

VEINS OF THE EARTH

(A Jumpchain CYOA for the Lamentations of the Flame Princess supplement)

There is a deep, dark place beyond the caves of the known.

Far beyond light and law, life finds a way to persist even when cast aside by society. When all else perishes in one of many recurring apocalypses throughout the cosmic lifespan of existence, the survivors crawl here to survive. It is a place where the forgotten bodies of titans lie entombed as cavern systems, until large crabs adopt their skulls as homes. It is a place where darkness takes on a life of its own. A place where the art of countless lost civilisations is preserved upon a skittering insect half a mile long.

But still, life persists.

Not easily. Not comfortably. But it does. Skittering creatures hunt and parasitise. Somewhere from high above, every myth to do with the underworld and it's associations trickles down to decompose. Everyone is hungry. *Everyone is always hungry*, even with clerics and wizards to conjure food from nothing. There are nations within the darkness that have adapted to be just as nightmarish as their environs-and those who stay too long down here soon find themselves no less mad and mutated simply by brushing up against all this strangeness.

In short, hopefully you have a good reason for being here.

Take 1000 CP, and hold tight to what light you can find.

Locations

You begin in one of several caves. It doesn't matter where. The examples below are just a few among the many. Assume you are surrounded by danger, mystery and deprivation on all sides. *What kind* can differ.

A Boulder Hall: You are in a flat, high-ceilinged cave full of truck-sized rocks barely balanced on each other. Touching one has a 50% chance of moving it. One slamming into another has an 80% chance of moving it.

Carbonised Trees: You're in a forest baked into charcoal by a long-gone flame. Loud sounds make whole trunks shatter, causing them to drift apart into clouds of choking smoke.

Daemon Tusk Cave: You're in a cavern made of nails and teeth. Stalactites/mites form an open maw. Cannibal signs are carved everywhere. It could be the mouth of some sleeping thing.

Titanribs Corpse Cave: You're in a cave that used to be something divine, grand of stature, and that *probably* made at least a cameo appearance in Greek mythology. Clavicles are rocks, a nodular spine marks the passageway. If a crab hasn't already taken it, the skull is valuable.

Stone Monkey Cave: This cave is made of endless tessellated stone monkeys clinging to each other. There's a magic word that makes the monkeys reform into a new cave with different exits. You don't know the word. It's not clear if anyone knows the word.

Rock Milk Teats: Decayed celestial trees form randomised Kabbalistic glyphs that ooze forth from nodular cysts as something like milk. It's flammable and very, very caustic. It poisons those with evil alignments and drives good ones mad. It forms rainbows like gay petroleum.

Magnetic Spring: May be carbonic acid, may be something equally acidic. Pearly melting acid everywhere. Absolutely fucks a mundane compass.

Lock Pick Cave: You're surrounded by endlessly turning unseen locks with weird equilateral fingertip gaps. If anyone dies here, there is a loud CLICK and all the tumblers will pause then continue. Except one. Mind your fingers.

Civilisation: With few exceptions, the most actively dangerous places.

Origins, Age, Gender

What? You're underground. In the dark. Surrounded by horrific things. *Nothing but survival really matters anymore.* Be whatever age and gender you want, as long as you can still eke out a living amidst danger.

Adventurer (Drop-In): You're not from here.

Why did you come here? Did an evil wizard teleport you to some chamber from the surface? Were you tricked by a map proclaiming there was treasure to be found past where bats dare fly? Are you *lost*?

There is no mercy for anything edible down here. Be careful.

This can be the Drop-In option if you like.

Local: You are from here.

This means that you are likely part of a strange and *at least* half-mad creature whose habits are unacceptable on the surface. A monstrous creature eking out a strange and horrifying existence. Something long dead who didn't get the memo. Or a terrifying anomaly with no explanation.

We'll figure out the specifics later.

Races

Human (Free, requires the Adventurer Origin): You don't belong here.

You are what the majority of sentient races would agree to call a person, inheriting the deindustrialisation left in the wake of the dwarfs retreating underground from war and impotence, and bulldozing its' way through the forests once ruled by the elves. This is, generally, agreed to be the way of things. The halflings are, on the whole, rather ambivalent about your kind.

You are the current dominant race of the surface. The problem is that you are currently in an ecosystem that requires very different adaptations.

Dwarf (Free, requires the Adventurer Origin): You don't belong here

You are part of a dying race. Once the most powerful upon the planet, war and impotence stripped away your kind's pride-leaving only an insatiable, loveless, fixation on **work**. Now all that is left for your kind is to acquire gems and precious metals to numb the brain, and appease the spirit. Then to rot amidst your once-grand architecture, and technological marvels.

Your kind are typically four foot tall but very sturdy, able to carry greater burdens than humans and living about 300 years. The length of a dwarf's beard is a measure of their virility and worth.

Elf (Free, requires the Adventurer Origin): You don't belong here.

You are part of a fallen race. Where once, your kind's nations rule the forests, the plains and the mountains, now you have retreated to secret enclaves away from the expansive nature of humanity. Some of your kind accept this is the way of things, hoping to guide mankind as the natural heir to creation. Some find humanity as a blight, working to destroy them before the natural order goes first-a task hampered that despite the great power of the elven enclaves, they are utterly impotent to project it.

As creatures of natural magic, elves typically live in deep wilderness. They are on average five feet tall, and slender with pointed ears as well as disproportionately large eyes.

Halflings (Free, requires the Adventurer Origin): Literally just Bilbo's more militant ancestors in The Hobbit. Breakfast obsession and all.

You belong here the least of everyone.

Cambrimen (+ 100 CP): You are a fucking embarrassment of an evolutionary abortion comprised of six gigantic fatty cells crudely shoved together into a child's idea of a humanoid figure. Your worthless retard eukaryote ancestors didn't have enough genetic complexity to build something that wasn't a stupid, deranged failure of a sentient being, so they made your kind instead. Your kind are commonly known for flailing incoherently in combat, often forgetting what weapons are, and communicating in barely coherent demands like LUK LUK LUK (Attention) and U NO MEH? (Respect) and SLIME (a Cambrimen has an urgent need to give someone some dangerous corrosive slime, right now).

On the plus side, nothing wants to eat them because their giant cells are too stupid to have nutrition, their lack of biological transmitters means their biology is too simple to be hurt from electrical attacks, mind-altering magic, poisons, noxious gases, oozes, fungi and many other things that presuppose a complex series of vulnerable tissues. And they can't drown (because they don't breathe), barely take any damage from falling (they just pool and get up again) and don't age because they don't know how to.

Knotsmen (+ 100 CP, *please reconsider*): You are the descendants of a banished people from the surface that exist in constant discomfort from their own veins and arteries knotting up against each other. A long time ago, a single tribe was driven from the surface and made a terrible deal with *something awful outside of time* to survive. The results speak for themselves: More and more of their bodies twist around themselves over time. Their society is built around hunting slaves, pillaging secrets, chasing debts and desperately denying the awful thing they are and the living nightmare their culture has become.

On the plus side, this makes them excellent sophists and lawyers as a culture, and their dark pact makes them supernaturally lucky at survival as long as they have still-living children. Those who become gifted at magic learn spells based on holding others accountable to debts: Forcing targets to list the exact cost of every object they own (including body parts), inscribing their names on bones, enslaving the souls of slaves who try to escape by suicide, taking possession of thoughts and causing others to disbelieve your identity unless documentary proof from a registered authority is produced. Wearing armour is agonising for them. Their warrior

castes still have the will to do so and chase down a debtor across entire cave systems.

Knotsman culture is extremely patriarchal, and women are literally treated like property stored behind closed doors. They have been so thoroughly broken that if their culture was demolished, they would build it up again exactly as it was.

You are strongly advised not to be a Knotswoman if female.

Olm (Free): You are an eyeless, slit-nosed, pin-toothed and strangely beautiful people descended from cave salamanders. Only one million years old, your kind are slender as a child and yet retain your tails and gills. You typically live up to 1000 years, most of which are spent waiting for food or hibernating to conserve resources, which allows their hunters to pick up a wealth of combat experience despite their deceptively slow motions.

Olm are roughly as intelligent and complex as humanity, but their entire culture revolves around the sad necessity of filling their bellies amidst scarce food. They have a great many of their people on ice that would create massive food problems if they were to all wake up at once. For this reason, cannibalism is viewed as a sacred act showing respect to the departed by keeping their qualities alive among them.

Gnomen (Free): Small, quick, and unusually calm and quiet, the Gnomen are a flat-faced people that have primarily prospered due to their lack. They lack tears, lack hopes, lack regrets. They value only life, action, light and the present. As a result their cave-cities are beautifully carved with marvellous gems, but not for financial reasons. Simply because they value beauty as if it had the properties of a real force.

Meanderthal (100): You are part of a stocky, primitive subspecies of human for whom separating tools, words, ideas and clear delineation between cause and effect really never went into fashion. You are likely a descendant of the fascist-animist super-shaman pseudo-criminals they collectively rendered themselves extinct with racial death-moans to rid the world of, or a modern throwback recreated by their latent genes.

Regardless, apart from being tougher and more mobile than the average human despite your primitivism, to survive this long you have had to develop a primitive but brutally effective animistic set of magics. You can directly attack someone's wisdom by hitting them with a rock. Gnaw out parts of someone's soul with your mouth. Whistle, hoot and clap someone's organs into fighting to leave their body. Or call out someone's spirit animal to devour, effectively eating someone's soul. Or animate gasses into ignition, potentially jumping into someone to set them alight from the inside. The more complex acts of conversing with the afterlife or singing to the stars and the space between material things have had little reason to be used for centuries.

Dvargir (100 CP): You are bald. Bearded. Shorter, and stronger than a typical man. Your entire culture values only **WORK** and **BLOOD** with all else being either impediments or vessels for these things. Long ago, the first of you emerged from some primal core and set into motion a process called the Ascent in which every generation is designed, with statistics and graphs, to be more focused and efficient than the last. They work to work so that they can work. Their slaves can (seemingly) rise high in their societies if they prove productive (the slaves are not valued, only the work is) and are immediately shot if not. They do not dream. They do not believe in chance. If a Dvargir ever loses the ability to work, they simply sit in place waiting to starve or walk off into the dark.

The Aelf-Adal have recorded many thousands of wars with the Dvargir, over thousands of years, with many surprises and temporary truces. The Dvargir have recorded exactly one war with the Aelf-Adal, which is progressing according to schedule, give or take a century or two.

It's not clear if they are all that remains of what were once dwarfs on the surface. Any dwarf should hope they are not.

On the plus side, they are far and away the most technologically advanced race in the Veins. They have made radioactive lamps, fuel that can illuminate an entire cavern with a hand-held reservoir and refined spidersilk ropes. The Dvargir alone field mines and gunpowder rifles regularly. With great age, some Dvargir learn to grow, shrink, become invisible and similar feats by shifting their relation to the world.

Aelf-Adal (100 CP): Your kind were born from Nightmare, though whose or why is long forgotten. You are one of the few unambiguously beautiful races of the Veins, with elf-like forms as dark as shadows themselves-and a culturally ingrained hatred of humanity, who are both prey and perhaps creators to them. After a disastrous war with humanity in which they found that dwindling human numbers depleted their own lebensraum, the unexpected ferocity of humanity, and the mutual terror giving even *nightmares* nightmares of their own, some forgotten messiah led them underground to rebuild their civilisation.

And to hate. To continuously meditate on their thoughtless superiority, and carefully controlled contempt for all else that lives. So that one day, the walls between sleep and waking are torn down, and civilisations exist purely to instil and sustain fear.

Their flesh is neither wholly dream nor reality, but never ages. They have mastered much magic related to blurring the lines between perception, reality and sheer terror: Building cities out of shadows and mirrors, casting rays that blind or erase thoughts, creating zones where the terrain bends to match what's feared about it.

dErO (100 CP): The dErO are NOT a race of bald, intense creatures that all resemble Dr. Eggman if he lost weight and was a little person. YOU CANNOT READ THIS AND THE LIES ABOUT YOUR PLANS WILL NOT CONCEAL YOUR DREAMS.

The dErO are NOT paranoid, and are ALWAYS in control.

They know better than you.

They. Know. Better.

You are irrelevant.

~~You will not understand the Great Machine, and when you do it will be too late~~

There is no Great Machine, but you should say what you know about any parts, schematics or other components about the Great Machine you know of. WHICH DOES NOT EXIST.

The dErO are in FULL CONTROL of the situation and CANNOT be defeated and are MASTERMINDING EVERYTHING, pulling EVERY STRING there is to be pulled. THEY. ARE. IN. CONTROL.

WHERE IS THE MACHINE?

WHAT IS THE MACHINE?

WHEN IS THE MACHINE?

WHY IS THE MACHINE?

HOW IS THE MACHINE?

Good. The simulation is over. You are good dErO. As a good dErO you know how to build contraptions like the Air-Looms that beam intrusive thoughts and mind-control frequencies from tangles of clicking engines across entire caverns. DO NOT TELL THE OUTSIDERS THIS. You can build ray guns and other beam weapons that influence thought in various ways. Or straight up make brains explode. Or the Revelation Engines. WARNING: ANALYSING A REVELATION ENGINE WITH A REVELATION ENGINE CAUSES A FEEDBACK LOOP. Or applying Congruity Knots to make humanoid ideas into dErO ideas. THEY CANNOT BE USED ON dErO AND NEVER HAVE BEEN.

Deep Janeen (200 CP): There are spirits of air, or fire, or water. You are not one of them. You are a timeless spirit of the deep earth, larger than men with skin like blue veined marble. Male or female, you have bodies curved like a sacred vase or scimitar, and voices like water poured into an upturned bell. Deep Janeen love gloom, the elegance of worked stone or imprisoned beauty, and the wealth and luxury their earth magic lets them hoard. They loathe paintings, frescoes and any material that is dishonest about what it actually is. The more masonry surrounds them, the safer they feel (from other deep Janeen). They are among the few beings pleased to see someone pass through their territory, as a chance to test and improve their wondrous labyrinths. Deep Janeen architecture is fiercely divided between the Umbral (regarding the placement of massy shadows) and the Lithic (the placement of shadowed mass), neither of which can be distinguished well by most outsiders, and both of which have a fierce loathing of each other.

The least among them can match any human architect, but their aristocratic culture means most work is done by slaves. Such are their powers over stone and vacuum that the mazes they compete against can be spun into existence as their whim. Sending letters written in burning flame or enchanting carpets to fly them around in style are mere hat tricks by comparison.

Archean (200 CP): In the distant dawn of life itself, most life settled for being boring and perishable things like plants. Fungi. The Archea are an ancient phylum which decided that this was pussy shit for cowards, their cells catalysing impossible chemical tricks to survive in otherwise-lethal environments for aeons. These towering, gangly humanoids with metallic fumes for faces move slowly but gracefully. They are old, indifferent to the organic life cycle, and tend Atomic Bees for their deadly yet valuable honey. They feed on radiation, blackness and great silence. Every now and then one gets curious about life on the surface, at which point the geological timeframes they process existence through get confused. They'll want to know why the mountains die. They'll want to know why cities are full of some kind of flickering cancer, that also seems to generate them. They'll want to know if food is something you or something you do, and what weather is.

All Archeans can cure any disease in linear time by recalling its earliest evolutionary progenitor, transform any chemical and erode any material very slowly in ways alchemists have dreamt of, create chemical weapons and impossible alloys, and through their sensitivity to the deep radiations of creation know much about cosmology-from seeing the expanding primal fires of the universe clearly, to pointing out the bodies of dead gods orbiting cold suns or other stellar phenomena. Hitting them with most metal weapons causes the weapon to quickly rust to dust. A few, the Lithonomers of their kind, can dimly perceive the reality of organic life and caves by using different strata of rock to lens cosmic rays. Individuals Archeans often learn to weaponize radiation in singular and unique ways: Breathing out a silver curling fog of toxic heavy metals, firing mutagenic cancer beams, going into a battle-seizure that sprays poisoned molten gold everywhere, and emitting lethal amounts of radiation with a scream.

Silichominid (300 CP): The Silichominids are to Archeans what golems are to humans (if humans didn't make golems). Their flesh is beryllium and aluminium wrapped around Mica bones, and their impossible silicon biology causes them to constantly emit heat which needs to be contained in cylindrical, many-limbed, foot-thick heat suits of iron and diamond. The scuttling limbs at their base let them totter slowly wherever they want to go, and they are innocent. Utterly innocent. As far as most of them can tell caves don't exist, organic life and air don't exist, and as long as they stay in their "spacesuits" then "outer space" is a barely comprehensible vacation away from their billion-year war with primordial frost giant descendants over control of rustbergs in hyper-dimensional magma-space. The war has killed millions since the giants were driven out of Asgard, and will never end.

All lesser race wars are merely considered "ethnic troubles" by the most cosmopolitan Silichominids, who have been made aware that *things* exist outside in "outer space" that die very easily to attempts at communication.

They can melt rock with the effort of a man breathing on a cold window, and shape it similarly over roughly an hour wherever they totter. Their language is a transmission of magnetic energies that induces spasms in most organic life, to say nothing about how coming near their iron hull exposes most to incineration even if they don't smack something with their tentacular feather-limbs. Almost impervious to harm (unless you find enough kinetic energy to smash plate armour several times over), the extreme conditions of their native environment also render them absolutely immune to almost all magic from this world's baryonic universe. Even Power Word: Kill doesn't work on them because they are not chemically alive in terms the spell engages with.

Substratal (300 CP): The Substratals are to the Deep Janeen what tube worms are to earthworms. Originating from the Axis Lithic, the iron core of this world surrounded by molten magma, they can look like anything from a constantly rearranging shape of tessellated polyhedral, to a bodybuilder-shaped tornado, to a segmented snake of perfect spheres, to a rippling flame of shifting stone, to a pangolin. Just a pangolin. Or a giant crawling baby.

As elementals of molten stone and solid fire, their perspective on reality is very different-able to travel through stone and rock with no impediment. Most are strong or smart enough to flick away summoning spells; the majority of those summoned are fugitives, children or pacifists on vacations. Little is known about what a creature whose capabilities by definition involving shifting lava or hypercondensed metal around, save that ambition, treasure, slaves and status are utterly irrelevant to them. Perhaps when you can sling tidal waves of magma around, the distant hell of open air is too ungovernable and irrelevant to dwell on.

Monster (Free): Oh. You don't fit cleanly into any of the above. Perhaps you're an unusually intelligent member of a species that normally doesn't achieve sapience. Perhaps you were from the surface, but mutated in strange and unique ways to survive here. Perhaps you are a very special sort of aberration. Like most discoveries in the Veins, you are at least somewhat concerning.

Perks

Perks are discounted by 50% under the relevant Origin header, irrespective of race. One discounted 100 CP perk is free, the other may be bought for 50 CP.

Adventurer

Three Classes, One Weirdo (100 CP): You were not meant to survive here for long. The precious skills you may have accumulated in travels on the surface, the disciplines you have gleaned from constant practice. They are all just ways to delay the inevitable.

Still. They're better than nothing. Here you may select which of the four major classes, the disciplines of adventuring, you may have become at least initiated in on the surface. And potentially proficient. **Select only one.**

The **Cleric**, spiritual warriors who receive the grace of a loving (or "loving") deity.

The **Magic-User**, a daring wielder of the chaotic forces from beyond reality willing to bet their soul for fortune and wisdom.

The **Fighter**, who hits things very hard. No, it's not very exciting by comparison, but on average they're also the *only* member of any given party with a snowball's chance in Hell against the monsters of this realm.

And the **Specialist**, a professional explorer with aptitudes in random skills including but not limited to architecture, bushcraft, climbing, languages, sleight of hand, stealth, tinkering, searching and other miscellaneous helpful skills for any adventuring party. Though generally even less useful in a straightforward fight than a Magic-User or Cleric, they're often proficient in sneak attacks.

This perk gives you 1 level in a given class, representing some vague combination of divine empowerment, mystical learning or sheer bloodminded grit depending on your class. It can be repurchased (at 50 CP, if discounted) for an additional level, up to a maximum of 20.

Yes, that means you can only start at Level 20 if this perk is discounted *and* you spend your starting CP budget here. *Most adventurers die quickly in the Veins.* **No, you cannot multiclass.** People here *suck* too much for that.

Alignment Selection (100 CP): There are three alignments in this world, which determine how a sapient being relates to reality on a cosmic scale. It can also determine how said sapient beings are affected by certain magical effects.

Lawful: To know that the universe has an ultimate, irrefutable truth. And that as time moves on, all resistance to this plan falls away, leaving nothing but a perfect state without change or the possibility of change.

Chaotic: To look to the howling maelstrom beyond reality, which is the source of all magic. To believe, joyously or more commonly in utter despair, that what men call demons (and worse) will some day rise from it, and wipe away everything that gods and kings build up.

Neutral: To just kind of be meh about the whole thing, perhaps more consciously disgruntled with the notion of pure Law or Chaos than self-professed advocates of either.

This perk gives you an affinity for one of these alignments, modestly but noticeably enhancing all actions taken in alignment with them. **Only one alignment may be chosen.** The Lawful version of this perk always enhances service to or powers derived from the gods, legal matters of all kinds, and solving problems in a straightforward way like hitting something with a rock. The Chaotic version of this perk always enhances unhinged or improvised solutions, and all non-divine magic from this world.

The Neutral version of this perk enhances all actions to mediate the others, and generally being a bit of a wishy-washy wallflower.

Hardy Cartographer (200 CP): Wow, way to make the Specialist feel even *more* useless outside highly specific situations like disarming traps. You only need a third of the sustenance a typical member of your species requires, and mapping out difficult to navigate spaces like these caves is second nature to you. You can do both of the above with very little effort and thought, even while dealing with the various inexplicable horrors here. It could be through sheer grit. It could be through the blessing of an obscure god. It could be through some kind of nonsensical dungeon diving metaphysical law that ensures all adventurers *have* to have a certain level of support from reality itself so the whole dungeon ecosystem can function.

Light of Hope (200 CP): Light! The most precious resource for any being that relies on sight in this world-which for all that there are other, more exotic forms of perception. Is usually the fastest and most reliable. For some reason, in your presence light lasts four times as long and shines twice as brightly whenever it would be convenient for you. Your blows also land more surely, and fortune favours your stratagems as long as you're well lit.

Actually Worthwhile Loot (400 CP): It is not uncommon to go adventuring in these parts only to turn up an obscene painting of two dwarfs mating or a pile of useless radioactive rocks that most of this setting doesn't have an advanced reactor to make use of. This is no longer the case for you. Your chances of finding something *you* would consider valuable have greatly increased, and you find it in six times as great a quantity as most in this world. This works best when you actually know where to look and never lets you find anything truly unique, but once in a while you also just stumble across useful things in a totally incongruous place. As if some fed-up player homebrewed a bag of goodies to keep you in their campaign.

Rapture Repellent (400 CP): Your mind is an iron fortress, deadened to most of the madness-inducing effects in these tight tunnels. Be they magical, chemical or mystical, you have the mental fortitude to make most of them back off and go the other way. This is priced so highly not just because of this gift's rarity, but because the line between madness, reality warping, and rampant mutation is very thin down here. As such, this perk also confers significant resistance against the other two. You could bathe in a cancer bear's gore without fear of further medical complications, and resist gaining hypersensitive skin as an adaptation by screaming internally and smacking yours on the cavern wall until it goes away (quietly, to not attract attention).

The Foretold Hero (600 CP): You are the shadow of a five-dimensional being existing in a higher plane, and this is why much of your life makes no sense. Don't worry about it. What matters is that a little of your spirit has flowed upwards, making you more in touch with that wholeness than most. As a result, you can perceive the parallel selves of others you fight-and by striking precisely, mix and combine your foes with other possibilities of them. Or strike them in the past and future, so they suffer damage that will inevitable come along later, or take place in the past. Conversely, your

awareness of your other selves lets you overlay their potential powers and capabilities onto yourself when it would be advantageous-and makes you greatly resistant to all undesired reality warping effects as you reassert your cosmic identity, or disperse the damage across countless selves. Finally, if you kill something you can make everything it has ever done disappear as long as that being was less than 5th dimensional itself. Causality and reality simply re-knit themselves around a sudden lack. To the extent it matters, if *theoretically* this was all a tabletop role-playing game, then the *notional* players and GM wouldn't be allowed to talk about the annihilated thing in the game. "The game" being the current reality you're in.

There are probably more uses for this to the wise. But this game was not really meant to explore those. It was meant to have adventurers die horribly and hilariously in dark tunnels.

You shouldn't have had this. Now that you do, presumably anything else in this jump that makes you special also has a higher dimensional analogue that is mostly irrelevant outside of localised interaction with you.

Merciful Homebrewer GM (600 CP): ~~You're not supposed to acknowledge this, but somewhere a bunch of people sitting around a table just shook their heads in disgruntlement at a copy of Veins of the Earth, and pulled out some 3rd party content.~~

Wow, everything sure has been going way more smoothly than you'd expect! Cunning enemies keep going the wrong way while chasing you, cruel ones prove surprisingly open to negotiation, and catastrophic cave-ins often miss you wherever you go. Once in a while, you'll find a legendary sacred sword just lying on a hill for someone to take, or somehow hornswoggle an entire settlement into making you their king. Hazardous locations like the caves are much safer and comfortable for you to travel through, you make breakthroughs in training your martial prowess that takes other initiates months, and the gods themselves are more keen to bless you than others for reasons even they're unsure of. Whatever you set your mind to in future worlds, similarly fortuitous coincidences will help you out.

It's like someone important is really looking out for you, or something.

Local

Mobility Master (100 CP): It might due to mutated ligaments, treading partially in dreams or something weirder-but somehow, you can navigate most terrain in the Veins as easily as a human runner on a racing track. No mere pile of boulders will slow you down from full speed, and low ceilings or tight squeezes impede you much less than they should. Watch out for spiky surfaces, caustic pools or shifting caves, though. There's a limit to what your superb mobility can navigate.

Slavery 101 (100 CP): Most civilisations in the Veins, even the extraordinarily kind ones, end up using slavery for one purpose or another. As a paragon of civilisational progress, you are also an expert slaver. You know how to size up the worth of a man at a glance, to browbeat captives into reluctant obedience, and intuit betrayal from the desperate and unhinged. Presumably you could use these talents in other areas, but what could those possibly be? *Civilly* leading others to greatness as *equals*? Don't be silly.

Subterranean Diplomacy (200 CP): Due to being less insane than most of the political groups they represent, the most respected Ambassadors of the Veins are a symbiosis between a near-immortal reptile and an almost-alien fungal intelligence. There is now competition for that role: You. You are immensely talented at other languages, picking up bizarre ones like Funginid or even interpreting things like radiation emissions after a few exchanges. You also have a cold, detached genius for realpolitik. Finally, as long as you act in good faith it to mediate or represent someone else legally it *seems to occur far less than it should* to anyone that your diplomatic credentials should be questioned. An eldritch horror for which the concept is irrelevant might ignore you, but even the Aelf-Aedal will humour your standing as the defence. And while a corrupt court may still decide to kill you, it will be far more receptive than it should be to an impassioned and well-researched case about why you should live.

12 Shades of Darkness (200 CP): Darkness takes on a life of its' own in the veins. There's romantic darkness, playful darkness, menacing darkness-and of course, the absolute and crushing darkness of something impossibly vast beyond the mortal condition. You have a particular affinity for darkness, moving thrive as fast and being six times as likely to surprise someone within it as long as no light greater than a candle is near you. Whenever it's advantages for you, shadows fall over you or anything else you want hidden, and it takes noticeably more energy to illuminate the darkness near you.

FUCK THEM AND EVERYTHING THEY VALUE (400 CP): There is some sort of horrific miasma in symbiosis with you. It could be a particularly eldritch disease, a surreal venom that calcifies sorrow into obscene cysts, a curse transmitted from a god's corpse or even a bizarrely mutagenic madness. What it does is ensure anything you've used regularly, anywhere you've been regularly, or any being you've killed is utterly worthless to be looted because of the noxious forces now emanating from it. It's roughly as nasty as a heavy dose of radiation poisoning, although whether it results in someone ritualistically mutilating themselves or erupting into a fungal drone or something stranger is open-ended. You can also seed all your attacks and spells with a much more diluted version of it, something like a nasty case of food poisoning unless you inflict catastrophic damage on the level of levering a limb or have time to concentrate your blight on a pinned target. One that is more like a really nasty flu until it has time to ramp up.

Mutagen Magnet (400 CP): It's not clear what exactly induces life to change in the Veins. Is it just the accumulated bacteria and viruses? Does the decay of titans and magical artifacts release strange curses, or blessings? Does madness somehow *scare* flesh into warping? Well, whatever is going on sure is going on faster and better in you. All phenomena and substances that would alter you are much more effective when it would be convenient for you, and the results far more prone to being beneficial with no real health detriments to you. A focused will and concentration on your self-image can even minimise the aesthetic detriments of such changes. While rapid exposure could see you quickly obtaining many useful adaptations, even far away from the Veins once a season or so you can grant yourself a useful adaptation on the level of echolocation, extending your nails into

claws or being able to skin and wear an animal so that it defends you with all the life of its living self in times of peril.

Yes, the key word here is *adaptation* rather than strictly *mutation*. No matter how mundane the mutagen may be, your changes no longer have to be limited to biology.

Here There Be Dungeons (600 CP): The spirit of the Veins lives on in you, somehow! Maybe you're the heir to some forgotten Titan. Maybe you were lucky to inhale a great surge of the magic here. Whatever the case, proportionate to your overall power you can make any at least *mostly* enclosed environment take on the strange ontology of the Veins. A normal farmer could turn his cottage into a strange realm of warped topology and strange life. As you grow in power, you'll also exercise more and more power to shape the topology, population and composition of the Vein-like region. A real dungeon master, that's you.

Killer OSR Loyalist GM (600 CP): Things have not been going well for all who oppose you lately. Weapons jam or get stuck in their sheathes, and the weather is often downright unpleasant. Monsters catch their scent before most of their normal play, civilisations become almost unnaturally suspicious of them, and if it's possible at all for a curse or trap to activate in their general vicinity-it will, homing in on them unerringly. Their taxes and legal problems go further and further awry. They accomplish less than they should after hard training. They're far more prone to madness, scarcity, being stolen from, accidentally breaking their lanterns, dysentery while on the Oregon Trail-every sort of misfortune and calamity.

This is nothing truly anomalous. This is just the law of this world enforced against those unlucky enough to call you enemy-though it only targets those with directed malice, or things, phenomena and entities putting you in immediate danger.

The Monster Section (Requires being a Monster)

You're a horrific entity of the chthonic depths. Welcome! Here in these sections, you will conceptualise your overall capabilities with these loosely defined stats. As you'll soon find, you can be **extremely** fast and loose with what kind of entity you are, or even if you're more of a phenomena than an entity, as long as you vaguely fit the capabilities described below. As always, when in doubt, fanwank something. Take a stipend of + 400 CP that can only be spent here first.

Choose one option from each section, unless otherwise indicated.

Armour

(+ 100 CP): Your hide is softer than human flesh. You likely have the consistency of a rotting corpse or slime. You would be advised to avoid harm in general.

(Free): Your hide is roughly as tough as human flesh. This is very weak relative to even ordinary dangers in the Veins.

(100 CP): Your hide is as tough as leather armour.

(200 CP): Your hide is as tough as chainmail.

(300 CP): Your hide is as tough as plate armour, or shields.

(400 CP): You do not have a physical form. You are a disembodied presence, a local phenomenon or something similar. This makes you functionally immune to most of the hazards here.

(500 CP): In addition to the above, you can become selectively tangible, like a spirit.

Hit Points: To skip the whole meat points argument, it is assumed your *basic attacks'* effectiveness is *at least* roughly comparable to the examples listed for these HP sources.

(+ 200 CP): You are astonishingly fragile. A man could kill you with a swipe, if you could actually be hit.

(+100 CP): You have slightly less vitality than a starting adventurer.

(Free): You have slightly more vitality than a starting adventurer, comparable to the tenacity of the Knotsmen.

(100 CP): You're quite tough, like a giant mantis shrimp.

(200 CP): You are even tougher, like the dreaded Phantom Hand of Gargas. You are effectively biologically immortal at this point.

(300 CP): You are immensely vital, like a titanskull hermit crab.

(400 CP): You are as everlastingly vital as the Antiphoenix.

(600 CP): Only the Bröcken, a shadow of a fallen higher dimensional divinity, clings to life as surely as you do. In addition to your immense vitality, you have a few conditional forms of damage immunity such as halving all damage from edged weapons *plus* only suffering lethal damage from those of noble title gained from a legitimate source.

Speed

(+ 200 CP): You move at an eighth the speed of most humans, like an Archeon.

(+ 100 CP): You are noticeably slower than a human adventurer, but not *that* slow.

(Free): You move as fast as a human adventurer.

(100 CP): You move twice or thrive as fast as a human adventurer.

(200 CP): You move five times as fast as a human adventurer.

Senses

(+ 100 CP): You are blind. Have some CP!

(Free): You are not, in fact, blind.

(100 CP): You can see in the dark as clearly as day.

(200 CP, can be taken as an extra choice, can be taken multiple times): In addition to the above, you have an unusual sense that conveys extraordinary perception in a limited field. Perhaps you can sense cosmic rays accurately enough to gauge great information about the nature of the universe. Perhaps you can hear heartbeats accurately from miles away. Perhaps you can, somehow, track shadows by scent.

Extra mobility: Multiple choices may be taken in this section.

(Free): You walk everywhere. Or slither, or crawl, or...you get the idea.

(100 CP): You can burrow through soil.

(100 CP): You can swim as fast as you walk.

(100 CP): You have some adaptation like suction pads on your feet that lets you go up vertical surfaces.

(200 CP): You can fly.

(200 CP): Instead of burrowing, you can directly phase through stone and earth selectively.

Size

(+ 200 CP): You're as small as a butterfly.

(+ 100 CP): A human could hold you in their arms.

(Free): You are, roughly, person-sized.

(100 CP): You have a noticeable size advantage over a person, like a bear or tiger.

(200 CP): You are large enough to tower over a person, like an elephant.

(300 CP): You are as large as a whale.

(400 CP): You could knock down a castle by barging into it hard enough.

(500 CP): You are half a mile long.

The Kitchen Sink: Here we go. These are all the weird adaptations beings of the Veins have. Pick as many as you like, and feel free to make up your own options as long as they're roughly in line with those listed here and don't exceed the 600 CP examples.

(Free): You have bioluminescence, exquisite patterns etched into you, or some other sort of purely decorative display.

(Free): You have the physiology of a lupine, avian, or other relatively mundane animal physiology. You can still be mutated or glow in the dark or whatever, this just denotes you are nominally a living thing with lungs and vital organs and such.

(Free): You can speak fluently despite how unusual your anatomy is.

(100 CP): You can emit intense heat, acid or similarly hazardous things over a short distance. Longer distances generally require more CP, at 300 CP you could shoot someone accurately across a cavern.

(100 CP): You can inflict a kind of limited madness. Something on the level of an irrational urge to betray treaties like what the Splinterlads spread, although you can steer the precise nature of it.

(100 CP): You are infested with symbionts that attack your enemies.

(100 CP): You have extra sets of flexile manipulators.

(200 CP): You can create sticky strands of tough silk, Spider-Man style.

(200 CP): You can infest others with spores, a plague or similar things with strange and corruptive properties. This can potentially turn others into monsters similar to yourself.

(200 CP): Your body is made of a selectively corrosive, selectively sticky slime.

(200 CP): You have a devastating and long-ranged method of ruining someone's day. It could be a caustic chemical weapon, or something more non-lethal and exotic like a brown note.

(300 CP): You have a certain way of inflicting death that requires great physical control of a target, but is certain against most targets. You may have to drag someone inside the rock you phase into, for example.

(300 CP): You have powerful psychic abilities, such as levitating a whale-sized mass (including yourself) and projecting complex illusions such as your imagined ways of dying.

(300 CP): You regenerate quickly from an easily met condition. Perhaps as others shed blood near you, you regrow wounds and mend broken bones. Perhaps you can devour molten metal to quickly regenerate. Alternatively, you regenerate slower but constantly.

(300 CP): Pursuant to the above, you have an unusual physiology that can survive everything from extreme temperatures, to harsh impacts like cave-ins, to extreme radiation.

(400 CP): You have an even more extreme version of the above. You are no longer alive in a way that matters, and therefore cannot die to effects that conventionally enforce death-just be physically destroyed. You are also immune to most magical abilities. Your biology no longer has to make biological sense; you could be something like a kaiju made of the skeletons of pre-natal children with eyes like burning cities and broken obsidian Kanji and still have functional biology.

(400 CP): Your physiology has a bizarre relationship with time. The prime example of the Tachyon Troll, which by following the Tao of the Troll shows up to battles already grievously wounded when near those who will inflict damage on it, and must be fought twice to resolve the paradoxical nature of its wounds. Failure to do so causes it to unleash waves of rapid aging. You may have this, or a similarly dysfunctional relationship with time.

(400 CP): By your nature, you can cast a range of spell-like effects at will within certain theme like “bear totem” or “X Elemental” or “Legalisms”. Perhaps you are cursed, or blessed, or just mutated to have spell-glands.

(500 CP): You are the living embodiment of an elemental force. The Antiphoenix for example represents ultimate entropy. It can compel others to never speak again, reopen previously suffered wounds over the course of a song, conjure up to 100 cubic feet of supernatural black fire in whatever shape it desires within 30’ and can cast at will the spell **POWER WORD DEATH-FOREVER**, which is like Power Word Kill but has no limit on total hit point number and prevents resurrection. It has other assorted abilities like draining intellect and life and soul merely from being stared at in darkness, and knowing all dead languages as well as everything that has passed, all that will die, and those immortals who don’t quite live up to the name. It ends things: Lives, hopes and loves, but also curses, tyrants and pain through creative use of its abilities and perhaps other miscellaneous powers. Anything it kills will never come back by any method, fictional, meta-fictional or divine. Ever. *At least, by means available in this world.* Every single part of its body is extremely valuable and dangerous.

(600 CP): You are the remnant, emanation or other extension of a higher dimensional being of considerable power. You have the higher dimensional state mentioned in **The Foretold Hero**, and the world accommodate itself in minor ways to your assumptions. Doors expand to suit your size, steps lower and lengthen, dirt or damage and other unsightly features tidy themselves up around you. The Bröken has a decayed divine authority to befit her nature as one of conquest and destruction. She can gain introduction to any god or deity, grant a seal that can pass through any portal, grant an oath that let others command undead like an evil Cleric of equal level to herself, call up the spirits of the dead, reverse/modify/amend divine judgements while in their presence and isolate or swap around the parallel selves of those she fights.

Items

You're probably expecting a few neatly organised rows of themed objects or property situated under the appropriate headers. Well, here's the thing:

Tough luck. Things so scarce in the Veins, even the wealthy starve from time to time. What you're going to be instead presented with is a selection of Loot, representing an assortment of treasures that can be looted, stolen or otherwise seized from those prosperous enough to make something that isn't rope and a cage here-or the miscellaneous treasures of the Veins themselves.

All Loot can be repurchased, and each price tier of a trove is followed by an example. Each purchase of a specific Loot price tier grants one instance of a purchase described in a bullet point under the appropriate price tier. You can repurchase Loot price tiers as often as you like and make up something fitting the given examples in rough value, and the overall vibe of the race the Loot belonged to. The maximum value of the loot you can pay for is the maximum available amount listed under a given header. Loot of the Civilipede obviously does not have discounts.

If a race's name comes up in a piece of Loot, **that race gains one discount for each tier. One purchase of a discounted 50 CP item becomes free, 50 CP item prices are otherwise unchanged.**

Loot of the Aelf-Adal

50 CP:

- Aelf-Adal 'Arak', a viscous mixture. The top layer gives penetrating insight but curses character. The bottom layer removes the curse and makes the drinker violently drunk then wipes 2d5 hours of memory. Insight must be communicated during drink.
- Aelf-Adal 'manacles'. Actually penetrating bars as thin as syringes, driven through the forearms like hairpins and linked by slender chains.
- A few syringes of heroin. That's it.

100 CP:

- Aelf-Adal ring. The wearer can vomit a torrent of poisonous spiders that pool around them like a shadow, and help them climb sheer surfaces. This control ends the moment the wearer becomes afraid.
- Aelf-Adal climbing harness. Like a normal climbing harness but makes you look cool. Slim fit only.
- Aelf-Adal candle lamp. Dull barely-lit red in the visible spectrum. Much brighter to those with thermal vision. Candles are black honeycombs formed into cones, hexagons filled with strange pungent chemicals.

200 CP:

- A set of blades and armor forged from shadow made solid. Like the dream venom of the Aelf-Adal it is not wholly physical. It can pass through all physical barriers that any light can enter at all, and cut as if it were still wrought iron.

400 CP:

- A black city that exists only in nightmares, replete with strange treasures, sustenance, riches and other useful things. Most of them are enchanted with magic drawing on darkness and nightmares. Among other things, some great divine miracle has stabilised this place enough to sustain the existence of dream-born beings like the Aelf-Adal even should all other sentient life die out. A situational but precious treasure.
- A population of Aelf-Adal fit to populate the city above. They will hate you deeply unless you yourself are either Aelf-Adal or somehow related to one of their gods. If so, they will revere you with the loyalty of soldiers sworn in common cause to a grudge for their lord. Yes, this has to be purchased separately.

Loot of the Dvargir

50 CP: Utility implements for personnel-scale work.

- Carbide lamp. Bright, soft, white flame. Creates toxic carbide sludge that must be disposed of every day.
- Dvargir mushroom vodka. Icy clear. Drinker cannot let any argument lie, pursuing every tiny detail with agonising relentlessness unless a Wisdom test it passed.
- Stone jar resembling a Dvargir head. Finish a strong drink with it in one gulp after tipping its face to look at the ground, and it will speak a true prophecy about something that will happen in the future when you are drunk. The Dvargir itself will be drunk, usually incoherent, and hates anyone who drinks from it. That does not make it speak any less true.

100 CP: Personnel-scale tools for field work.

- Geophone. Delicate. Can hear sounds in 200' radius through stone.
- 5 litres of Luminol, a thin spray useful for revealing the location of blood stains and other organic byproducts, even if cleaned up.

200 CP: Personnel-scale tools for deletion, major harvesting, construction or other vital operations.

- A well-made blackpowder rifle
- Several crates of blackpowder and ammunition.

400 CP: Large scale infrastructure.

- A city cut from bare stone. Morale-boosting murals (discarded and left alone for being unproductive) optional.
- A mine shaft into a rich seam of the Veins' strange ore. Comes with refining facilities. Functional.
- Autonomous biological labour units, AKA enough Dvargir to populate the aforementioned city.

Loot of the Gnonmen

50 CP

- A single faceted gem. Beautiful. Captures light wonderfully.

100 CP

- A sack full of aforementioned gems. Variety up to you.

200 CP

- You would seize this thing? This beautiful city with all its harmonious curves, and its unearthly sensation of lightness? This delight for the senses, despite being proportioned for the short Gnonmen and not humanity? Take it, then. There is only the present. Seize the day.

Loot of the Silichominids

50 CP: Every known item known to be carried by a Silichominid is a piece of high density technology that resembles a warped metallic fruit. It is somehow simultaneously solid yet liquid, and flesh-meltingly hot at all times. Typically they are arranged in diamond/graphite bandoleers; any purchase of one comes with a free bandolier.

- Ghost of a banana (passport)
- Half a lettuce (recording device)
- Endlessly flaking onion of paper-thin lead (map)
- Aluminium Ginger Root-like object (inaccurate guide)

100 CP: As above, although these are typically more destructive.

- Necrotic pineapple. Shoots half a litre of molten gold under pressure out to 20' when manipulated (local currency)
- Psychedelic grapes that burst into radioactive sludge (home currency)
- Eggplant. Screams in brain-scrambling emissions when waved in delicate figure-eights (mobile phone)

YOU CANNOT LOOT THE dErO ALL THIS HAS BEEN AUTHORISED

50 CP:

- Conspiracy pills. Allow the user to hear the voice of the players and the GM as they speak around the table. Contains a poison that kills if the voices are directly acknowledged.
- Congruity Knots. Some sort of...device, that when applied to a humanoid that has had its upper skull removed, grants dErO power sets and the ability to build their own Influencing Machines. **DO NOT USE THEM ON dErO YOU CANNOT YOU MUST NOT YOU WILL NOT.**

100 CP:

- A set of conspiracy pills that have been cleansed of the poison. You may now acknowledge the 4th Wall safely. The consequences of that, if there are any, are on you.

200 CP:

- Revelation Engine. Some sort of computation device that supercomputers all possibilities, revealing secret plans and hidden structures of power. Prolonged use influences user into creating secret plans and hidden structures of power.
- Suspicion Machine. Transmits suspicion through solid rock to affect unsuspecting minds. Sometimes backfires and infects user with unlikely suspicions. There is no way to determine which is the case.
- Thought Exploder. Reveals secret influences upon the mind, and can be used to secretly influence the mind into secretly influencing other minds. Can result in cranial explosion or unconscious creation of Influencing Machines.

400 CP: **THE GREAT MACHINE**

- ~~—YOU HAD IT~~
- ~~—YOU HAD IT ALL ALONG~~
- ~~—GIVE IT TO US~~
- ~~—GIVE US ITS MECHANISMS~~
- ~~—GIVE US ITS OPERATIONS~~
- ~~—GIVE US ITS OUTPUT~~
- ~~—GIVE US CONTROL~~

- What a strange device! Seems like it could take up most of a small building. Imagine a relatively simple soft sci-fi thing like controlling the weather, or mind controlling a small army, or controlling the structure of the caverns for miles, or controlling unstable vortexes of magic. It can do this with remarkable precision as long as you're at the controls. Seems to induce feelings of smugness and megalomania after prolonged use. Perhaps there's a lever somewhere to turn that off?

Loot of the Civilipede

50 CP:

- Boy, there sure is a lot of decorative art with no functional use for an increasingly frustrated adventurer here. Take it. Just take it all.
- A Spider's Embrace. This is horrifying. The ochre shell of this cup is made of enamelled spider shell, and that's the least awful thing about it. It depicts a Trogloraptor, a type of giant hunting spider, carrying children on its back. Unusually, they are not sedated, and are in fact [DATA EXPUNGED]. This cup is notable for being banned in all cultures, prone to compelling most into wanting to scrub their own eyes in what *feels* like a curse, and being one of the few things even the Aelf-Adal find appalling. The Aelf-Adal are generally in favour of showing no mercy to children, but this is too much.
- A star map. A chiaroscuro shadowplay of lead and glass, containing encoded information in the darkness of negative space. Designed for extraterrestrial travel. Pity there's none here.

100 CP:

- Golem Cage. Someone bound a great many light and shadows with sorcery, into a breathtaking image of the Nightmare Sea. The live, tortured shadows can be used to trap golems of light, and presumably other intangible entities.
- Philtre of the Silent Saints. A glass bottle with the head of a snake, within which the faces of strange enamelled gods peek through glowing plants. Sniffing it makes you feel utterly safe. You aren't physically, but the scent does suppress the effects of scrying, curses and other remote attacks.

- Punishment stone. A eternally burning seated figure, surrounded by 3 feet of blue and green flames. Forcing someone's face into the flam for up to a minute will either inflict damage or slowly burn away their Id or inner passion until none remains. The subject can intuitively choose.

200 CP:

- Ion Mask. Heavy, grotesque, studded from gold and jewels. Allows you to see and negotiate with any demonic entity in the area. Only compels them to reveal themselves and treat the offer seriously, not accept.
- Flower Bell, Celestial. Assembled from flowers of painted stone. Ringing it inflicts a hastened reincarnation on the recently dead. They are resurrected but never in the same location, with the same gender, or with the same form. And never with the memories of their old life. Personality and capabilities otherwise unremoved.
- Thief of Bronze. A compressed pile of mangled bronze with hands, limbs and a face. It's a thief, that when hidden in secret places, runs off in the night with any transportable goods. Due to some...negotiations, whatever the original purpose of its theft, it now brings them to the cage for your perusal.

400 CP:

- **HIS BOW, HIS BARBS.** Whose? If you have to ask, you don't need to know. This bow of unremarkably black wood has exactly two arrows. Each causes immediate death on impact. Previously, anyone picking up the bow is reduced to walking skeleton in 1-2 minutes, then their animated skeleton falls apart when they put it down. Mercifully, that curse has been lifted through your investment of CP.
- Oh look, it's a whole quiver of those arrows! Replenished every week by a mysterious skeleton.
- Creation phallus. A stylised erect penis carved from black marble, and pointing directly up. A lotus blossom of polished iridium grows out of its tip, dully reflecting any available light. Sex in the presence of the phallus always results in concept, always of genius children. In game terms, their combined Intelligence and Wisdom is never less than 30.

- A hermaphroditic statue of Coatlicue, Mother of Gods. Possibly out of rivalry with the phallus, also ensures conception when fucking happens in its general vicinity. The children are paragons of athleticism. In game terms, their combined Constitution and Strength is never less than 30.
- A statue of a faceless goddess whose body is *always* perceived as the image of degenerate lusty temptation by the viewer's values. Seems to have wanted to get in on the action above. Yadda yadda, always fertile, and the children look *damn good* and dance like they trained all their life to, you freak. Game terms, their combined Charisma and Dexterity are never less than 30. And yes, the statues stack. As if to compensate for boosting the most useless stats in the Veins, this statue also seeds the combined lust of a whole temple full of sacred prostitutes into those rutting near it.
- The Grand Grimoire. This confusing mix of stone slabs, papyrus and vellum looks like several people from different eras collaborated to make a book. Normally, magic in the Veins is scattershot and haphazard, doled out in small doses by a cruel GM. This represents easily the greatest concentration of it in one place, for it includes **every spell listed in Veins of the Earth**. It cannot be stressed enough that Magic-Users are lucky to find even one or two spells in this place before going mad or mutating.

600 CP:

- The Civilopede: Ever wondered where all this stuff is even stored? There's a gigantic insect half a mile long that resembles a centipede, a millipede, and a glittering heap of gems. It has an unerring sense for Art (and most things around it), and strives to consume and collect it upon its back. It charges freely through the Veins, few cities having the power to stop it. This Civilopede has somehow been convinced you are either a fellow critic or the jewel of its collection, and is thus unusually open to your suggestions. Unlike the older specimen known as a patron-predator of civilisations in the Veins, this Civilopede's museum is empty, although it has a contingent of Canonites (evolved bipedal ticks, and also art critics) ready to curate and manage its future collection.

- Castilian Caddis Fly shell. What a find! Shed from a giant caddis fly larva, this shell is made up for shields, swords, spears, plates, helmets, knives, axes, maces, polearm tops, flails and other weapons of legend. Washed clean of markings by the river's flow, each was the legendary blade of a particular culture or hero-cycle, made to kill gods and defeat evil. All have long since become as forgotten and defunct as anything in this place. Don't let anyone know you have this, as living arms depots the legendary weapons accumulated by this fly are a politically sensitive matter to most kingdoms. Also given this game's inspiration, these weapons are *probably* more "Cyril uses Godsbane to strike down Bhaal because it is mystically empowered to do so as an otherwise ordinary weapon" than ending worlds or even levelling mountains with every swing.
- Monkey egg. This two metre high stone egg's black surface is cold, and inscribed with acid etchings of prayers to Monkey, in the image of Monkey. Scholars propose it either contains a miscarried twin or some other form of divine life. By investing CP, you have ensured that this is true. The egg will, *soon*, hatch into an Antimonkey. An Unmonkey. A being as powerful as the legendary Sun Wukong, but opposite to him in nature and power (though not necessarily more malicious). As the egg's owner, this strange entity will latch onto you as its parent.

Companions

Delicious Friends (50/200 CP): Oh look, it's your emergency food! How kind of them to show up canned and carrying future utensils. For 50 CP apiece you can create or import a companion with 600 CP to spend on anything. All race options are free for companions, and if relevant they gain the Monster stipend. For 200 CP, you may import or create a full set of 8 at a discount.

Reach into the Dark (Free): This is a bad idea. A horrible idea. An idea that indicates you may already be infected by the many madnesses of this place. But if you really want to extend the hand of friendship to *something* from this world, feel free to try. If they agree, they become a companion. There are no easy ways to introduce people here.

Rogue Potato (50 CP): Burying deep underground to escape the ravenous appetites of monstrous giants, this master criminal can shimmy through the tightest of crawlspaces with the greatest of ease. It knows how to wheel, how to deal, and where to stick the knife in. It has tendrils everywhere, figuratively and literally. It mourns the surface, but revels in the dark. It secretes incredibly potent poisons, and only needs soil and water to feed. It is also a literal potato roughly the size of a dwarf, with mobile shapeshifting roots it uses as everything from lockpicks to poisoned shivs and spears.

Everyone notices this. Nobody finds it worth drawing attention to when the potato carries itself like a grizzled criminal with a heart of gold.

The Flame Princess & co (100 CP): Shortly after your arrival, you encountered a fiery haired warrior of uncommon might, battle prowess, and bravery, and her closest companions: A blonde cleric who also carries a sword almost as long as she is, and a brunette magic-user. They are very confused about how they got here, and would be very grateful for any kind of help in this dark and hellish underworld. Despite the circumstances, they are also remarkably optimistic and upbeat, dreaming of the grateful people they'll save on their adventures and the priceless loot they'll share in times to come once they escape. If you get to know them better, they'll admit that they've also had very vivid dreams of them suffering horrible mutilations in further adventures on the surface. Rather than being discouraged, they've decided to embrace the challenge of overcoming the dire fate seemingly presented to them.

These dreams are so vivid they seem to have conferred a wealth of experience and training on them, as if they have reaped the rewards of many lives unlived until they became warriors of legend. In gaming terms, they are all level 20.

They are even more confused about this, having remembered only recently set out on adventures together before getting *very lost*.

Drawbacks

Lamentations at the Horrifying Surface World (+ 0 CP): You start at the very *edge* of the Veins, such that you can see a glimpse of the outside world's light. Choosing to follow it would reveal a dire truth to you: While the world outside may be less sane, *it is not by much*. Twinkling stars smile on the players but rage at the GM IRL Maddened cults worship tentacular horrors snaking through their fields. Ominous black monoliths herald the unravelling of all reality. Perhaps you may come to regret leaving for the surface, because **at least the Veins are consistent in their strangeness**.

Crawling in circles (+ 100 CP): You left your sense of direction somewhere at the entrances to the Veins. Now you can't make heads nor tails of how to navigate the damn place apart from what you can sense directly, even if you should normally have some supernatural means to. This isn't necessarily lethal, many things survive here without a sense of direction. Just, without accomplishing much of note.

Delicious in Cave-In (+ 100 CP): You taste *great*. All carnivores agree, and so do most parasites and ineffable horrors from beyond the known. This means that any predator drawing blood from you will be greatly incentivised to keep going, and even sapient beings that normally wouldn't consider cannibalism would be more tempted than usual by your presence. Tread carefully.

One Hundred Bad Things (+ 100 CP): Suppose there was some sort of notional table of possible encounters. Nominally it's just a game abstraction for the unknowability of the games. Now, alas, it's all too real. You are prone to finding random terrain, monsters and other encounters regardless of how much sense it makes. Expect to find giant spiders inside a seemingly benign Gnomes settlement until *you* come along, a treacherous cave lined with dangers next to an innocuous riverbank, and generally much more unpredictability. There is now a non-zero chance of running into the Antiphoenix in a public bathroom.

Knotty Situation (+ 200 CP): There are crueller and more relentlessly warlike races in the Veins, but none pettier than the Knotsmen. Rumours are rapidly spreading among the entire race/faction/tragedy that you are guilty of the gravest among their crimes: Breaking the bond of soul-debt. As more of them will hear it, they will mobilise to slay you like any faith would their direst heretic, Weeping Knights chasing you with chain and shield while reinforced by the magic-using Bailiffs or teams of Usurer slaves, and the ruling Elect caste eventually turning their attention to you. If you fend off enough of their lesser. The Knotsmen are not the most powerful or cunning of foes. They are, however, the most bitter.

Inconvenient Guest (+ 200 CP): Being infested is normally like getting rained on in the Veins-a passing misfortune. Unfortunately, in your case now only is something wriggly and writhing now visibly entangled with your anatomy, but a second mind has taken resident in your biology. It's a relatively lazy, atavistic mind that mostly wants to feed, preserve its own life and spread. But it does mean you'll need to win a contest of wills to expend energy on anything more significant, especially if you want to try to get rid of it permanently.

Lamenter's dirge (+ 200 CP): *There is an engine of stone the size of a tectonic plate. You have to run from its endless shadow, it's waiting outside the light whenever you're awake, hunting you.*

You don't really know the people around you. Your memories with them are disconnected, they don't make sense. You must have been charmed by magic. How much is false? Find the vile wizard who has bewitched you! Off with his head!

Alternatively, they're all automatons from a plane of pure reason. Trace your fingertips over their contours, and you'll feel their circuits. Find out what they want, and why they're here. You can't let them know that you know. You just can't.

Someone has put a device inside you. It moves around. You HAVE to cut it out.

One of these madnesses, or a similarly proactive delusion, afflicts you.

RAPTURE (+ 300 CP): There is a...*thing*, a phenomena, a madness that inflicts such tangible horrors it might be better thought of as a kind of invisible monster that can only be fought mind to mind. It really might be a cloud of living madness. Or your hidden desire to die, or your compressed fear of this awful place, exploding under pressure. It might be something intrinsic to your very being deciding that *you don't belong here*.

It happens upon you in traumatic or unfortunate circumstances, or when one of the undead victims it caused to commit suicide touches you. And unfortunately those *things*, what some call Panic Attack Jacks, have started following you wherever you go. It starts as forgetfulness, despair, uncontrollable spasms, a panic attack-things that could be explained as normal but severe mountain sickness.

Then it starts taking control of a finger. A limb. Eventually paralysing your whole body.

It forces a mental battle of something generally significant to you, in a generally ominous location. It could be your parent, your god, a recently slain foe or friend. It could be a Substratal or a champion of living darkness. You could fight it in a sinkhole swallowing you both, across the surface of an enormous eye or in some great earth engine. It is usually screaming or laughing. Or both.

This is a test of pure willpower and intellect. Failing it causes the Rapture to assume control of you for increasing lengths of time; a few seconds at the start but it's hold over you will grow. While in control of you, it will use any means you have to kill you. Succeeding alters or mutates you in some minor way, generally related to adapting to the caves-although you may attempt to mitigate this with any means at your disposal.

If the Rapture fails to kill you ten times in a row, it usually leaves them alone afterwards. The Panic Attack Jacks will wander off or slump, disinterested. Maybe you've wrestled control of your own biology. Maybe you've conquered your death impulse.

Or maybe it really is an invisible and untouchable madness monster, and now, and you can hunt it down to kill it for good now it's properly afraid of you.

Cavernous calamity (+ 300 CP): Roughly once a year and sometimes thrice in particularly rough ones, a calamity on par with every member of the Olm population suddenly waking up and going hunting for you, personally, will occur. It's rare for wars to merit the astonishing amount of protein it will take for the Olm to put their relatives back to sleep, but with ten times their normal numbers and a wealth of strategic knowledge about the caves even the more advanced races could be gravely threatened by them. Even if you're not being hunted by such a force, you have the misfortune to always be at the epicentre of such an encounter. Maybe the ocean will flood into the chambers directly above you, or an undead titan will wake up and grumpily mistake you for the god who bested them a few eons ago.

Still-Tor-Jumper (+ 300 CP): There's something hunting you. It looks like your build from this world but naked, evil(er), and dancing on invisible strings or hooks. Every now and then the roof will fade, all natural light will be snuffed out, and from on high a pale eye-shaped gleam that illuminates nothing except itself will appear. Your doppelganger will plummet, screaming, through space-time bubbles, and surrounded by what looks like gigantic heron's legs on each side.

Your doppelganger will try to grab you, emulating more and more of your powers, your skills, your aspects from other worlds while the stilt-like legs girding it try to pinch you like a beak. If it succeeds, if you don't kill it or knock aside the beak of the overpredator hunting you, it will drag you up and out of this world to feed that looming horror. Your chain will end, and the stilt-girded horror will be the only testament to its existence.

Kill this creature, and in a subjective month at most or so, another will start hunting you. It seems this entity has a lot of bait. Mercifully, the bait-doppelgangers' similarities seem to be reset each time.

There is no explanation for this. There is no background, nor reason. Nobody understands what this is, no one will ever know. It simply is.

...unless, perhaps, you have the means to attack beings outside reality. Or drag them down to your level. Then, just maybe, you might actually get some *goddamn answers* if you're powerful enough to beat up what is effectively a higher dimensional apex predator.

Ending Options

THANK THE GODS IS THAT NATURAL LIGHT?! (Go home): Yes! YES IT IS! You can see it shining above you, and oh blessed be, there's even the slightest tint of blue! *Blue!* Get out as quick as you can! The caverns are suddenly wide enough to take everything that's joined you on your journey, and you're out of this terrible place, and you're in your home of origin. What a wonderful turn of events. What a relief, to be away from this awful place.

The Choice: Troglobite or Trogloxene (Stay): You have made the baffling decision to eke out a living in this surreal hellscape of stone, earth and darkness. One can only hope a parasitic fungus hasn't influenced you into this decision. If you manage to find your way out of here before your stay ends, take 1000 CP as congratulations for at least managing to avoid the worst of here. Also take 1000 CP if you manage to establish a base of power as secure as any of the advanced civilisations, because you deserve it for acclimatising that well.

Veins of the Multiverse (Move on): Oh, look at that. There's a crack in a wall. If you look through it, you can see a completely different setting. Smell it, even! Why? Why not? It makes as much sense as anything in this surreal place, honestly. Might as well step through to continue your chain.

Notes

Technically, in the base rules of Lamentations of the Flame Princess, dwarfs are *not* supposed to be casters. *Technically* in those rules Magic-Users and elves are always supposed to be Chaotic aligned (nature is a bitch, or something). However, **you are in the Veins of the Earth**. Consider your Jumpchain-granted fiat to be a subtle sign this place is changing your race's fundamental character.

Magic in Lamentations of the Flame Princess is broadly styled after the 1981 Basic/Expert ("B/X") version of D&D's. First level Cleric spells are things like Cure Light Wounds, Detect Evil, Protection From Evil, Purify Food & Drink, Sanctuary and Turn Undead. Seventh level Cleric spells are things like Control Weather, Earthquake and Holy Word. First level Magic-User spells are things like Animate Death, Cloudkill, Contact Outer Sphere, Hold Monster, Wall of Force and Telekinesis. Ninth level Magic-User spells are things like Power Word Kill, Time Stop, Imprisonment and Lost Dweomer.

Lost Dweomer is

Take the above framework, make it weird, gross and !FUN! (read: catastrophically dangerous to the target and sometimes the caster), and you've got much of the extra spells included by the campaign models. A few are listed below. All are accessed by Magic-Users unless otherwise indicated:

- Brain Slave (Level 1): Imbues a disembodied brain with the flight of a bird, permanently, with a touch. Does not enforce loyalty. Typically only cast by the Knotsman on slaves they have tortured into unhinged loyalty beforehand.
- Dribbleganger (Level 5): With a fragment of DNA, the caster creates a permanent duplicate of any humanoid creature. It has all the innate powers and physical capabilities of the original, regards the caster as a parent, and has 1/6th of the original's intelligence. It has fractured memories of the original that it usually does not understand. You need the equivalent biomass of the target to transmute into the target as part of the spell

- Cryobrite Bridge (Level 1): Summons a 10' long bridge of yellow, cakey, brittle, untrustworthy stone. It's width is equal in feet to 1/3 of the caster's Intelligence score. Generally taken as a grave insult in the Veins (if people wanted a bridge, they would have built one).
- Optic Beast (Level 3): Summons a projection of any creature the caster has seen, cast from a man-made light-giving flame. If the light goes out, it dies. It dies anyway in as many rounds as you have levels in Magic-User. It has no magic or special attacks, only the physical traits of that creature. It can only affect creatures that can see it, and is always golden.
- Speak With Air (Level 4): Allows you to interrogate the air for information. Air moves too quickly on the surface to have an individual consciousness, and is functionally dead in a dungeon where it's stagnant. Air is most useful as a scout that doesn't understand mass, weight, colour, or light, but has a keen sense of its own composition, temperature, and breathing in the caverns. Can track breathing *very* efficiently.
- Summon Mirth Elemental (Level 6): Summons the most irritating elementals of them all. Instantly enrage anyone they have not charmed. Elementals will obey the caster as long as the orders are funny, and can replicate the powers of the spells Time Stop, Shape Change, Power Word Stun, Reverse Gravity, Creation Major, Mind Switch, Hold Portal, and a lot of illusory bullshit. If the caster gives unfunny orders, the Mirth Elemental immediately starts creating anarchy on its own.
- Vampire Counsel (Level 2): Summons a member of the Vampire Court to deliver legal advice. The vampire summoned will be human 70% of the time, and 30% another humanoid but highly intelligent race. The vampire will only serve in a legal capacity, never engage in non-verbal combat, and never do anything illegal-although there are, like in real legal practice, grey areas. The vampire will serve as long as they are fed a point of blood a day, and there is legal work to do. All other beings will react as if there is, in fact, a vampire present. But all records will indicate the vampire is a registered member of the bar in that polity and qualified to represent the caster and associates in

court. You will never be convicted for casting this spell, only arrested if even that.

- Waterfall Caul (Level 1): Steal a fragment of a waterfall's power for a day. By snatching a cloak-shaped gap from the waterfall, you can wear it like a functional cloak (that does not chill you) which appears from nowhere, flows around your body and disappears. To anyone else it is surging water with the same temperature and force as the original falls. Anything thrown or pushed into the water will appear in the waterfall the cloak was taken from; its physical protection is akin to plate armour wherever it covers the body. Quite loud, and tends to mist up the place.
- ~~The Twinkling Star~~ Oh hell no. It's not even a ranked spell, or in this campaign.

This place is not just strange and disturbing, but deliberately designed to be comically over the top dangerous. I offer this play report as both a source of hope and a commentary on the inherent strangeness of both the game and its setting. Even the mighty Anti-Phoenix, avian embodiment of entropy, is not immune to prophecy and a nat 20:

<https://pretendo.games/2019/04/06/play-report-veins-of-the-earth/>

The Flame Princess and her party don't have statblocks or a written history in the setting. They are just mascots who periodically appear in the game's illustrations, like stand-ins for the real PCs.

In response to any question about how this setting works, or why anything in it even exists:



FOR THE LOVE OF GOD, FANWANK SOMETHING