

DO IT FOR THE BEAST

AN ADVENTURE LOCATION BY MICHAEL PRESCOTT

THE SITUATION

Long ago, Seree wizards drew sorcery from deep within a place of natural power. They left a monstrous *guardian* to protect it, but it grew cruel and vain, and built a cult to worship and feed it. The *guardian* taught them the Seree's secrets, but also the perversions of 'the beast' in the darkness below.

SEREE HEXARIUM

The 'Column of Red Might' is inscribed with the *eight powers*. Two great *chunks of dark glass* (one split from the other), triples the potency of any magic performed in their presence.



GUARDIAN CAVE

The river is deep, swift, and loud. Glistening stalagmites stick up from knee-deep mist. The *guardian* is a gray salamander the weight of four horses, easily spotted by the blue, *glowing speckles* on its back. A mane of *human arms* waves about its neck.

It *speaks telepathically* in a low warble. It warns anyone (even cultists) trying to enter the cave or Hexarium, and attacks trespassers mercilessly. It uses all *eight powers* freely.

FLYING TEMPLE

d6 *club-wielding cultists* doze in the shadows. When they worship, d6+6 cultists knock furiously on the *wooden columns*, a mass casting of *culture's drum*: everything here levitates, and gravity is halved in the temple complex.

SCALES OF JUDGMENT

d3 *captives* are shackled on the floor. Each day, the cultists make a great show of weighing one them for purity. Any found lacking (everyone) is tied to the feeding post for the *guardian* to eat.

CRIMSON TEMPLE

Statues with elephantine faces leer down at the black mica altar. Upon it lies an ivory *wand of distant cutting* (counts as sword, range 30 paces).

During worship, whichever elder cultist leads the ceremonies casts *bloodform*, turning into a writhing mass of snakes floating above the altar.

ELDER CULTISTS' CHAMBER

A *curtain* conceals the corridor to the secret door by the altar.

d6 cultists elders are sleeping in the narrow *wooden bed*, arms by their sides and stacked like firewood.

In the *chest* (along with some gold) is a *knife* made from the *guardian's* last tooth. It leaves bloodless, painless cuts; the cultists are covered in *nasty scars*, having used it to make flesh pockets all over their faces, arms, and bodies, one for each month of service.

CELLS

The doors to seven of these cells have been staked closed and contain *automatons*. They wait motionlessly and will react to disturbances by bashing at their doors. There is a 1 in 3 chance that a door gives way, allowing d3 automatons to emerge.

The *eighth cell* is an unlocked, private recuperation room for *Bascule*, a freshly cut *half brother*, who lies helplessly on a straw pallet. He moans and sobs, unless disturbed. (His twin did not survive.)

SNAKE PIT

A shallow, sand-filled pit crawls with d12, *blood-red serpents*. It is just deep enough to keep them in.

ROARING CANYON

The *thundering roar* from the river cavern prevents easy conversation.

This box canyon is *magically humid*, and anyone here for more than a few minutes becomes soaking wet.

Fist-sized *water spiders* hunt fish among the rushes; they will bite waders. Their bodies are glossy and red, and their venom causes uncontrollable twitching.

TRILEMMA ADVENTURES

RED SERPENTS OF BLOOD

The air in the caverns is alive with the presence of ‘the beast,’ an evil power deep belowground. Exposed skin tingles, itches.

Any **fresh blood** that touches the air (e.g., from wounds) animates instantly, becoming a ruby-red serpent.

The blood of a whole person, dead from mortal cuts, will produce d6 serpents each the size of an arm. Smaller injuries produce smaller serpents.

The serpents are venomous, agitated, and keen to return below to join with the beast. They do this by slithering into the river of the Guardian Cave and swimming upstream, attacking anyone that impedes them.

THE CULTISTS

The cultists are pale, thin, and except for their ages look nearly identical—like a chain of brothers from the venerable to the young. Most are visibly older on one side.

At any one time, thirty or so are out in nearby towns, working in disguise as laborers, stealing supplies or plotting abductions.

ALL FOR THE BEAST

The cult sees the red serpents and the magical rituals as compelling evidence of the power of this place. (If anyone doubts, they cut them on the hand.) Beyond feeding the **guardian**, they have



surprisingly little dogma except their one precept: everything they do is done ‘for the beast.’ They wash ‘for the beast,’ eat ‘for the beast,’ steal ‘for the beast,’ and sleep ‘for the beast.’

Once in a while they let a captive go, so long as they swear to secrecy, and to live the rest of their life ‘for the beast.’

HALF BROTHERS

Twice each year, the cultists choose one of their number and use the **tooth-knife** to splice him in half. Each half has a 3 in 4 chance of survival and slowly regrows a matching other half.

The process is painless, but deeply unsettling, and the cultists do not relish the year it takes to become whole.

THE ELDER PLOT

The five eldest cultists (wisps of gray hair, bisected by wrinkling pink scars) take turns serving as high priest and leading the worship ceremonies.

They know that ‘the beast’ is not the **guardian**, but a great power deep in the stone below. They plot to snare the **guardian** and cut it in two (as they do themselves), all the better to serve the beast. They don’t know this won’t work.

AUTOMATONS

The skull-headed automatons left here by Seree sorcerers are tall and deliver wicked blows with brass **axes or maces**, but their wood is dry and brittle.

Made from servitor-acolytes, they **obey** any simple, loud command. The elder cultists know this and will call them to defend against attackers.

Inside the skull of each automaton is a thumb-sized ‘wizard flower’ of **topaz** (10% chance of emerald), its surface furred with fractal spurs.

THE GUARDIAN

The guardian is a giant, orca-sized salamander, stone gray but for **glowing**

blue flecks along its back. Its shovel-like head is battered and scarred from a hundred battles, with four beady eyes staring out from deep pits. A mane of human arms encircles its head.

It is intelligent, educated, and curious. As long as nobody steps foot in the cavern, it will happily converse.

In ranged combat, it uses the **lights of oos**, **vulture’s drum**, and **blood-form** to bewilder enemies. Close up, it uses **oaken grip** (from any of its limbs, or its tail) to seize enemies, then **bites**.

THE GUARDIAN’S BITE

Though now toothless, the guardian’s bite is magical, bloodlessly severing limbs. Instead of wounds, it leaves behind puckered skin. If it gets a whole arm, it will regurgitate it later to add to its ‘mane.’ Other body parts it digests.

A horrible, vibrating phantom limb sensation persists for d6 months—indefinitely for arms the guardian adds to its mane. If limbs are somehow retrieved, they reattach just by placing them in contact with their original root.

GUARDIAN DEATH

If the guardian is slain, the body quivers and splits apart. A great red tarantula the size of a pony bursts from the carcass, glistening and steaming, the work of the beast to pervert the guardian. The tarantula will do everything in its power to escape upstream.

THE EIGHT POWERS

The Column of Red Might is inscribed with eight spells.

Mason’s Hand—a touch opens a small, precise crack in stone or metal, growing by a hand’s breadth each minute.

Numbfinger—a touch from vibrating fingertips deadens a whole limb.

Oaken Grip—the caster’s grip transforms into mighty, immobile tree roots until they voluntarily let go.

Vulture’s Drum—a frantic drumming rhythm which levitates the drummer upwards until they stop drumming.

A gentler rhythm slows descent to a safe speed.

Bloodform—the caster explodes into a mass of 12 writhing, blood-red serpents. Lasts for d6 minutes.

Lights of Oos—blue flecks glow brightly on the caster’s skin; anyone looking at them can see nothing but their dancing afterimage for d6 minutes.

Slinger’s Lung—the caster coughs up a violent spray of small lead pellets, fast enough (at five paces) to pierce skin or damage unprotected eyes.

Algion’s Bifurcation—a random half (top/bottom, left/right, front/back) of the caster’s body sticks with iron strength to whatever it touches; the other half becomes magically frictionless and ungrippable. With concentration, the caster can control which half is which.

d6	Encounters (Each Area)
1	A worn down, legless automaton drags itself along the floor
2	d2 cultists, going to or from the stores for something to eat
3	d3 cultists debating how best to snare the guardian in loud whispers
4	a frantic red serpent, somehow escaped from the snake pit
5	avalanche of knocking sounds from d12 cultists worshipping in the flying temple
6	d6+1 cultists in the dress of nearby settlements returning to the caves with d3 captives