountainside near the falls reveal the remains of thick veins of gold. Heavily mined centuries ago, they speak to the riches and decadence of the doom priests.

THE TREASURE VAULTS

Obsidian statues of beast-headed humanoids guard these stone vaults. Carved scenes of decadence and murder decorate the walls. Pillars of gold-laced sandstone hold up the cracked, vaulted ceiling.

Area Aspects: Obsidian beast-headed statues, gold-laced pillars

Golden statues and gem-encrusted jewelry and adornments reveal the wealth of the doom priests. The treasure vaults of the central ziggurat hold and protect these vast riches. Some of these vaults have been breeched and looted, while others remain heavily trapped and guarded. Their petrified guardians stand upright, wrapped in black-runed cloth and wielding obsidian weapons as sharp as glass.



THE MACHINE

The rumble of stone and rushing water echoes through this chamber. Water flows from spouts on the sides of the chamber, turning massive stone wheels. Notched discs of iron are caught by rods embedded in the stone wheels, turning as they pull a complex series of chains that disappear into holes in the walls.

Area Aspects: Rumbling stone gear works, large turning iron disks, complex series of chains

This chamber operates a vast network of mechanisms that close doors, power fountains, and reset traps throughout the central ziggurat. Even after the death of the doom priests centuries ago, many of the machines of the ziggurat continue to operate.

THE CHAMBER OF DARK SECRETS

Images of hundreds of humanoids being crushed between floor and ceiling are carved into the pillars of this pyramid-shaped room. Stone benches sit in a triangular pattern surrounding a platform of dark granite. A pedestal shaped in the form of two cupped, clawed hands with seven fingers rises in the center of the platform.

Area Aspects: Grotesque pillars, granite platform, clawed pedestal

The pedestal is the resting place of an ancient tome, thousands of years older than the stonework of the ziggurats. The book speaks of dark rites and terrible magic that will bring power to the doom priests for a thousand generations. Many of the pages are stained with blood. Others have been burned or raggedly torn as if by hands clutched in madness. Skeletons frozen in the final act of reaching for the book lay in a circle around the pedestal, their skin and bones burned to black ash.

DESIGN NOTE:

Is the book still on the pedestal? Has it been stolen and replaced with something else? Has some terrible power already been unleashed here? Does some small, intelligent creature now use the pedestal as a throne? Tune this room and its contents to the story of your own adventure.

THRONE OF THE DOOM GOD

Blood stains the pillars of this large chamber, whose alcoves reveal the leering faces of demonic statues. Crumbling steps lead to a raised platform where the statue of a many-armed god sits on a huge stone throne. Gold- and silver-lined symbols decorate the throne. Two of the statue's hands are outstretched and covered in blackened dried blood. The dark eyes of the statue appear hollow.

Area Aspects: Blood-stained pillars, leering demonic statues, many-armed god statue, gold-glyphed throne

The long-desiccated remains of bodies torn and shredded for the amusement of the doom priests and their hate-filled gods lie scattered across the chamber floor. Barbed hooks and wicked chains provide clues to the most vile of ceremonies conducted in worship of the Doom God. Hidden cubicles and passageways lead off from this chamber, including one behind the statue.

DESIGN NOTE:

Whatever other creatures might call this location home, this is a likely area for a boss monster. It's possible that an evil even worse than the doom priests resides deep beneath the throne, calling twisted and powerful monsters to this place.

THE SKY TEMPLE

A weatherworn statue of a multiarmed bestial god sits in the center of this open-sky temple at the top of the largest of the three ziggurats. An altar stained brown from centuries of sacrifice sits at the feet of the bestial god. A deep shaft in front of the altar leads hundreds of feet into the earth, below the lowest levels of the ziggurat.

Area Aspects: Multiarmed bestial statue, bloodstained altar, deep sacrificial pit

The shaft leads down into a charnel pit filled with the remains of thousands of sacrifices. A web of tunnels spreads out through the area, including passages that lead to the cracked cellars of the ziggurats. Local legends speak of flesh-eating creatures that once claimed these tunnels as their own.