

The Coriandrome Circus



A **Gods & Monsters** Location

The Coriandrome Circus

A Gods & Monsters location for adventurers of all levels

by Jerry Stratton

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<http://godsmonsters.com/Guide/Coriandrome/>

“The only people for me are the mad ones, mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn burn like fabulous yellow roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars.”—Jack Kerouac, *On the Road*

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The Coriandrome Circus	1	The Mystical Maze	14
Inspiration	1	Resources	20
Finding the circus	2	The Autumnal Swarm	21
Entering the circus	3	The Tablets of Enki	26
About the Circus	6	GNU Free Documentation License	29
Random encounters	8		
The Midway	9		

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1. Lost Castle of the Astronomers, for 1st to 3rd level
2. Illustrious Castle, for 2nd to 3rd level
3. Vale of the Azure Sun, for 3rd to 5th level
4. The House of Lisport, for 4th to 6th level
5. Helter Skelter, for 5th to 6th level (includes encounters with the Autumnal Swarm)

The Coriandrome Circus

Koris: Insect

Drome: A road, a course, a racing theater

The Circus is the reflection of the first city. The center of the circus is the carousel, a mockery of the city's aureum and the tree. The center of the carousel is a twisted metal pole, plastered, resembling some denuded autumn tree.

Mr. Ray Mundy (Raymond E., Ramón Dee) doesn't need to buy souls: everyone wants to give them away. Pride ("I'm the best that ever was") is his hook, as is insecurity – often two sides of the same coin. The Autumnal Swarm pupate inside sentient beings. As they pupate, they can make the lame walk, the weak strong, the old young, and everyone beautiful and above average. They will offer potential hosts this trade: for all their narcissistic wishes come true they need only host a young and beautiful pupa. They, indeed, are pupa themselves, waiting to burst out of their shells and be loved.

Inspiration

1. Ray Bradbury: Dandelion Wine, Something Wicked This Way Comes, The Next in Line
2. Timothy Truman: The Bargain (Grimjack Volume 1 Number 14)
3. Grant Morrison: Persephone (Doom Patrol Volume 2 Number 37), Danny the Street (Doom Patrol Volume 2 Number 35)
4. Bob Dylan: Mr. Tambourine Man (Bringing It All Back Home)
5. The Tubes: She's a Beauty (Outside Inside)

Finding the circus



You'll need to set this adventure up ahead of time; fliers, legends of a dark carnival, and when it leaves, people disappear. But the people who disappear are people no one really cares about: the old, the lame, the sick, and the nervous. The circus can show up anywhere. Good places for it are across the lakes at *Prata Phoenix*, outside of a village on the road (such as *Occasus*), or a few miles from the temple of *Preaching at the Gates of Hell*.

Midway prizes are handed down as heirlooms; oddly creepy yet evoking nostalgia. Colorful sunglasses with large lenses, forever flowers perpetually bright, super-bouncing moldable clay, a hemispherical jar of eye-agates in liquid, painted wooden birds that fly when thrown.

HANDBILLS

If they're going to encounter the circus, you'll want to leave faded handbills around on the road, especially the dry and dusty towns around the Glendale train. The circus's handbills are in Latin. They advertise old granny the fortune teller, the illustrated family, the fire-eater, the boy with the lightning bolt hands, the most beautiful woman in the world. See! The girl with kaleidoscope eyes! *Cultosaurus Erectus*! The strongest little girl in the world. The lady of the labyrinth. The family of glass.

HOT AIR WITCHES

Sixteen balloons all searching for bumps in the smooth mass of souls. The witches have rainbow discs for eyes. Knowledge passes from color to

color as it shifts from balloon to balloon. They're looking for a hero, so that they can corrupt them, suck them dry, and make them a part of the circus. Each witch has two heads, and carries a brass telescope for each head.

The witches will return to earth if there's a storm or high winds.

THE STREET PARADE

The circus will run a parade through the nearest large town (getting permission according to local rules) with all of their most colorful acts: an army of knights, giant lizards on leashes, the roaring tiger jumping through fire on a float, scantily-dressed women on horseback, the boy with lightning bolts sparking from his hands, fire eaters, and all manner of exotic creatures.

Entering the circus

Employee/Camp Follower tents

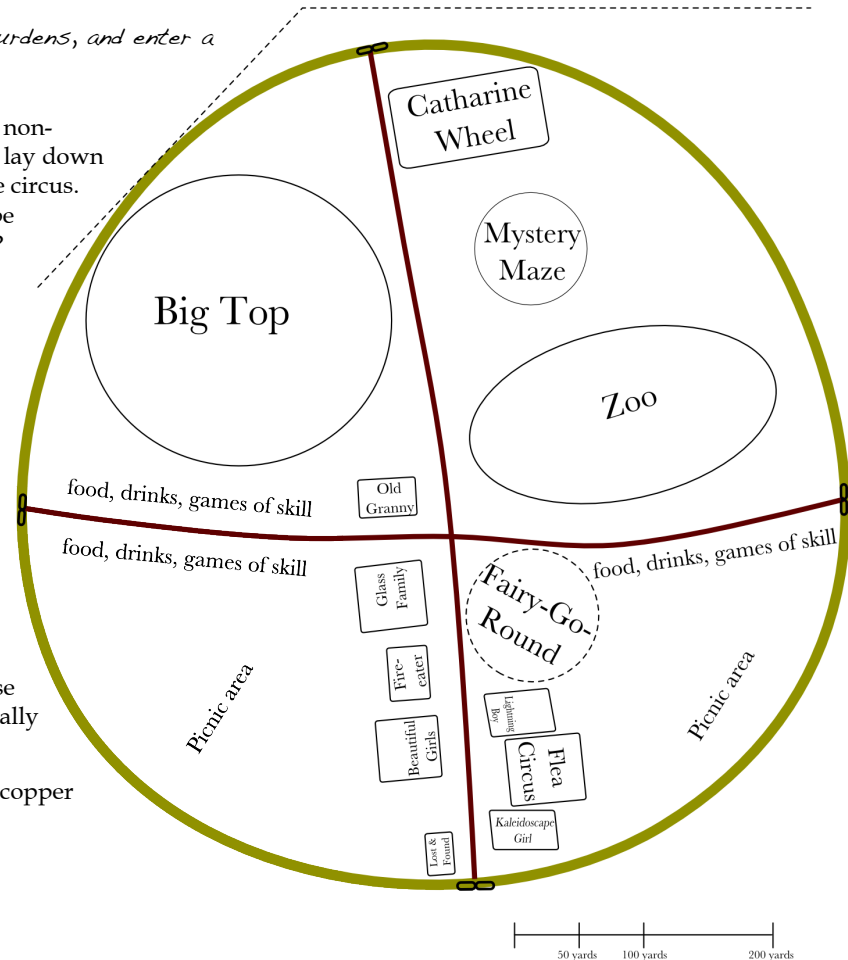
"Forget your troubles, lay down your burdens, and enter a world of wonder."

The sign says "No large packs, no weapons, no non-intelligent animals". Characters are required to lay down any visible armor and packs before entering the circus. The barker will tell them that their things will be safe. "What do you carry, friend? Gold? Spices? Oils? What care we for the treasures of the mundane world? Ours is a world of merriment and wisdom."

Their things will be searched, but the barker is basically right: mundane treasures won't be stolen. If they are crazy enough to leave one of the tablets at the entrance, however, that will be taken, as will recognizable artifacts such as the Dragon Sword of Thracia. More normal magical things will be left alone.

Characters are allowed to bring smaller, personal weapons, such as rapiers and staves, but not daggers, long swords, short swords or certainly anything larger than that. If they refuse and brush past the barker, the barker will mentally call out the guard.

It costs two brass dupondii for each ticket; two copper pennies will also do.



4 – The Mystical Maze

THE PROTECTORS OF THE CIRCUS

There are thirteen barkers in the circus: one for each major attraction, one for the main entrance, and one for the road. Each is a beetlepede spy. The barkers, being always on duty, can respond to a mental call at d3 per round.

There are twenty-eight workers in the circus, and all of them are beetlepede spies (17) or pupae (11, including all seven of the Most Beautiful Women). The spies can respond to a mental call at 2d6 per minute.

There are thirty-three hangers-on in the circus. Twenty are pupae. If necessary, 2d4 of beetlepedes can emerge within two hours, and an additional 2d4 in two days.

This makes a total of 30 beetlepedes in the circus and thirty-one pupae. Here are a few of the free-range beetlepedes:

Ramón Dee: (Autumnal Swarm: 5; Thief: 8; Survival: 23+26=49; Move: 14; Attack: dagger at +5+4=+9; Damage: d4+1; Defense: +2; Special defense: slo-time 4 yards, Magic Resistance: 3)

Ramón's bug form (Autumnal Swarm: 5; Survival: 23; Move: 16; Attack: mandible at +5; Damage: d8; Defense: +5; Special Defense: slo-time 4 yards; Magic Resistance: 3)

Ramón should really have a magic dagger with a special power.

Most unlisted beetlepede spies are in 1st level hosts, unless you make them special.

Beetlepede spy: (Autumnal Swarm: 5; Human: 1; Survival: 5d8+1d6; Move: 13; Attack: dagger at +5; Damage: d4+1; Defense: +2; Special defense: slo-time 4 yards, Magic Resistance: 3)

Bug form: (Autumnal Swarm: 5; Survival: 5d8; Move: 16; Attack: +5 Damage: d8+1; Defense: +5; Special defense: slo-time 4 yards, Magic Resistance: 3)

LODGING

Many folks will simply set up camp in the areas around the circus. If the circus sets up near a city or town, it will try to arrange lodging within that place for a cut; a barn might cost one dupondii per night. Some of the circus-hands and camp-followers will also sell tents, blankets, and serapes. It's also likely that equipment sellers will set up around the circus to sell things like tents; such items will go for at least 50% of list price, and probably start at double price before haggling.

There are freelance guards offering their services for a denarii each per six hours. Some of the guards are trustworthy, some are not. Some work for the circus and have traveled with it for a while; others were recruited by the circus from among the locals.

Circus-recruited guards are trustworthy in the sense that they won't just steal something. The circus guards who travel with the circus are pupae (80%) or beetlepedes (20%). Local circus-recruited guards are 20% likely to search whatever they are

guarding and report back. Pupae guards are 50% likely to search whatever they are guarding and report back. Beetlepede guards always search what they are guarding, and because they are part of the swarm, they will steal anything that the swarm knows it wants. The circus will disavow knowledge of the guard if the guard steals anything. It will punish a guard that gets caught searching but not stealing.

About eighty-percent of non-circus guards are dishonest and will try to skim easily-missed items, such as coins, from their charges; if they steal something not easily missed, they'll just leave. Characters can make a Perception roll to attempt to hire a trustworthy guard.

EVERYONE IS BEAUTIFUL

Among the circus-workers and camp-followers, nearly everyone is beautiful. There are no sick or old or handicapped, unless that's what they want, and that's pretty much limited to old granny and the hot air witches. Everyone is special. That's because they're mostly pupae of the Autumnal Swarm. Only a few non-pupae are here, probably following someone who took the scarab and who they've now lost. So play up the ruggedly handsome workers and the stunningly beautiful food vendor. If the characters know someone who has taken the scarab, that person is doing amazingly well. They look better, they look stronger, they look younger, they look healthier.

There are intelligent people from a thousand different worlds here: humans of every culture, goblins, saurians, sakmat, oruat, and any other human or semi-human intelligences that the characters have met that you feel like including.

About the Circus

THE AUTUMNAL SWARM

The Autumnal Swarm are a Burroughsian infestation of mental vermin. They wish to control the Eternal City and the Crossroads, and to destroy the World Tree. The swarm is always searching for doors that lead to the crossroads or that lead to places that can be used to weaken the tree. Thus, swarm hosts are often found near doorways to other worlds and waystations to doors.

See *Helter Skelter* for more about the Autumnal Swarm. The swarm travels through the crawlspace of the world. The Circus is a breeding ground for the swarm: it attracts people for the pupa to pupate in. Most of the camp followers are pupae and many of the workers are.

The Circus also has Butterfly Warriors protecting itself, and the standard warriors of the swarm infiltrating local communities and searching out things or people the Circus wants to find. When near the circus, they work in conjunction with the Hot Air Witches.

THE TABLET OF ENKI

The circus has the tablet of faith; they'd love to have the tablets of law and of music and of course wouldn't turn down the opportunity to gain any of the tablets.

If the tablet of faith is ever taken from the circus, the circus will crumble to dust, and all of its denizens scramble away into the desert.

If the tablet is ever threatened, the circus will pack up and leave. It takes two hours for the circus to leave; when it is packed up and ready, it will get on the train and go away, if possible. Or it will load up wagons and the wagons will drive themselves away.

If you know where the doorway is that the circus used to get to this world, that's where it will head. Otherwise, the circus will be able to find a doorway within d50 miles on a railroad track or roadway, or within d100 miles if in natural surroundings (for this reason, the circus almost always sets up on a roadway).

MAGIC RESISTANCE

Because there are so many beetlepede spies in the circus, there is always a magic resistance everywhere except in the maze, which is slightly disjointed from the rest of the circus. Any time anyone uses magic (including circus performers such as Old Granny), roll 2d6 for the additional magic resistance in that area at that time. The magic resistance you rolled will last until the end of the scene and will be used for all magic. It is also the number of beetlepede spies that can respond within one minute.

A PLACE OF POWER

Because the circus has one of the tablets of Enki, the tablet of faith, the area within the walls is a level one place of power. Because of the circus's influence, it is ordered evil.

DIVINE GUIDANCE

If a prophet requests Divine Guidance, try something like these:

1. Hanging from the tree of life, the one-eyed man does not dice with the trickster for fate.
2. In the Hall of Karma, what appears impossible is real, and what is real appears impossible.
3. There are bugs burrowing in the world tree.
4. When you sell your soul for power, you are not the one who benefits from that power.
5. Empty lives breed hollow souls.
6. The abandoned house is soon infested; the infested house is quickly abandoned.

Use them and change them as appropriate for the cares of the deity that provided the spirit.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

Every six hours there is a 50% chance of an encounter. You can also use this if they choose to go looking for unspecified people to talk to. If they want someone who knows something specific, have one of them make a Perception roll. If successful, go down the list of circus visitors, camp-followers, and circus workers until you find someone who actually knows what they're looking for answers on (otherwise, roll randomly as normal).

It's not a bad idea to put a circus worker in the mix who they have a connection with. In our game, Rigan Clenriquen was the grandmother of one of the player characters.

01-40	East of the jungle road encounter	40%
41-60	Circus visitor	20%
61-80	Camp-follower	20%
81-90	Circus worker	10%
91-00	City encounter	10%

CIRCUS VISITOR

01-40	Two 13-yr-old boys from Lekus, Yem & Gill	40%
41-70	Gault Parani, farmer from Ubres	30%
71-90	Aga Malaniu, carpenter from Dentrú	20%
91-98	Mischa or Loren, parent of Yem and Gill	8%
99-00	Dered Unaya, surgeon from Cittareale	2%

CAMP-FOLLOWER

01-40	Shusata, farmer from Kish, 3 years, pupae	40%
41-70	Girdin Jali, rake, Occasus, Rigan's lover, 5 yrs	30%
71-90	Buwiro, saurian from jungle, 4 years, pupae	20%
91-00	Onkalati, sakmat from Barcelas, 6 years, pupae	10%

CIRCUS WORKER

01-37	Rigan Clenriquen from Highland, pupae, 5 yrs	37%
38-62	Gaasji Olepre, slave from Egypt, pupae, 2 yrs	25%
63-80	Lecretia, Hamokeran prostitute, pupae, 3 yrs	18%
81-88	Gegmenada, barker from Ife Nlah, beetlepede	8%
89-94	Ladira, most beautiful woman/Portugal, pupae, 4 years	6%
95-96	Ramón Dee, circus owner, beetlepede spy	2%
97-98	God's dove	2%
99-00	The Devil's cat	2%

CITY

01-44	Mananubi (d20)	44%
45-77	Dragon messenger	33%
78-98	City traveler	21%
99-00	One of the twins	2%

The Midway

The midway is set amidst a dusty field. Rickety wooden fences surround it, and a ramshackle collection of tents and wagons lie at the back.

FOOD AND DRINK

There are several places to get food, mostly fried meats and breads. It tends, generally, to be food of the local area, but mixed with spices brought in from wherever the circus has visited. There are wines of any price and quality, and ales weak enough to keep circus-goers from getting too rowdy. There are areas in the two front quarters, where people can set up picnics with their food.

GAMES OF SKILL

Shoot a crossbow and win a prize! Toss a ball and hit the duck!

Prizes: colorful sunglasses with large round lenses, forever flowers in perpetually bright colors, super-bouncing moldable clay, a hemispherical jar of eye-agates in liquid, colorful wooden birds that fly when thrown, hula hoops, dolls, porcelain nesting dolls.

THE BIG-TOP

At the end of the midway is the big-top, a great tent ringed with pastel paper lights, visible from across the lake. Here are the women on horseback, the rough riders of the world, and the flying ladies of laughter, and other "elegant exercises on the slack rope and the trampoline". Actual battles of the worlds fought. Water jumps. Jumping over dinosaurs! All the fearful frolics with fate in one place.

1. New Women On Horseback
2. The Royal Tiger
3. The Flying Ladies of Laughter
4. Colonel McCabe and His Rough Riders
5. The Flying Foxes
6. The Water Weirds
7. Taming the Giant Jungle Lizards

The big top seats 10,000.

10 – The Mystical Maze

The “battle” involves feats of riding in the context of a stylized battle between colorfully-armored knights and barbarian trapeze artists. The giant jungle lizard show has trapeze artists swinging amidst actual giant tyrannosaur-like (but only sixteen feet high) dinosaurs as the creatures roar and snap at the men and women swinging past them.

THE GREAT CATHARINE WHEEL

The circus has a great wheel on which people can ride and observers can place bets. It’s a ferris wheel decked out like a roulette wheel. The wheel is 200 feet high. What you see from the Catharine Wheel is not the surrounding area, but the surroundings the circus has passed through.

The axle of the Catharine Wheel is an angel statue toiling to keep the wheel turning, it’s wings folding and unfolding as it turns the gears.

“In France the condemned were placed on a cart-wheel with their limbs stretched out along the spokes over two sturdy wooden beams. The wheel was made to revolve slowly, and a large hammer or an iron bar was then applied to the limb over the gap between the beams, breaking the bones. This process was repeated several times per limb. A special grace, the retentum, could be granted, by which the condemned was strangled after the second or third blow, or in special cases, even before the breaking began. Afterwards, the condemned’s shattered limbs were woven (‘braiden’) through the spokes of the wheel, which was then hoisted onto a tall pole so that birds could eat the sometimes still-living individual.”

THE FAIRY-GO-ROUND CAROUSEL

There are ninety “horses” on the carousel, each one of ten creatures: sphinx, hydra, minotaur, dryad, griffon, manticore, harpy, hippogriff, satyr, and centaur. The center of the carousel is a plaster tree, with bare branches, as if it were autumn.

The creatures will whisper conversations to their rider, and perhaps steer some likely prospects to the mystical maze or old granny or the flea circus. Or, if the character seems like someone who should be distracted, to the Girl With Kaleidoscope Eyes. Hearing the creatures requires a perception roll (at +4 if they specifically listen for the whispers).

There are brass rings that, if caught (agility at +2) allow the character to stay on the carousel for the next ride. Each ride, there is a +2 to the chance of hearing the whispers. Suggested whispers:

“Rider, what is your name?”

“Where are you from?”

You have traveled far. What do you seek?”

“Old Granny can help. Old Gran’ can always help.”

“Rest, and leave your cares for tomorrow. Relax in the tent of the girl with kaleidoscope eyes. You won’t regret it.”

OLD GRANNY

Tells the future in her cards. She can also offer a future that's better than the one she sees. All it takes is a little bite. Try this, child! She can hand out scarabs if she thinks it's worthwhile. Granny's table has tarot cards, a crystal ball, a marble-white skull, and a pot of tea. Her crystal ball connects with a larger glass device in the ruins of the Mansio Solis (The Fell Pass).

"You carry a heavy burden."

"You have many enemies."

"You are about to meet a man."

"You have come a long distance."

"You have met strange friends along your trip."

"Only two places may you find what you seek: where you began, and where you will end."

Old Granny is a 2nd level sorcerer and beetlepede spy.

Granny: (Autumnal Swarm: 5. Sorcerer: 2; Survival: 27+9=36; Move: 12; Attack: dagger at +5+1=+6 or spell; Damage: d4+1; Defense: +2; Special defense: slo-time 4 yards, Magic Resistance: 3)

Granny's bug form (Autumnal Swarm: 5; Survival: 27; Move: 16; Attack: mandible at +5; Damage: d8; Defense: +5; Special Defense: slo-time 4 yards; Magic Resistance: 3)

Granny has these spells in her spellbook:

First level aura of confidence, charisma, clean slate, fool's magic, hair, leaping, sense magical aura, suggestion,
 understand languages

Second level animal undead, illusory self, minor phantasm, sensory assurance, shadows

She has six spell slots. She normally memorizes sensory assurance, minor phantasm, suggestion, and sense magical aura.

Spell	range	formula	ingredients	duration	casting	reaction	effects
Minor Phantasm	60 yards	wgi	colored chalk	concentration	1	active perception	7 yard radius
Sense magical aura	self	wg		2 minutes	1	none	20 yards, 2 feet wide
Sensory assurance	2 yards	wgi	paper chain	2 minutes	2	perception	take tricks at face value
Suggestion	2 yards	wg		2 minutes	1	willpower	internalize suggestion

12—The Mystical Maze

Granny's specialty is *poisoner* and she has several poisons ready that she can put in the tea she offers visitors if she thinks she needs to either weaken them, make them less smart, hurt them, or search them.

Poison	Action time	Effect	Doses
Killing poison	1 hour	1d4 injuries	1
Weakening poison	10 minutes	-3 strength	2
Fogging poison	1 minute	-2 intelligence	1
Sleep poison	1 minute	sleep 1d20 minutes	6
Fogging poison	1 hour	-4 intelligence	2
Weakening poison	1 hour	-4 strength	2

She can also create other poisons given enough time, as described in the specialty.

THE FLEA CIRCUS

Watch the fleas through a huge lens: they all seem as large as a man! They walk tightropes, do somersaults in the air, and jump from bar to bar. And they look at you back through the lens.

THE BOY WITH THE LIGHTNING BOLT HANDS

"Lightning streams from his hands. His power can heal—or destroy."

Light plants on fire. Brings small animals back to life. He looks like a 13-year-old boy, and he can do d10 points damage per round—or shock a dead creature back to life, healing one injury in the process. This only works on creatures dead from one or two injuries.

In the back room are several dead rabbits, squirrels, and other cute fuzzy creatures.

THE GIRL WITH KALEIDOSCOPE EYES

"Come, my friends, and see, the girl with kaleidoscope eyes! See the show of lights! Her eyes are a mirror to your soul!"

The girl enters the room and rests on a couch, surrounded by mirrors that hang from the ceiling. The light from her eyes bounces from the mirrors and fills the room, a living kaleidoscope of colors that shift, collide, merge, and grow.

A child of the hot air witches, 10-year-old Esmerelda's eyes light the room—literally. Dots collide on the walls. Viewers must make a Willpower roll or be mesmerized for the two hours of the show. They won't be robbed or searched unless they've

already acted suspiciously or the circus thinks they have something important. The Girl is mostly used to break groups apart so they have less support in other shows.

THE FAMILY OF GLASS

They're not really of glass, but they are very odd. They are tall and thin, and their skin is translucent. With a bright light behind them, you can see the wine course through their systems, see the shapes of what they eat in their stomachs, melt away, see the waste build in their bowels. "That was disgusting. I want to see it again."

THE FIRE-EATER

Eats fire – and then is consumed by it. Nightly! Eats fire, and is burned from within, white hot, you can see his insides, and then he become dust before your eyes.

LOST AND FOUND

The lost and found of the Flea Circus can find anything – for a price. "What are you searching for?" "What price are you willing to pay?"

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN IN THE WORLD

"And her sisters from many lands." Beautiful women of many human cultures. There are seven of them; they are pupae. There are two heavyset guards, one on each side of the stage. They are 2nd level warriors and beetlepede spies.

Guards: (Autumnal Swarm: 5; Warrior: 2; Survival: 24+5=29, 24+5=29; Move: 14; Attack: scimitar at +5+2=+7; Damage: d8+1; Defense: +2; Special defense: slo-time 8 yards, Magic Resistance: 4)

Guard bug forms (Autumnal Swarm: 5; Survival: 24, 24; Move: 16; Attack: mandible at +5; Damage: d8; Defense: +5; Special Defense: slo-time 8 yards; Magic Resistance: 4)

THE ZOO

They have dinosaurs! Birds of wonderful plumage! Birds of paradise. Platypuses! Monkeys, apes, and baboons. Two-headed snakes! Huge water tanks with fountains!

The Mystical Maze

“Dare you enter the maze of curious mysticism!” The halls beyond the mummies, mirrors, and flames may only be entered through the maze. If anyone attempts to enter the maze from the top or the bottom, or by walking through walls, they will see dusty, moth-eaten mummies, and funhouse mirrors.

The entrances are filled with fog, of silver, gold, or bronze. Within the fog sound is muted and light reflects oddly. The halls are lit with paper lanterns that do not burn.

There are two one-way exits in the maze, at the end of the hall of mummies and in the hall of ghosts. These appear to be normal, open options but are only visible and can only be used in the direction of the arrow.

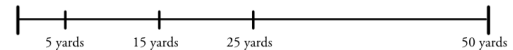
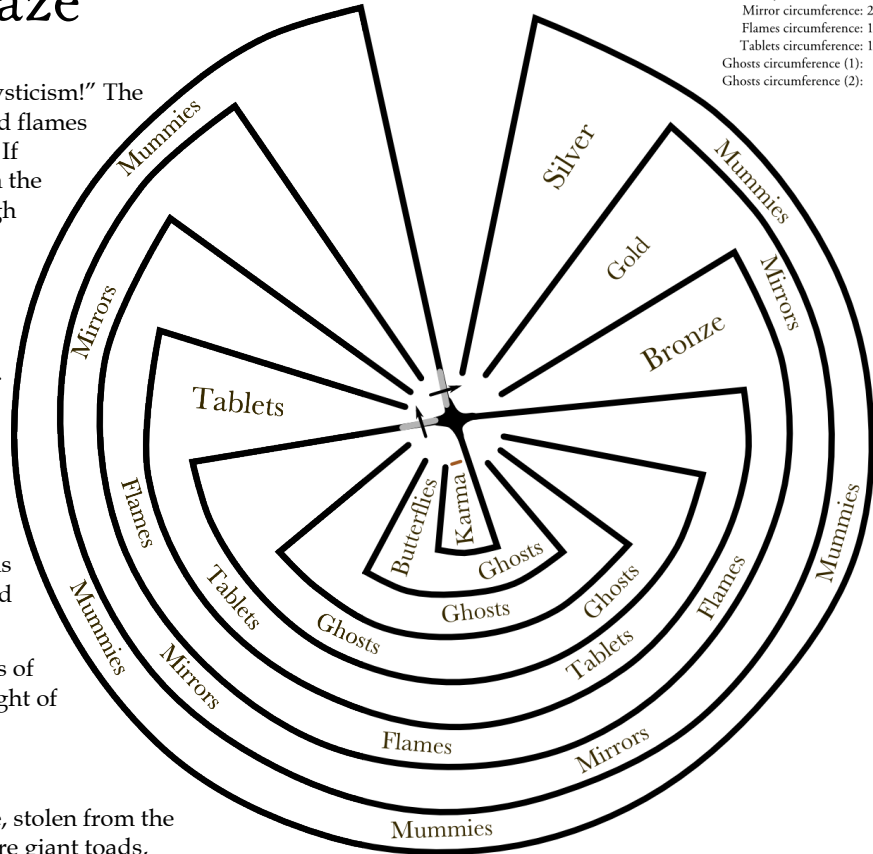
There is a 10% chance every ten minutes of the devil’s cat or god’s dove catching sight of them.

THE HALL OF MUMMIES

Men and women and children all agape, stolen from the cemeteries of a thousand lands. There are giant toads, chimpanzees, saurians, humans, elves, dwarves, and cavemen. No halflings or mananubi.

Player characters or their friends who die in or near the circus may end up here.

- Mummy circumference: 260 yards
- Mirror circumference: 200 yards
- Flames circumference: 150 yards
- Tablets circumference: 100 yards
- Ghosts circumference (1): 80 yards
- Ghosts circumference (2): 50 yards



THE CITY OF SILVER MIRRORS

One makes you look old. You look just like your grandfather. Another garbs you in silken dresses, shimmering, a puppy beside you looking up with wide eyes and a shaggy smile. There is a mirror of you as a child.

You are standing at the ancient gates of a great city. Men and women on the other side beckon you through into the light.

THE FORTY-TWO FLAMING TRUTHS OF THE ILLUSTRATED FAMILY

The flaming truths are tattooed on the back of chained slaves and played back against the wall in film loops of about two minutes long. To read a flaming truth, a character must examine the image for several seconds. The truths alternate from wall to wall at ten foot intervals.

1. You will die.
2. Everyone you know will die.
3. Life means suffering.
4. You are not real.
5. Good and evil are illusions.
6. God is dead.
7. Truth is complex.
8. Truth is relative.
9. Faith without evidence is unreliable.
10. You deserve more.
11. Judge not, lest ye be judged.
12. There are no absolutes.
13. There is no eternity, only death.
14. Pain is the only true evil.
15. You are alone.
16. Every culture has its own morals.
17. You are a citizen of the cosmos.
18. Sadness is the only true sin.
19. Success belongs to the city.
20. It isn't worth dying for.
21. Understanding cures all ills.
22. There is no tomorrow.
23. Happiness is now.
24. You can always deal with it tomorrow.
25. Change is overrated.
26. It's not a question of faith, it's just common sense.
27. One man's freedom is another man's chains.
28. You are the only god.
29. Every faith is a heresy to some man.
30. Good depends on your perspective.
31. Faith is fear.
32. The proper study of mankind is man.
33. It matters not what you believe, only that you believe it.
34. How would you like it if someone did that to you?
35. It isn't your fault.
36. Give to Caesar what is Caesar's.
37. Truth lies between.
38. Be reasonable.
39. Life should be fair.
40. War is peace.
41. Freedom is slavery.
42. Ignorance is strength.

Roll a d42 (d100, subtracting 50 from numbers 51 and above, and re-rolling 43-50) to choose a truth at random.

THE HALL OF STONES

The circus has a tablet, the tablet of faith. They keep it in a secret place, but have made a mold from it to make fake ones for display. The fake ones, of course, only display one tablet's worth of text.

A tablet of Ragnarok. A tablet of Revelations. A tablet of the sinking of the islands. A tablet of the fall of the great tree. A tablet of the writhing of the serpent. A tablet of the flood. A tablet of the dragon razing the city. There are 31 tablets total.

"There are insects at the base of the tree, eating at the roots. The tree weakens; the wide branches fall in and worlds collapse upon each other; the tree collapses, and all worlds are one."

THE HALL OF KARMA

"Shake hands with both the Devil and God."

Leading up to the Hall of Karma, beyond the tablets, are the ghosts of non-swarm people or intelligent creatures they've killed or wronged in the past. The ghosts have no physical presence unless the character rebukes them. Then the ghost will form into a real creature and attack. The cat and/or the dove will watch, if possible, so as to know who the characters have wronged and be able to use that in conversation later.

The final room of the Hall of Karma is protected by two Butterfly Warriors, one as a man, the other as a woman, at the narrow end of the hall labeled "butterfly". A white sphere above them pulses; if there is magic within four yards it will pulse a dull red.

*2 Butterfly warriors: Level 7+1; Survival: 34, 34; Defense: 8; Organization: hive/task-oriented; Intelligence: average; Charisma: average; Movement: 20/12; Attacks: scimitar and sting at +7; Damage: d8+2, d10 or d12; special attacks: stasis; special defenses: immunity to sleep and telepathy, flicker; **magic resistance: 2**; size: medium.*

The butterfly warriors will refuse entrance to any group that is armed, that is carrying something magical (as perceived by the sphere above them), that recognizes them, or that the swarm recognizes as dangerous.

Any group they do choose to allow entrance will need to answer a riddle. Here are some suggestions:

1. "The wealthy want it, the poor have it. It is greater than god, and worse than satan." (nothing)
2. "I am born the son of a furrow, grown I'm the body of gods, and in my old age I'm the country physician." (linen)
3. "A house: one enters it blind, one leaves it seeing." (a school.)
4. "There are two sisters: one gives birth to the other and she, in turn, gives birth to the first." (night and day)
5. "What is the room you leave without entering?" (womb)
6. "What is the room you enter without leaving?" (tomb)
7. "Where may you find roads without carts, forests without trees, cities without houses?" (a map)
8. "What crosses the river but doesn't move?" (a bridge)

When under attack, the butterfly warriors will call for assistance. The remaining beetlepede spies will have to run the maze to get there. The first beetlepede or butterfly will arrive 2d10 rounds after the call; after that, on a 50% roll each round 1d3 of them will arrive until all have.

The Hall of Karma contains god, the devil, and the tablet of faith. God and the devil are both beetlepede spies. God and the devil will not assist the butterfly warriors except to provide the slo-time field that will give the butterfly warriors a **+5 to either attack or defense** and a **magic resistance of 4** instead of 2 as long as the fight is in the 8 yard radius of god and the devil. Remember that butterfly warriors slowly **take the shape of those they fight**.

Both god and the devil can offer a scarab. They will discuss anything the characters wish if the characters reach this point. They will lie through their teeth or tell the truth as they see fit; their goal is to give the survivors a scarab and bring them into the swarm.

Remember that there is a **magic resistance of 4** in this room due to the overlapping slo-time fields. They can **add 5 to either their attack, defense, or an action**, or some combination thereof. Their magic resistance drops to 3 if for some reason one of them is killed or leaves. Their slo-time field will then drop to four yards radius.

Unlike the butterfly warriors, god and the devil will not fight to the death; if they are losing they will try to leave with the tablet. Like the butterfly warriors, god and the devil will call for assistance as soon as any hostility develops.

The room **smells of lotus and sulphur**. The tablet of faith is in the form of a cuneiform-covered chessboard between god and the devil. The chessboard contains pieces that act like live humans, which god and the devil move. This is an illusion maintained by the devil, and will disappear if the devil dies or leaves.

God and the devil often send their cat and dove out to watch the circus. The devil's cat will wander the camps outside the circus looking for dangerous individuals, and for potential marks for the circus.

GOD

God is a fifth-level prophet of Enki. God is a man with a long flowing beard and lots of white hair. He bears a crooked staff.

God: (Autumnal Swarm: 5; Prophet: 5; Survival: 31+22=53; Move: 11; Attack: staff at +5+2=+7 or spirit; Damage: d6+1; Defense: +2; Special defense: slo-time 8 yards, Magic Resistance: 4)

God's bug form (Autumnal Swarm: 5; Survival: 31; Move: 16; Attack: mandible at +5; Damage: d8; Defense: +5; Special Defense: slo-time 8 yards; Magic Resistance: 4)

God can call the spirits of death, fire, order, prophet, water, and weather. He has 19 calling points, and normally the following spirits and likely spirit manifestations:

1 fifth-level spirit of death	deadly injury, spiritual hold, stillness, infestation, foul air, darkness, nausea
1 fourth-level spirit of fire	pillar of flame, fire of the forge
1 fourth-level spirit of death	spiritual hold, stillness, infestation, foul air, darkness, nausea
1 fourth-level spirit of death	spiritual hold, stillness, infestation, foul air, darkness, nausea
1 second-level spirit of order	command, protection from morality

God has the specialties **Familiar**, **Familiar's Eyes**, and **Familiar Puppet**. He can see through his dove's eyes, and even control the familiar and manifest spirits through it. His familiar is a dove. It has 17 survival, intelligence 6, wisdom 4, and charisma 4.

God has charisma 15, wisdom 18, intelligence 12, strength 12, endurance 11, and agility 10.

God can also appear as Odin, the one-eyed man with a floppy hat, Ptah, or Gilgamesh.

THE DEVIL

The devil is a sixth-level sorcerer. The devil is a woman balancing a knife on her fingers, and wearing little more than a sardonic smile. Flames wreath her scantily-clad body.

Devil: (Autumnal Swarm: 5. Sorcerer: 6; Survival: 29+19=48; Move: 11; Attack: wavy dagger at +5+2=+7 or spell; Damage: d4+1; Defense: +2; Special defense: slo-time 8 yards, Magic Resistance: 4)

Devil's bug form (Autumnal Swarm: 5; Survival: 29; Move: 16; Attack: mandible at +5; Damage: d8; Defense: +5; Special Defense: slo-time 8 yards; Magic Resistance: 4)

The devil has 23 spell slots, and a spellbook in her carriage with the spells:

first level	aura of confidence/desperation, fan of flame, fool's magic, inscription, light/darkness, mage bolt, sense magical aura, understand/confuse languages
second level	crawl, dreams, fan of frost, illusory self, minor phantasm, sleep, sulfuric spray
third level	aura of innocence/guilt, dream omen, fire blast, group suggestion, open, silence
fourth level	invisibility, personal alteration, riddleshield, sulfuric burst
fifth level	aura of nobility/depravity, illusory transport, lasting suggestion, magic door
sixth level	cold flame, dreamwalk, wraithshape

She normally memorizes magic door (all other doors of the maze are within 60 yards), sulfuric burst, invisibility, silence, sulfuric spray, minor phantasm, mage bolt, and fan of flame. The devil's magic is subject to their magic resistance.

Spell	range	form.	ingredients	duration	casting	reaction	effects
Magic Door	6 feet	wgi	silver dust	6 rounds	1 round	none	connects two doors in 60 yds
Sulfuric Burst	120 yards	wgi	aspic sulfur bead	instant	4	evasion	2d4/3 rounds or d8 once
Invisibility	touch	wgi	glass dust	6 hours	1 round	fortitude	invisible
Silence	18 yards	wgi	sea sponge	30 minutes	4	none	silence
Sulfuric Spray	self	wg		1 round	1	none	6 points in 2 yards/120 deg.
Minor Phantasm	100 yards	wgi	colored chalk	concentration	1	active perception	15 yard radius
Fan of Frost	self	wgi	water	1 round	2	none	6 points in 2 yards/120 deg.
Fan of Flame	self	wgi	spark/flame	1 round	1	none	6 points in 1 yard/120 deg.

The devil has the specialties **Familiar**, **Familiar's Eyes**, and **Familiar Puppet**. She can see through her familiar's eyes, and even control the familiar and cast spells through it. His familiar is a cat. It has 12 survival, intelligence 6, wisdom 4, and charisma 6.

The devil has intelligence 15, charisma 15, agility 14, strength 11, wisdom 11, and endurance 9.

The devil can also appear as Loki, as Eshu, or as Ishtar.

Resources

Look in the resources file for the maps and handouts. You can get the resources on godsmonsters.com/Guide/Lost/.

1. A map of the circus and the mystery maze, as an Inkscape file, a PDF, and a PNG.
2. The Coriandrome Road Show poster is an Inkscape file. I've provided both an aged PNG and a clear PDF of the poster. It uses a public domain image of an Adam Forepaugh and Sells Brothers poster in the background.
3. A photo of an Egyptian scarab, like the scarabs used by the Autumnal Swarm.
4. A Descent d'Absalon circus poster, depicting aerialists and hot air balloons.

These were all created using Inkscape and GIMP. These are free software packages available for Windows, Mac OS X, and Linux, so you should be able to edit the source files in the resources archive as needed for your own game.

The Autumnal Swarm

PUPAE

The pupa grant great bonuses to their host. Agility, Endurance, and Strength are all raised to 13 if they were below 13. Intelligence is increased to 10 if it was below 10. For up to three minutes every day, the pupa grants its host a bonus of six on any one ability except Wisdom. If the host is an archetype, that archetype can be increased by six levels for those three minutes. The host will gain all immediate benefits of the level increase: attack bonuses, reactions, and survival; but will not gain new skills, fields, or spells (though they may cast existing spells at a higher level). Player characters will not gain verve or mojo.

For up to three hours (but not concurrently with the major bonus) the host can use a lesser bonus of three.

Pupa last for thirteen months, after which the pupa emerges from its cocoon and leaves the dried (and beautiful) skin behind, an empty shell. The pupa will emerge as a beetlepede or as an unformed butterfly warrior.

The swarm will call beetlepede pupae “chrysalises” and butterfly pupae “nymphas”.

The pupae are scarabs that attach themselves to the host’s tongue, and slowly take over from their tongue. They now have two tongues, one of which is a beetle-like bug kept hidden unless they need to use the pupa’s powers. Then their insect tongue detaches from the roof of their mouth.

LEAVING FOR EMERGENCE

If there’s someone they know at the circus, or someone known by someone they know (such as Rigan Clenriquen in our case), they should be a pupae. They will be improved: younger, stronger, healthier. Until, of course, the bug needs to emerge.

“I’ve got to go. My time has come. To spread my wings. A butterfly I’ll be, they said. I’ll fly away. I’m sorry, you can’t follow. Unless you talk to them and get your own wings.”



BEETLEPEDE SPIES

Rare: The Road, The Circus
Class: Fantastic
Moral Code: Ordered Evil
Activity Cycle: Any
Diet: consciousness
Number: 1-12
Level: 5+host
Intelligence: High
Charisma: Average
Movement: Host+1 or 16
Attacks: Host or mandibles
Damage: Host+1 or 1d8+1
Defense: Host+2, or 5
Special Attacks: Slo-time field
Special Defenses: Slo-time field, immunity to sleep and telepathy
Magic Resistance: 3+
Size: Any/Medium

The natural form of a beetlepepe spy is of a human-sized ant, beetle, and centipede cross. A beetlepepe may take control of any living, intelligent creature who consents. Their insect form “enters” the host and leaves a crossroads-shaped scar on the body. This sphincterous scar opens to let them enter or leave as they please. Note, though, that the beetlepepe is not physically inside the host: means of looking inside the host body will not reveal the bug, unless it looks inside their spirit. Further, damage to a host does not damage the bug(s) inside.

A beetlepepe adds its survival to that of its host; when a beetlepepe leaves its host, it regains all of the survival it had when it entered. When a beetlepepe’s host dies, the bug will usually leave the host with full survival. Several minutes after the insect form dies, it ripples away across the dimensions, devolving into a gooey yellowish puddle.

Treat the host and beetlepepe as separate opponents for experience purposes. If a host is defeated but the bug leaves and they don’t defeat it (or it defeats them), they’ll get experience for the 5+ level host, but not (yet) for the 5th level insect form.

Hosts must have originally had at least a five wisdom to be a host; a host can have up to one insect inside them for every five points of wisdom. Having multiple beetlepepes in the same host will increase the slo-time field (see below) as normal for multiple bugs, but will not increase the level of the host or its survival—however, at any point before the host is killed, the bug in control can cede control to another bug, restoring the insect portion of the host’s survival. The beetlepepes are considered separate opponents for experience purposes.

THE SLO-TIME FIELD

Each beetlepede spy generates a slo-time field four yards in radius. Within this field, time moves half as fast for everyone except the spy. If more than one spy intersect each other's field, the radius is additive. If two spies come together, the field is eight yards radius; if three come together, the field is twelve yards radius, and so on. Each doubling of the beetlepedes inside the field also increases the magic resistance in the field by 1. So two insects have magic resistance of 4; four have magic resistance of 5, eight have magic resistance of 6, and so on.

The effect of the slo-time field is that, compared to others within the field, beetlepedes move very fast. Movement rates are doubled. When acting against an opponent affected by slo-time, the insect gains a +5 to one of attack (which warriors can convert to combat bonuses), defense, or any agility or evasion roll.

Firearms are half as effective against a swarm insect or host because of the slo-time field: firearms damage is halved.

BUTTERFLY WARRIORS

<p>Rare: Swarm hives Class: Fantastic Moral Code: Ordered Evil Activity Cycle: Any Diet: identity Number: 1-10 Level: 7+1 Intelligence: Good Charisma: Good Movement: 24 (wings)/13 (tail) Attacks: weapon and sting Damage: weapon+2, d10 (or d8 or d12) Defense: +8 Special Attacks: stasis Special Defenses: immunity to sleep and telepathy, flicker Magic Resistance: 2 Size: Medium (or small or large)</p>
--

They appear as normal humanoids – humans, saurians, etc. – from the waist up. From the waist down is a twitching insect-like larval tail, ending in a sharp stinger. Dull orange, greenish-brown, sickly grayish purple, and puke yellow pulsate slowly

across their larval half. They dart like hummingbirds via beautiful diaphanous wings emerging from their humanoid half and also slither quickly via their larval-tail.

The Butterfly Warriors are the messengers and guardians of the Autumnal Swarm. They are often sent out as spies, to retrieve items, and to perform assassinations. Their knowledge merges with the swarm as normal when they return, and they can merge their knowledge with other warriors by touching them or by flickering with them.

They attack with weapons and by stinging. They often use jagged scimitars as their weapon attack; whatever weapon they use does normal damage, with +2 damage for strength. They can also use claws or talons if their shape allows it, doing the same damage as the shape normally does, at +2 damage. They can attack with both the weapon and the sting in the same round.

They can use their sting in a called shot to place a victim in stasis for a number of rounds equal to half the damage done, round up. A victim of stasis is invulnerable for the duration of stasis; they're literally out of time, able to do nothing and be affected by nothing. They are visible to others, but have no recollection themselves of anything between going into and coming out of stasis. They will continue whatever action they had started before going into stasis. Victims can make an evasion roll to avoid stasis.

Butterfly warriors can flicker to a new location within ten yards at the beginning of each round. An after-image remains at their original location for the remainder of the round. The after-image will act separately from the real warrior; it cannot affect the world or be affected by the world, but it can be targeted by spells or other effects. It will continue in its ghostly way to perform whatever actions the warrior had been doing when it flickered away. This ability is part of why they are difficult to hit, and also gives butterfly warriors a bonus of 2 to all reaction rolls against area or targeted effects. While the after-image is targetable by spells, it does not maintain them – if a butterfly warrior with a darkness on it flickers away, the darkness goes with the warrior and does not stay with the after-image, for example.

Butterfly warriors can also exchange places with any other butterfly warrior within 100 yards. When such an exchange takes place, the two warriors also share all of their knowledge. The range of potential exchange is increased for each extra warrior in the area. If two warriors are within 100 yards, for example, they could each flicker places with another warrior in 200 yards. If there are three warriors within 200 yards of each other, they can each flicker places with a warrior in 300 yards, and so on.

In either case, flickering is a free action; a warrior can flicker and attack normally in the same round.

They take the form of whoever they are fighting, but with a multi-colored larvae-like tail that undulates and ripples. Thus, they can only impersonate someone from the waist up. Barring that limitation, they can impersonate vaguely human-like persons from small to large size. When they fight someone, they will start to resemble that person (from the waist up) after every successful hit with weapon or sting. After seven hits (or after successfully putting the target into stasis) they will completely resemble their target, and maintain that form until their next fight. If a butterfly warrior stops fighting before fully taking on the form of their target, they will maintain a “between” form until their next fight. If a butterfly warrior takes on a small form, their sting only does d8 damage; if they take on a large form, their sting does d12.

When a butterfly warrior goes unconscious, their wings take over and fly them to the nearest swarm hive (or base camp). When they die, their whole form morphs into a twitching multi-colored larval form that tastes like chicken. Unlike the beetlepedes, their form does not ripple away in a few seconds, but rather disintegrates somewhat naturally over one to three days.

THE MIND OF THE AUTUMNAL SWARM

The Autumnal Swarm are a fractal mind. Within each insect is the seed of the whole. Whenever an insect is within the slo-time field of another insect, they share their memories fractally. Because of this, they each generally know anything that another swarm insect knows. When a swarm insect dies, its last senses are sent in a burst to any other swarm insects within five hundred yards.

Because their mind is so alien, they are immune to telepathic powers and spells. They are also immune to sleep. They are even partially immune to spirit charms such as fear, command, spiritual hold, and spiritual torpor unless the manifestation affects all insects within the current insect meld. For example, if there are three Autumnal Swarm hosts or insects within the same slo-time field, a spiritual hold must affect all three of them for it to affect any of them.

The Tablets of Enki

Know then that all those exercises that men call arts, and all wisdom and all knowledge, are but humble branches of that worthy study that is justly named the Art.

The tablets are in the first language that everyone can read, if they can read at all. They appear to be the reader's native tongue. The stone of Arthur was one of the tablets of Enki, and it granted him the art of war and a desire for civilization.

The tablets are not magical; they are divine artifacts. Possession of a tablet grants great skill in the areas that the tablet covers. The tablets have a tendency to disappear once found.

Anyone reading a relevant tablet gains a bonus of 4 to any rolls covering the tablet's field of knowledge. For studying, a tablet is a never-depleting mojo resources for study in its field of knowledge. Wisdom is required to effectively use the tablets, though anyone can use them to some extent: the tablet is treated as a mojo resource of ten times the reader's wisdom.

However, the concentrated wisdom found in a tablet is dangerous. Anyone successfully using a tablet on a roll or to gain a field, field bonus, or skill must make a Willpower roll (or their archetypal reaction roll if the tablet and the field pertain directly to their archetype). On a failed reaction, they gain d3 injuries if they were making an individual roll or d6 injuries if they were gaining a field bonus, field, or skill.

The tablets have a bulk of 40. They're about 31 inches by 20 inches by 1 inch and made of stone, clay, or petrified wood. Their form can change depending on the culture in which they reside.

There are nine tablets. Tablets in the city influence all of the worlds of the tree. The domains of tablets that are not in the city are fragmented. Thus, no one today speaks the language of the city; all languages have fragmented. And everyone worships echoes of the original gods. The tablet of animals is gone, and so there are monsters and the Autumnal Swarm. Off of the road, the tablet influences the area around the tablet. One tablet, the tablet of war, was once in Highland; this is why war was used even to solve scholarly disputes.

Within a place of power, such as the ancient temple of Apuiporo, the tablets grant special facility within the place of power. It is easy to learn languages at Apuiporo because the tablet resides there, even though no one knows about it.

The language of the tablets is a proto-language, the language of the city, a written and a spoken language. It is not Latin, but it once was.

Tablet	Teaches	Location	If this tablet is in the city, what happens?
war	warrior arts, justice	Tomb of Clanricarde	The cities of the road are secure against the dark, if they choose to defend themselves. Justice prevails for those who choose it.
crafts	woodwork, pottery, weaving	unknown	Craftsmanship advances to its apex, and the tools of the craftsman spread through the road.
fire	mining, smelting, metalwork	Lost Dwarven mine	Technology advances in conjunction with magic or the divine.
language	languages, speaking, communication	Library at Apuiporo	Everyone speaks a common language. Trade flourishes.
gardens	farming, botany, gardening	Library at Apuiporo	A “garden of Eden”. Trees awaken, and the great tree speaks everywhere.
animals	herding, breeding, biology	Cartoril	Monsters scatter and eventually fade.
music	inspiration and the arts: magic	Luputac, the lost city	Art is magic; all magic is art; dreams are real; muses are free.
law	government, civilization	Elven underground	Democracy flourishes across the worlds.
faith	lore of the gods and worship of the divine	Circus	Everyone worships common gods, with one Lord, one Tree, as the font of all. Gods live among us in the manner of Olympus and the antediluvian world.

When Ishtar left Enki, drunken and spent in his castle beneath the waves, she loaded to her vessel the nine stones of enlightenment. These stones she brought to shore and displayed in the market of the City, and the City flourished in their light.

From the tablet of war the people of the City learned to defend themselves against the servants of Tifá. From the tablet of crafts they learned all manner of woodworking, pottery, and weaving. From the tablet of fire they learned to smelt metals from the mountains, and to work that metal into tools for the advancement of war and craft. From the tablet of words they learned the one tongue of the road, and traded their crafts through the cities of the road.

From the tablet of gardens they learned to grow food and flower for the nourishment of body and soul. From the tablet of animals they learned the hunt and the herd. From the tablet of music they learned all arts to move mind and mountain. From the tablet of law they learned the government of themselves.

From the tablet of faith they learned the lore of the gods and the wisdom of a servant’s heart.

Ishtar left the tablets in the City’s care with this command: the tablets must be displayed to the tree; thus their light illuminates the city. Hoard them, and they will be stolen. Hide their light, and they will be lost.

If a prophet if Ishtar is quested to find one or more of the stones, Ishtar — or her consort Tammuz who is fated to die — may talk to them during a *Divine Guidance*. Remember that if the prophet is straying from the path Ishtar set for them, Ishtar can choose to give them spirits other than the spirits they ask for — such as replacing one with a *Prophet* spirit capable of manifesting *Divine Guidance*.

The problem is that there was not and could not be a tablet against envy. The nature of mankind is the freedom to choose good or evil. You remember the tower of Babylon? Tell me the Tower of Babylon.

...

Yes. Here's the part they neglected to tell you in the temples of Kish: they weren't putting the tablets in the tower to glorify the gods. They put the tablets in the tower because they were envious that other peoples of the road benefited from the blessings of the tablets without having to accede to the authority of the City.

They chose to live in ignorance and poverty of mind, rather than let others live in the light of knowledge and wealth ungranted. So they hid the tablets away in the tower. But anything hidden will be stolen, and so the tablets were scattered to the hidden places of the unlawful. For what the city did was to put the tablets beyond the reach of all but thieves and burglars; so it is that thieves and burglars only may benefit from them.

Places that have tablets become places of power, with a level equal to the number of tablets there.

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