

DELVE TOO DEEP

*A system-neutral fantasy
adventure*

INTRODUCTION

This adventure is aimed at fantasy adventure systems or generic systems. While it's framed as a dungeon crawl, combat is avoidable. The adventure is focused on exploration, problem-solving, and interaction between characters, although it's assumed the players might be hired for a physically dangerous task.

The adventure includes suggestions on what types of skills can be rolled at various points, and what types of combat encounters might occur, but it is left up to the GM to determine the specifics. Some checks are listed as being harder than others, whatever that means in the system you are using. It is best to play with characters that have skills other than just combat.

Content warnings

This story has themes of mind control which are hard to avoid entirely, but you can adapt it so that only NPCs are affected. The players can avoid killing entirely, though that will not be clear until the end of the adventure, and the risk of injury and death are present. If you aren't familiar with "safety tools", I recommend doing an Internet search and finding some that fits the group to ensure the whole table will enjoy the game. More broadly, it may be different in style to what your table normally plays, so make sure the table is on board.



Running as part as a longer campaign

This adventure could take place in any existing fantasy setting where what lies beneath the ground is not understood. It could probably be adapted to a modern or science fiction setting. Optionally, it could be played before or after my previous adventure, In The Land of the Dead God, with the same implied setting.

This adventure is a good opportunity to add a new antagonist if the players fail, and to foreshadow future threats if they succeed.

Running as a one-shot

This adventure is self-contained, though the events of the adventure could affect the future.

If playing as a one-shot, if the table is interested, you could play it as a more lethal style of game, or with more serious consequences for failure. With good out-of-character communication, you could play it with some inter-party conflict. You could do this in a longer campaign, of course, with more risk of derailing the campaign.

Running with one player and one GM

There are enough NPCs to fill out any weaknesses a particular character might have. NPCs could offer help on relevant checks, or you could have the players roll checks on behalf of NPCs.

Background

The background to this adventure is of course flexible, but this gives a starting point.

A long time ago

In an ancient time, a powerful kingdom or empire bore a hole deep into the earth, breaking into another supernatural realm. In the default setting, this is the Empire of Tuje. This empire mined this underground realm for power in some way that was dangerous, evil or both. The alien, powerful denizens of this realm are hostile or at least dangerous. This empire is long gone, and the land became a wasteland after it fell.

The present day

These lands remain an important trade route even after the fall of the empire, and a few towns remain. Travelers and merchants come from afar, and no player character would be out of place. Even long-time inhabitants of this land vary greatly in appearance.

The adventure takes place in a remote corner of this land. The few people who live here make a living by herding domesticated dinosaurs and fending off wild dinosaurs and other threats.

The problem

Recently, a mineshaft was discovered, surrounded by a ring of carved, ancient rocks of presumed religious significance. A priest, named Lo-me-nuse, took charge of investigating them, in combination with a scholarly organization known

as the Infinite Scroll. Last week an expedition went down and never returned. Lo-me-nuse decided to hire outside help to protect the next expedition.

More worldbuilding about the land of Tuje

Gods tend to be local in influence, and as numerous as the world has hills or streams. An unusually powerful god was associated with these lands. This god was killed in some manner, and it is believed this made the land a wasteland.

(Content warning: infertility) Crops no longer grow, nor do animals give live birth. Dinosaurs have filled the niche that mammals once did. People must travel outside of these lands to give birth, and so the people of this land have often been adopted from outside or came fleeing war, tyranny, poverty, and so forth. This is a land of survivors. Clans consist not just of blood relatives and relatives by marriage, but those who swore an oath of kinship.

The land is full of ruins. The hills of Gonemyu, roughly in the center of the map, south of Great Market Town, were used by the old empire for military purposes, and are now full of bandits and looters. Recently, the clan Tuheh Mazdi claimed a corner of these hills, where the mineshaft was discovered.

This will be the first time in living memory that someone has ventured that deep below the earth.



If you would like more background information, including on their language, you can find it here:

<https://seedlinggames.github.io/letatuje/letatuje.html>

Synopsis

The player characters were hired to join an expedition to explore an ancient mine, as experts and hired muscle. They may choose which of the expedition members to bring with them.

They then descend deep into the earth using an ancient, magical elevator-like device. As they descend, increasingly strange events occur. By dealing with these, they can build relationships with NPCs.

At the bottom, they discover a lush garden and encounter a strange, powerful being known as a jyraxa. It can read peoples' deepest fears and desires and use them as leverage to convince the NPCs (and optionally the PCs) to agree to a Faustian bargain resulting in taking over their minds. If the players previously refused to bring anyone with them, members of the last expedition can be here instead.

The players will need to deal with this situation, possibly using their previous influence to snap the NPCs out of it, possibly attempting to fight this being. They will probably have to flee and try and prevent the jyraxa from following them.

Adventure hooks

- If you previously ran In The Land of the Dead God, the Infinite Scroll might hire them to investigate reports of a nearby expedition gone wrong.
- While traveling, they encounter a messenger from the priest, Lo-me-nuse, looking to hire the first promising group of adventurers they find.
- The party hears rumors of a fascinating and unprecedented discovery, and are hired by a scholar to try to covertly find out what happened.

Dramatis Personae

An attached handout contains “stat blocks” summarizing what the expedition members can add to the party and how they will react to player words and actions. Depending on how the events during the descent resolve, they may be more inclined to listen to the players in the final confrontation.

Make it transparent to the players how the NPCs can help them on skill checks, and keep the players and not the PCs in the spotlight. The NPCs assist, rather than roll themselves.

Possible members of the expedition:

Yidi-myana (she/her) is a young dinosaur-herd, skilled with mechanical devices and wary of magic. Her mother, Hathral, disappeared on the last expedition.

Svathix (he/him) is a scholar of esoteric lore. He hides a brand that marks him as a criminal, and his glowing white eyes reveal his ties with the spirit that taught him magic.

Dedazeh Nyu Tuheh Madzi (he/him), commonly called Dedazeh, the bold, charismatic warrior who leads the local Tuje clan after retaking these lands from bandits.

Gazu-nyeji (they/them) is Dedazeh's cousin, and a monk of the Infinite Scroll, an order dedicated to preserving knowledge. Gazu-nyeji has much experience with ancient Tuje ruins and their magic, as well as other useful skills such as medicine.

Other characters:

Lo-me-nuse (she/her), the priest in charge of this excavation, who hired the party.

Hathral (she/her), sole survivor of the last expedition of four, and mother of Yidi-myana. The party will find her immediately before meeting the jyraxa, allowing them to learn about the threat they face.

The Jyraxa

Its true form is shapeless and incomprehensible, and perhaps not even real in a meaningful sense. It can appear as anything, if it wishes, and split into multiple bodies. If it dies it vanishes.

As it gets closer to the surface, its ability to act becomes increasingly limited. When the party first meets it, it is immensely powerful, but to act on the surface it needs a mortal host, who must let it in willingly.

Its mindset is fundamentally alien to that of mortals. It has a vague concept of time, and probably remembers the old empire. Its experiences with mortals were mostly of violence, but does it even care about that? It can read the minds of mortals and use that to manipulate them, but does it really understand what it reads?

Possible motivations. Roll a d6 or pick your favourite:

1. Curiosity. It wants to see the strange surface world, wreaking havoc only by accident.
2. Fear. It wants revenge on those who attacked a thousand years ago, or to attack pre-emptively.
3. Conquest. It has been trying to break into the mortal world, to take what it can for its own reasons.
4. Instinct. It is just a parasite, taking over the minds of others to travel to new worlds.
5. Collect on a debt. Someone made a deal for power a thousand years ago.
6. Retrieval. Something was taken from its world, and it will stop at nothing to get it back.

Or perhaps its motivations don't matter. Perhaps they will remain a mystery.



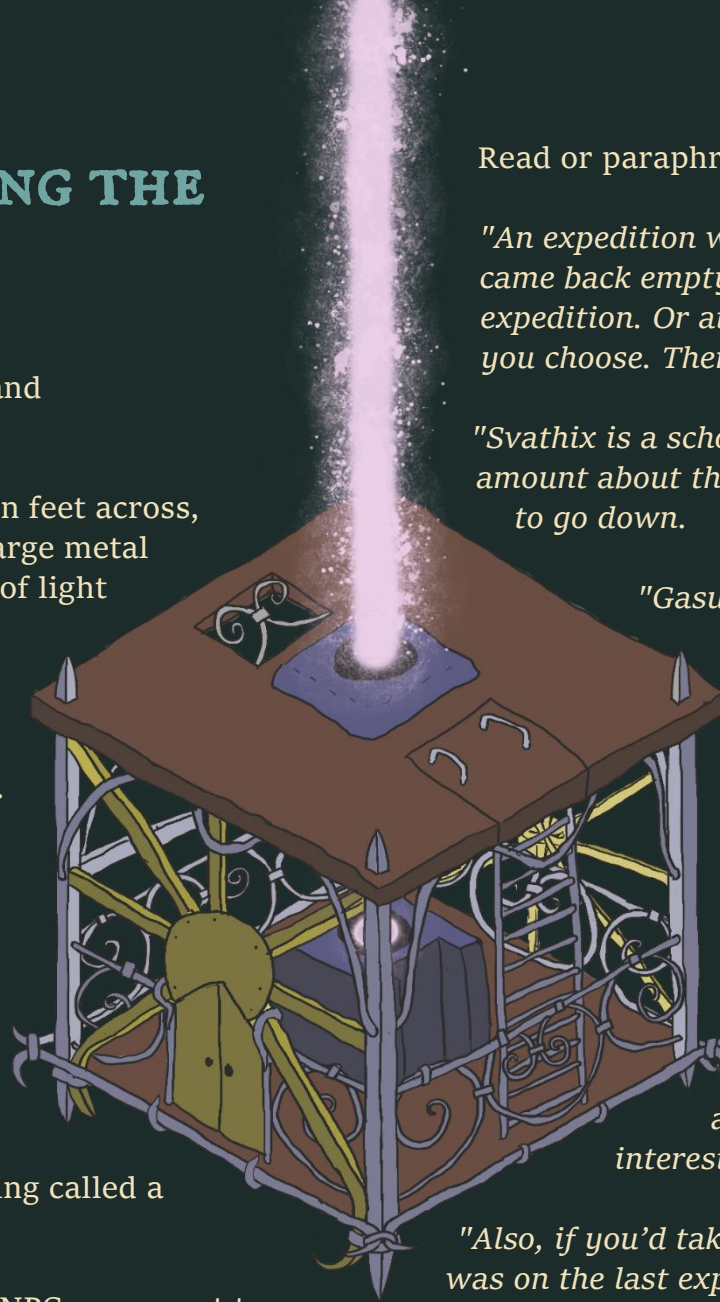
CHAPTER I: STARTING THE EXPEDITION

The expedition starts in a remote, hot, and dusty patch of land. Temporary tents have been set up around a hole in the ground about fifteen feet across, ringed with carved rocks in a circle. A large metal tripod sits above it, from which a beam of light descends to a hovering elevator at the level of the pit.

A woman in dusty robes with the embroidery of a priest is in charge here. She fits the description of the one the players are supposed to talk to. Her name is Lo-me-nuse. About a dozen other people are around.

Someone with knowledge of the past might be able to discern that the rocks are covered with the ancient script of the Tuje Empire. A hard check indicates that it warns against some unknown being called a "jyraxa".

At this point, you can decide how many NPCs you want to manage by deciding how many people fit in the elevator. If this is a solo game, more can flesh out the party.



Read or paraphrase:

"An expedition went down last week, and the elevator came back empty. So I'd like you to accompany the next expedition. Or at least one expedition member, whatever you choose. There are three options:

"Svathix is a scholar of a sort. Knows an incredible amount about things nobody else does and is still willing to go down.

"Gasu-nyoji's a monk of the infinite scroll. Another scholar, more of a generalist, but has explored a lot of ruins."

If they haven't come up before, it is common knowledge that the Infinite Scroll is a monastic order dedicated to the preservation of knowledge as a religious principle.

"Finally, Dedazeh is a local leader. He feels responsible for the safety of the last group. He knows how to fight and keep cool in a crisis, and a strong interest in the ancient empire."

"Also, if you'd take an extra person, Yidi-myana's mother was on the last expedition and she wants to find her. Neither a scholar nor a fighter, but she figured out how the device works that will take you down."

The elevator

The players may want to examine it in advance. It's made mainly of steel bars twisted in implausible ways, with an ancient, magical mechanism beyond modern understanding. It produces and absorbs a beam that holds it in place and can raise and lower the entire box. The beam will bend to the twists and turns of the tunnel.

It's also possible for them to remotely bring the elevator back up using another mechanism on the surface, but before the elevator came back on its own.

Yidi-myana

Yidi-myana is a young woman, in her early 20s or whatever age is younger than the party. She wears plain clothing, made of dinosaur leather. She carries a Tuje machete-like blade called a doka, which is used more often for work than as a weapon.

She's practical and down-to-earth. She generally distrusts and avoids magic, associating it with the dangerous ruins, but is willing to go on this expedition.



As you approach, she is trying to control a herd of dinosaurs, known as detsulago in her language and borealopelta in ours. They are shoulder-high and longer than a horse, and covered with spikes and natural armour plates. They suddenly spook when you come near.

The Dinosaurs Stampede!

As you approach, one dinosaur bolts and others follow. She grabs onto one rope but the herd is running towards some tents...

Possible skills:

- Skills with animals
- Social skills, with less effectiveness on the animals
- Physical skills to grab onto a rope or physically block them
- Know or observe what might have spooked them – for example, a helmet or glowing sword
- Appropriate magic could calm them.

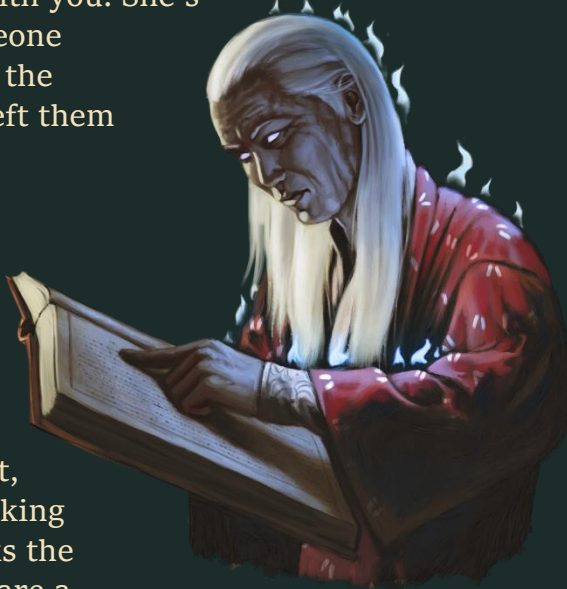
Success: She trusts the party and their general competence. Mark a box on her character sheet.

Regardless of what happens, when things are under control, she'll explain that her mother was on the last expedition, and

she wants to come with you. She's pretty sure that someone messed up operating the elevator and it just left them behind.

Svathix

He has long white hair and eyes that glow white with no visible pupils. He's soft-spoken and quiet, but if you get him talking he'll explain he thinks the marks on the stones are a warning about some dangerous being below, something called a "jyraxa".



Things the party might figure out, by making an appropriate check:

- *Medium:* Svathix is wary of the party.
- *Hard:* He's being evasive about having visited the cities of this land in a way that might suggest he's been exiled for some crime.
- *Medium:* His fine but tattered robes suggest he's fallen on hard times.
- *Hard:* you catch a glimpse of a mark on his wrist he's taking pains to hide. It's a mark of exile.
- *Medium:* His eyes show he is marked by some powerful spirit.

Backstory

As a youth, he fled the land of Silan with a friend and came here, fascinated by the tales of powerful magic and its reputation as a place to disappear. He made a deal with a spirit for power, without realizing the cost would be his friends' life. As a result of this act, he was exiled from the cities, but feels there is nowhere else in the world for him to go, and now wanders the wilderness exploring the old ruins.

Dedazeh Nyu Tuhel Madzi and Gazu-Nyeji

They're having an animated conversation in the Tuje language when the party appears. They are cousins, though Gazu-Nyeji left the clan to join the Infinite Scroll. Dedazeh Nyu Tuhel Madzi is his title, but most call him Dedazeh.



"These must be the mercenaries Lo-me-nuse hired," says Gasu-Nyeji, when you arrive. "Hmph," says Dedazeh, looking the party up and down critically. "Well, I hope you're up to the task."

Things the party might discern about them:

- *Medium:* Dedazeh's fine sword and steel shield are a rarity in these lands where metal is expensive, and the purple of Gasu-Nyeji's robes would have been imported at great expense.

CHAPTER 2: THE DESCENT

- *Hard*: While valuable, the dents and nicks on Dedazeh's weapons suggest they have often been put to use.
- *Hard*: The kinds of arcane materials Gasu-Nyeji carries suggests that she is used to dealing with dangerous situations.
- *Medium*: Dedazeh isn't very pleased you are here but is trying to be gracious. He views swords-for-hire as likely dishonourable.
- *Medium*: Gasu-Nyeji is very excited about this discovery and unconcerned about the risks involved.
- *Hard*: While they look quite different, you determine they are related in some way, either by your knowledge of the Tuje language or powers of observation.



The party travels downwards in the elevator, and the world gets stranger and more dangerous as they go. Assume they have reasonable supplies, if relevant in your game system.

There are four major events that could happen, each of which related to one NPC. You don't have to run one for every NPC present; you can make the game longer or shorter based on how many you pick.

Descending into the earth

The elevator travels downwards, the magical tether curving around the twists and turns of the mineshaft. The mineshaft turns into a series of natural caves, and then into something stranger. Random tables of descriptions are included for each section, which could be expanded into more encounters.

Of the four NPC events in the next section, The Foundry works best in the upper third, The Mechanism Jams in the second third, and The Mesmerizing Lights and The Haunting in the lower third. Each is associated with a particular NPC and will give an opportunity to check a box on their sheet. Look out for opportunities for other NPCs as well.

The Upper Third

The tunnel is carved with strange symbols. Knowledge of magic can reveal them to be wards of some sort. Every now and then there's a dusty, abandoned room. Some of them lead to tunnels that ultimately head back to the surface.

| Features (roll a d6) | |
|----------------------|---|
| 1 | Glowing, unfamiliar mushrooms. An underground farm gone wild? |
| 2 | Rusted weapons or tools. An armory? A workshop? |
| 3 | A mural of beings in strange garb. The scholars, if there, want to sketch it. A temple? A small palace? |
| 4 | An alarming number of crumbling skeletons, inert, in piles. War? Sacrifices? |
| 5 | Some broken pottery and other evidence of ancient habitation, most of it decayed. Some might be valuable for study. |
| 6 | A complex mechanism, now hopelessly jammed. What were they manufacturing? |

| Shape of room (roll a d6) | |
|---------------------------|--|
| 1 | A complex series of tunnels, mostly collapsed, perhaps for exploration |
| 2 | Small, cramped rooms, dug crudely in the side of the shaft or with a narrow tunnel between them, perhaps for living. |
| 3 | A natural cavern, repurposed and carved, with structures at different levels perhaps once linked with bridges |
| 4 | A short passageway opens into an immense hall, of religious or civil significance? |
| 5 | A gatehouse, leading to a tunnel back to the surface |
| 6 | The mineshaft widens into a room on all sides, perhaps related to the operation of the elevator itself. |

The Middle third

The caves are mostly natural. The air is cold and damp, the walls are slimy, first with green moss, then white moss, then blue moss.

| Random Descriptions | |
|---------------------|--|
| 1 | Sharp, jagged white crystals, like frost, with an elevator-shaped hole through them. Seems recent. If you touch them they draw blood. |
| 2 | Small flying creatures, pale and sightless, dart around you. They aren't dangerous, but they have never been seen on the surface. |
| 3 | A vein of ore. If you have some basic mining equipment, you can take some. It can be used to forge a weapon that glows with a strange blue light. A magic item? |
| 4 | Some water, acrid and tasting like brimstone, is flowing through a crack. You can pass through it or avoid it. Eyeless fish jump by. They are fearless and actually taste pretty good. |
| 5 | A large cavern is full of immense lichens that glow warmly. They seem to be feeding off something in the earth. Things with many eyes flee the light. The lichen dies as you touch it. |
| 6 | You pass through a cavern with a pool of lava. It's uncomfortably hot. Creatures with long legs, also unfamiliar, stride through the lava, ignoring you. |



The Lower Third

The walls become crystalline; it's unclear if they are natural or constructed. Light slowly appears, pervasive and without a clear source. Play up the strangeness of anything you find here: the players are no longer entirely in the physical world.

| Weirdness (roll a d6) | |
|-----------------------|--|
| | The rock is highly polished; you see your reflections off into infinity. |
| 2 | The rock is moving slightly, like it is breathing. |
| 3 | You pass through an immense geode; the light is so bright it makes you close your eyes from the light. |
| 4 | You see the bones of some strange, immense beast, turned to stone. |
| 5 | A perfectly round cave, like a bead strung on the tunnel, is covered with lifelike carvings of eyes. |
| 6 | You pass through a gap that stretches off to infinity, like an underground plain with an oppressively low sky. |



| Weirdness from other senses (roll a d6) | |
|---|--|
| 1 | You smell a completely unfamiliar smell that nevertheless seems like it comes from something delicious. |
| 2 | The rock seems to be singing, in music with no harmony or rhythm. |
| 3 | Whenever you speak, the walls seem to repeat whatever you say back to you. Not like an echo but like someone standing next to you. |
| 4 | As you pass through this area, while you can breathe fine, the air tastes like salt. |
| 5 | Your fingers feel momentarily numb, unable to feel anything, then tingly. They get better shortly. |
| 6 | You find yourself unable to perceive gravity, unable to tell which way is down. You are not falling, however. |

Major Events

I. *The Foundry (Dedazeh, upper third)*

In a cathedral-sized cavern, a stone vat holds a red glow that fills the room with oppressive heat. Immense steel mechanisms surround the room; some look like hammers, the fire has been burning without fuel for centuries, fueled by some powerful spirit bound to it. If they walk closer, they can hear it speak in an unknown language, filled with rage. They might need to make a check to overcome the heat and get close.

If Dedazeh is there, he is fascinated and wants to revive the furnace. He becomes uncomfortable when he learns a spirit

is bound to it, however. “Surely this isn’t the old Empire of Tuje that did this,” he says, sounding doubtful.

The party can try to help him rationalize this. They can also easily convince him that the empire was maybe more sinister than he thought. If so, mark a box on his sheet.

2. Elevator failure (Yidi-myana, middle section)

The party descends into enormous cavern, too big to see the bottom. Suddenly, a sharp gust of wind extinguishes any torches. A moment later any magical light goes out and the elevator stalls. Yidi-myana panics and says she hit the wrong lever. You hear flapping wings.

Some approaches:

- Try and get the lights re-lit, as they were extinguished by the wind.
- Yidi-myana could be reassured so that she can focus on the mechanism, and then realize it’s working fine – the magic is just being suppressed.
- Discover the flapping creatures are suppressing magic, but the beam of the elevator is fortunately too strong to be suppressed by them.
- The creatures could be driven away. If one is captured, it could be of interest to scholars.

On a success, check a box on Yidi-myana’s character sheet.

On a failure, the problem passes on its own, but the mechanism is slightly damaged, which could introduce a future complication.

3. Mesmerizing lights. (Gasu-nyeji, third section)

The tunnel opens into a large, cylindrical room. The air feels electric. Lights are set into the walls in a strange pattern. Looking at them makes one feel uneasy. Gasu-nyeji, however, gives the lights their rapt attention, unable to do anything but stare at them.

Some approaches:

- Try to persuade them to look away, cajoling or shouting
- Physically prevent them from looking at it despite their efforts
- Knowledge of magic, the supernatural or medicine could convince them this is out of the ordinary

Simply moving the elevator along will stop it, but they will still have a strange smile on their face, partly under its spell.

On a success, they’ll reluctantly admit that though they have dealt with many strange things in their time, this might be different. They’ve never been affected like this. Mark a box on their character sheet.

4. The haunting - Svarthix

You see a man and he asks for help. He smiles at Svarthix, who goes pale.

“I’m so glad to see you, Svarthix, it’s been so long. You left so quickly without saying goodbye... I’ve missed you.” He says his name is Vlin and is Svarthix’s old friend. Svarthix will say nothing unless you press him, and in fact urge you to leave Vlin behind with no explanation.

Careful examination or knowledge of magic can, with difficulty, determine that this man is not real. If an object passes through him, you attack him, or firmly insist he is not real, the illusion is dismissed.

To calm Svarthix, you can either dig into the past, with some persuasion, and convince him to set it aside, or convince him that whatever happened in the past doesn't matter down here. A relevant story, a religious belief, personal example, or just pure persuasion could help here.

On a success, check a box on his sheet.

Don't try to force the players to take this in a particular direction. They may simply distrust him at this point, and while winning him over is pragmatically useful, it may not make sense in story.



CHAPTER 3: THE DISCOVERY

Meeting Hathral

The party arrives at the bottom and finds themselves in a hall lit with a cold light. The walls are smooth and precise and polished without a single gap. At the end of the hall is a closed door, a round slab. A woman is slumped against it. This is Hathral.

It feels like it takes an eternity to walk across, or maybe just seconds?

Hathral looks up as you arrive. "Why... why did you return," he says. "Run while you still can." If Yidi-myana is with you: "Yidi! No, no, run!"

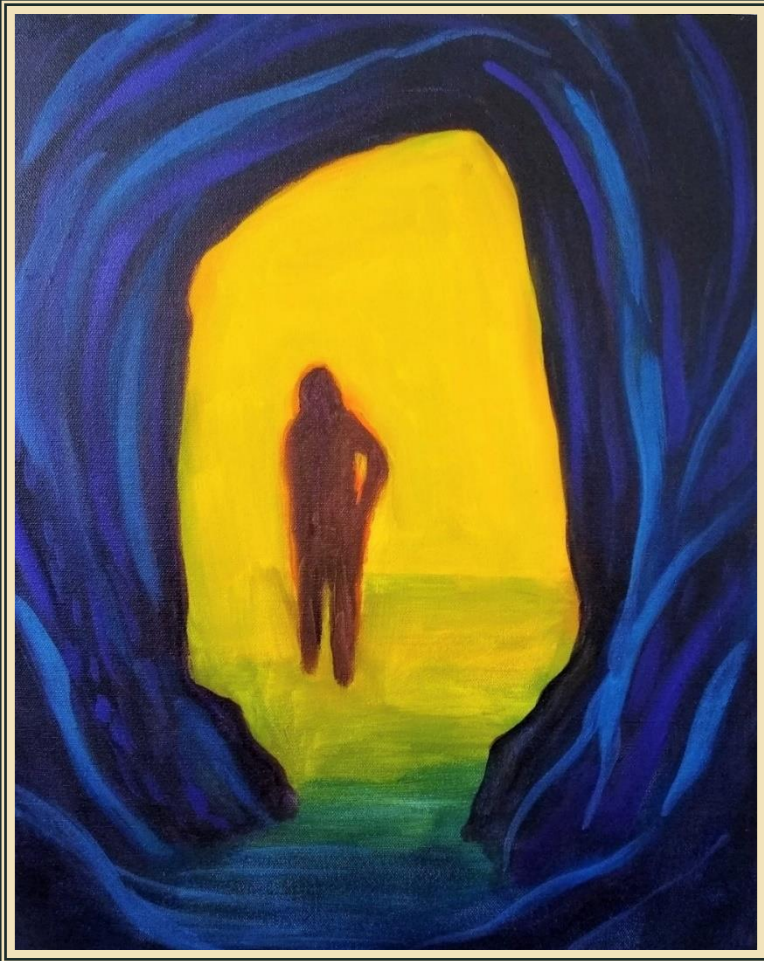
What happened before

The expedition went in the room and met a man who looked like a friend who once went missing. Her head felt strange, and as she heard the man talk she ran away. She isn't sure what happened next – she thought she started to go up in the elevator, but next she knew she was walking back towards the door and the elevator was closed. The rest were gone, and she slammed the door closed. A few moments later, the party appeared. Where did they come from? How was the elevator so fast?

The players can either go in the room or turn to leave. If they turn to leave, the jyraxa comes out.

The room

Inside the room, the party sees a cave filled with a garden in a rainbow of colours. It's warm and humid and the air is thick and sweet. A thin layer of warm water covers the ground over a soft mosslike bed. At the far end, some sort of portal shimmers. It is not a door, more of a tear in reality.



The players might realize, with an appropriate check:

- They do not quite recognize a single plant
- They feel weird, as though slightly intoxicated or feverish, in a subtle way.
- Difficult check: They are not in the same world they were in previously.

After a moment, they notice a figure standing in front of them they could swear was not there a moment before.

They see no sign of the rest of the expedition. They are gone.

Alternately, if the party chose to not take any NPCs with them, the previous expedition have been taken over and try and convince the players to let them come back with them. They speak together in unison.

The Jyraxa

Every player sees an old friend before them, a different friend. It speaks to them in a language they don't understand. If they have a magical means of understanding languages it is babbling: "above strangers red fruit incursion water stone gift grow eyes"

The Offer

Without accepting the offer, the jyraxa cannot possess you. However, the Jyraxa can read your wordless hopes and fears and craft the offer most likely to tempt you. Someone who

lets it in their mind can push it out again if they do so quickly, but after a day or so passes they are gone forever.

There are a few options here:

- Make some sort of check to see how likely each player is to succumb.
- The players can choose whether or not to accept, no check.
- Only the NPCs accept.

A player who accepts the deal is sure the Jyraxa will transform the world, make it better, solve all their problems, is their greatest friend. A player who rejects it sees a shapeless, unearthly form where once they saw a person.

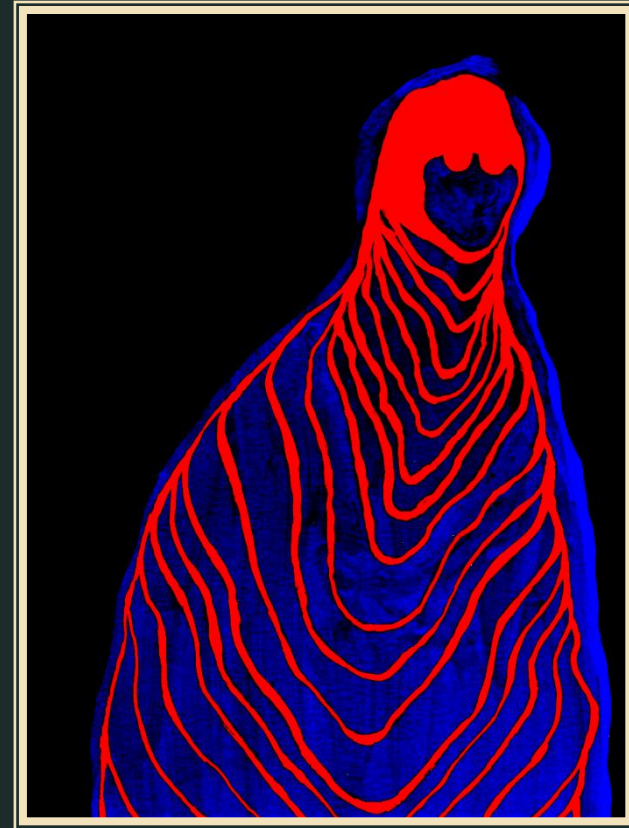
Yidi-myana panics and runs off. The other NPCs will likely accept the deal: Roll a d6. If it is greater to or equal than the number of filled in boxes on the sheet, they succumb.

Dedazeh will be promised that together they can make the land green and fertile again, and he will lead the Tuje into a new era of prosperity.

Gasu-nyoji will be told that if they don't join the creature, an immense well of knowledge will be lost to all people forever.

Svathix is told that losing himself to arcane powers is just who he is, a mistake he is destined to make.

Changing their minds



For player characters, what in their shared past will get them to snap out of it? Consider a scene with a flashback, if you haven't established much of their past.

For NPCs, you don't have that shared history, but you have potentially accumulated some points of influence on the NPC character sheets. You can spend them to reroll a check or for some other system-appropriate benefit. There will be no further use for them. At this point you can share the full sheets with the players.

Typical social rolls can be used to persuade the NPCs and understand their motivations, and knowledge skills can understand what is going on to set up arguments. Magic that wards against evil or affects emotions can also improve the situation for future rolls. The players could also attempt to incapacitate or knock them unconscious, although this would complicate fleeing to the surface.

What if the whole party sides with it?

If you are playing a one-person game, the player can take over as Yidi-myana and escape. Alternately, or if there are more players, give the party another chance on the way up to have their doubts and break free. Otherwise, the party could become NPC antagonists, or if they agree, the campaign is now about carrying out the will of the jyraxa until they break free.

Fighting the monster?

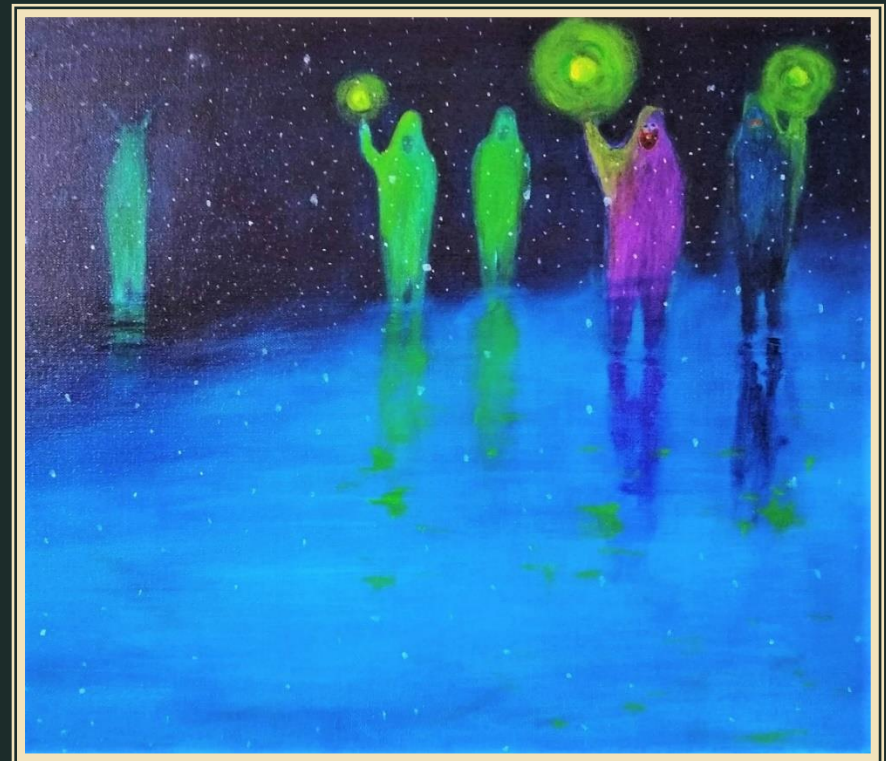
You don't need to have a fight here, but if you really want, you can pick something weird and especially hard to defeat, though not one that will immediately kill the party. You can reflavour an existing, weird monster: the jyraxa is a completely new being, not in any previous work.

Consider adding the following extra abilities:

- The party is beset by strange visions (they have trouble seeing and hearing, however that is mechanically represented in the system).

- Within the garden room only, the ceiling can fall under the jyraxa's command.

If the party defeats the jyraxa, they can explore the room freely. Be very clear that the shimmering portal seems to lead into unreality. Unless you have a plan for some strange world beyond, the character is never seen again.



CHAPTER 4: FLIGHT

If you want a shorter adventure, you could skip this part and have the return trip be uneventful. However, this is the part where Yidi-myana shines, if she has come with you. It also means that if the party subdued instead of won over the NPCs, there will be a cost to this partial victory.

5 events are listed in the order they might happen, with the last two being mutually exclusive paths back to the surface. Use some or all of them.

Until a final failure, failures should represent delays or setbacks. It should be clear the player can keep going.

Final consequences

Depending on the kind of game the table prefers and the events of this section, if the party fails too many times:

- The party escapes and seals the route behind them, but some players are affected by a long-term or major injury or similar condition.
- The party escapes, but the jyraxa does too.
- The party gets away, but some aspect of the jyraxa has come with them, to be revealed later.
- The party abandons the elevator and anyone injured or unconscious.
- The only way to keep the jyraxa out is a heroic sacrifice of all or some of the party.
- The entire party perishes, but the jyraxa is sealed away.
- The entire party perishes, and the jyraxa escapes.

Help from Yidi-myana

Yidi-myana is skilled with mechanical devices and may figure out how to make the elevator go faster, ram ahead, etc. For every box on her sheet that is checked, the players may gain one story-appropriate benefit in their checks. Tell this to the players and let them choose when to expend these boxes.

Problems in the depths

Grasping Vines

Vines sprout from below, wrap around and start pulling it down. Players can tear off the vines, use their knowledge of plants to repel them, or attack them.

The Deluge

An immense torrent of water appears, conjured by the jyraxa, and the elevator starts to slide back down. There are a few ways of counteracting this:

- Brace the elevator against the wall until the water passes
- Create some contraption to redirect the flow of water
- Realize that this water is enchanted in some manner, and use magic or a ritual to dispel it

If they fail at all of this, the elevator is damaged, which should cause problems later unless they fix it.

The Illusion

The party realizes they are now traveling through an eternal void that was not there on the way down. Force of will, faith in the gods, allegiance with other supernatural powers,

magic, or an exceptional ability to discern the truth could overcome this. They can also pass it by operating the elevator with their eyes closed.

Problems near the surface

An Alternate Route

As the party gets closer to the surface, natural tunnels branch outwards. Skills for navigating, for covering tracks, for caving in the tunnel or laying traps would allow them to reach the surface safely without being pursued. On a failure, someone could be injured, and knowledge of medicine could help you progress faster.

Without a human host, the jyraxa is greatly diminished here, and a battle with a level-appropriate, human-like but weird monster could happen.

Close the door

With their keen eyesight or knowledge of magic, they notice inscriptions on the wall in a very old script, and that the wall around it might be able to move, like a giant stone aperture. Possible approaches:

- With a crowbar, lever it closed with sheer force
- Decipher the inscriptions or just recall the magic word or gesture to close the door
- Sacrifice something of power to activate the inscriptions
- Break through to an adjacent control room

CONCLUSION

The party returns to find the camp completely packed up. It seems to have been gone for weeks, although the party is pretty sure based on the food they've eaten it's just been a day. A sign in the Tuje language has been posted warning people not to enter and a makeshift memorial has been set up. You're spotted as you head into the plains, and it's explained that everyone thought you were dead.

Outcomes

Has the jyraxa been released, or has it been sealed away?

If the jyraxa escapes and has taken over an NPC:

- Svathix gathers a cadre of arcane experts around him. They spread across the Tuje Valley, a new faction of corrupted mages to contend with.
- Dedadeh's clan gets taken over with dreams of power and conquest. A new age of war emerges here, a menace to travelers. Do the players ultimately return and deal with them?
- Gasu-nyeji corrupts a branch of the Infinite Scroll and they go about uncovering ancient sources of dangerous power hidden away in the ruins. What are they looking for, and what do they find?

It might also take over some stranger, with other motivations, or urge the players to some evil end.

CREDITS

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If you enjoyed this adventure, you might enjoy my other adventures, especially In The Land of the Dead God, for 5e and 13th age, which takes place in the same universe:

<https://www.drivethrurpg.com/product/337898/In-The-Land-Of-The-Dead-God>

<https://www.drivethrurpg.com/product/341526/In-The-Land-Of-The-Dead-God--Iconic-Edition>

Inspiration

Annihilation, by Jeff VanderMeer (a book)

The Destruction of the Kola Superdeep Borehole Tower, by The Mountain Goats (a song)

Veryovkina cave, and other really deep cave systems on Wikipedia

Constant Downpour, a game which arrived when I was editing and was about to give up but motivated me to keep going

Heart, the TTRPG, which you could definitely use to run this