

THE HALLS OF



ARDEN VUL

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Author's Foreword

Arden Vul appeared as a hazy gleam in my eye in 2009. I was returning to gaming after a ten-year hiatus and, as someone who had been transformed by reading of the Fellowship's trek through Moria, it seemed only fitting that my new campaign should feature a tent-pole megadungeon. At the outset I only had a couple of vague ideas for what my dungeon should feature: 1) 'at least' ten levels, 2) a 'blasted ziggurat' on the bottom level, 3) some sort of demon boss as a culmination of the dungeon, and 4) enough adventuring space that a typical party could never hope to clear it out.

From these vague beginnings, Arden Vul took a long time to conceive, map and write. I had spent several years as a lurker on-line, passively absorbing wisdom from such OSR luminaries as Allan Grohe, Trent Foster, Gabor Lux, Al Krombauch, James Maliszewski, and many others. My plan was to just start mapping and let things proceed from there. And so the first maps I drew eventually came to comprise what is now Level 3. My procedure was pretty simple: I'd draw some cool designs, and only then begin to think about who might have created them and for what purpose. Keying also began with Level 3. Levels 2 and 4 followed, since they were conceptually linked to Level 3. Level 1 was written later, as a 'starter' level for brand new characters. Levels 5-10 and the sub-levels proceeded mostly in order, since by the time I got around to them I had already established a pretty good sense of which factions and regions needed to be placed in which order. Those early levels were the easiest to write, as they followed some pretty standard dungeon tropes: lost crypts, factions of low-to-middle level opponents, hints about deeper levels, etc. It was also the case that I had no problem with skipping a room or series of rooms if I didn't know what should happen there, only returning once inspiration hit or once I realized I needed to link an upper level to a lower one. The lower levels were more difficult to key (and slower, as well!), since they needed to satisfactorily link up with the ideas and content that I'd laid out in the first few levels. Joe Browning was incredibly patient with this process, accepting that the writing process for such a large, complex, and integrated dungeon would be different from that required by a 32-page module.

I took inspiration from a wide array of literature, art, mythology, and previous gaming products. The entire setting of Arden Vul is basically an unlikely mashup of elements of the Byzantine Empire and Moorcock's *Melniboné*. General inspiration comes from the awesome NG product, *Rappan Athuk*, and from Jennell Jaquays' *Caverns of Thracia*, which remains for me a master example of level design. My beastmen are a clear homage to Gygas's Old Guard Kobolds (with a twist, though). Peter Mullen's image of a

giant, horned skeleton sitting in a chair in front of a pile of corpses (appearing on the first printing of *Swords and Wizardry*) provided the inspiration for my giant rudishva skeletons. The library of Thoth is infested with critters inspired by a Scott Lynch short story. An NPC on level 8 is a thinly-disguised biologist friend of mine. Al Krombauch's (sadly now-defunct) blog "Behind the Black Gates" gave me inspiration for the iconic Arden Vul location, the Obsidian Gates. I even reskinned a medieval Arthurian legend for one encounter!

I can't close without expressing some deeply felt thanks. First, this product would not exist without Andreas Claren. Not only did he push me to consider showing it to publishers, and not only has he patiently drawn and redrawn all the maps, he has been a font of personal and gaming advice for over a decade. Truly, Andreas is an amicus optimus. Second, I owe a massive debt to Joe Browning. I'm still amazed that he was willing to take a chance on an unknown author for a project this big! Since he came on board, his genius for editing – both copy-editing and the more challenging task of improving the author's ideas and execution – has been nothing short of miraculous. For support and advice, I must also thank Jon Hershberger, Stuart Marshall, and Scot Hoover. The players in my home campaign – Chad B., Matt, Katie, Olav, Randall, Chad R., Greg, Ethan, and Byron – also deserve thanks. Their clever and sometimes ornery play has frequently resulted in redesigns that have made the product better. Finally, I must thank my wife, Anne, and my daughter, Katie, for letting Arden Vul hang over our lives for the past ten years.

Richard Barton
March 7th, 2020

Rick thanks the following playtesters:

Home Campaign: Matt "Balthazar" Watson, Chad "Wicktrimmer" Bowser, Chad "Grimley" Rohrbacher, Randall "Callista" Hayes, Katie "Aelin" Barton, Greg "Maggie (for now)" Grieve, Ethan "Drombaush" Moore, Olav "Cleo" Rüppell, Byron "Abardar" Grimes, Mike "Adric" Watson, Dustin "I came to throw down!" Cranford, Ben "Jimmy" Fowler.

Others: Andreas Claren, Rafe Smt, Rodrigo Ventura Merg, Sage Barton, Heinrich Helms, Maggie Quigley, Mary Valante, and the Boone Crew. Kevin O'Brien, Kevin Dorn, Jimmy Honeycutt, Chris Helland, Kenetha Miller, Greg Grieve, Chad Bowser, and Russell.



Cartographer's Foreword

I first met Rick Barton in the mid-2000s at the Necromancer Games forum where I often used to hang around at that time. Both being music aficionados, we originally got into contact about music there, and only after a while started talking about gaming. Rick told me that even though he hadn't gamed anymore since several years, he was in the process of designing a multiple level dungeon. The snippets that he shared with me about it sounded intriguing, and after I expressed interest in it, he asked me whether I would like to take a look at a few maps and notes that he had already done.

After looking at the pencil-drawn maps and the accompanying notes that he sent me, I immediately realized that this was an uncut gem of a beauty that to me as a hobby cartographer was like the Arkenstone to the dwarves of Middle Earth. I had never before seen anything so beautifully convoluted and perfectly designed in a non-linear way, except for Jennell Jaquays' maps in Dark Tower and Caverns of Thracia, which to this day both count among the top five of my all-time favorite dungeon adventures. I tried to convince Rick that this had the potential of becoming a superior gaming product and that it cried out to be published. It was obvious that he had never thought about this possibility before and, being the humble person that he is, at first seemed to be reluctant of the thought, but I begged him to allow me to render his maps so they might better shine in all their beauty, and also to help him in finding a possible publisher, and finally he gave in.

Over the next ten years, rendering the 38 maps that make up The Halls of Arden Vul was the most demanding and most satisfying mapping job that I had ever done and likely ever will. It fills me with pride and joy to have been a part in the creative process of bringing Arden Vul to life, and I never ceased to admire Rick's ingenuity and creativity, his vast knowledge, and the incredibly fast output of high-quality gaming material, all perfectly well-written. Over time, Rick and I have become close friends, even visiting each other in the US and Germany, and I'm looking forward to working together with him on new projects for the World of Magae setting.

In the good tradition of saying *Thank You*, I want to thank my wife Bettina for being patient with my gaming obsessions over all these years. I also want to thank my son Lucas who turned out to be a talented artist and provided a few wonderful drawings to this product. Thank you to all my gaming buddies out there who helped me with comments and insights during the whole process, especially Heinrich Helms and Rafael San Miguel. And finally thank you to Rick Barton and Joe Browning for letting me be part of this.

Andreas Claren
March 7th, 2020

Publisher's Foreword

Out of the blue, way back in June of 2013, I was approached by Moritz Mehlem, a steady Expeditious Retreat Press customer, and Stuart Marshall, editor of the First Edition retroclone OSRIC, about a manuscript they'd stumbled across and fell in love with. They wanted to know if I'd be interested in taking a look at it and perhaps even publishing it. I agreed—I'm always willing to look at manuscripts—and when they put me in contact with the author who then passed along the first partial draft and companion maps, I was stunned by what was before me.

Firstly, you don't get many RPG publishing inquiries that *begin* with a 400+page manuscript submission. Secondly, and most importantly, you simply don't get submissions that, while still quite incomplete, are already leaps and bounds ahead of the standard adventure module fare. The early Arden Vul manuscript was good. *Very good*. Somehow, I'd lucked into the single most amazing thing I believe I will ever publish and it just landed on my virtual doorstep with a polite knock and a calm, "Hey, we think you're going to like this."

Describing Arden Vul to someone who hasn't read it is a difficult endeavor. It is a megadungeon, yes, but it's more than that. It's also a campaign setting, yes again, but it's more than that too. It took me several years before I finally hit on the right metaphor to describe the core of the work: Arden Vul is the banquet of role-playing modules, but it not just any banquet, it is the Manchu-Han Imperial Feast of dungeons. It is not merely the size that is impressive, although there are none larger, nor is it the resounding delicacy of the servings, although there are no dungeons more fiendishly interconnected thematically and texturally. No, Arden Vul is all these things, yes, but it is one thing in particular.

Arden Vul, the *real* Arden Vul, is the moment when you realize you're enjoying the most amazing meal you've ever had and there are still **90 more courses to go**. Arden Vul is *that* moment—that exquisite moment when you are ecstatically transported into another realm and can hardly wait to find out how everything else interconnects. When you want nothing more than to fully and deeply relish the moment where you are, but yet you also crave to know how things all work out in the end.

I remember when it happened to me, and I'm smiling knowing what's in store for you. For now, you are a member of an elite club and you have the enviable pleasure of taking the first bite of the massive fantasy gaming banquet that is Arden Vul. As you keep eating, you too will reach that point where suddenly it all starts to make a deeper sense, when suddenly you become awestruck by what has been created and laid before you, by the sheer unrelenting audacity of the work.

There will be a moment when you realize that you are one of the luckiest people: you have experienced a singular soaring vision and the unarguable masterpiece of old-school dungeon design. You'll push back from the table, full to brimming over, and the servers will continue to line up the next courses while you marvel at the bounty.

Bon Appétit!

Joseph Browning
Expeditious Retreat Press
March 7th, 2020

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Who has not heard rumors of the lost city of Arden Vul? During the glory days of the Archontean Empire, now 1,200 years in the past, Arden Vul was a small, but important, wealthy and secretive imperial center located atop a 1,500'-tall cliff at the head of Burdock's Valley. Dominated by the imperial administration itself, as well as by the great temples of Thoth and Set, the city attracted alchemists, scholars, priests and sorcerers by the droves. Seeking the lost secrets of long-dead civilizations as well as the mysterious element known as **arcanum** (see new magic items), the Archontes delved deeply - and secretly - within the mountain. Alas! The terrible civil war that rent the Archontean Empire, that is, the war of Sortians and Theosophs, led to the utter destruction of the city and the withdrawal of the imperial legions from the western continent of Irthuín.

Now, with the renaissance of imperial power, it is possible for well-equipped adventurers to make the long trek to Arden Vul from the exarchates of the coast. Tales of gold piled in imperial vaults, legendary magical artifacts resting in unspoiled crypts, and the fruits of the lost secrets of ancient imperial smiths and mages lying ripe for the picking are legion. Yet alongside the tales of lost treasures are other, more unsettling whispers. How could a lost city remain unlooted for more than a millennium? Surely only the existence of the cruelest of foes and unimaginable evil within the mountain can explain Arden Vul's unspoiled status. Only the bravest, the cleverest, and the luckiest of adventurers will survive to plumb the mysteries of Arden Vul.

After three hard days' march from the town of Newmarket, the setting sun illuminates a thunderous waterfall pouring down the fabled cliff face of Arden Vul. Two colossi carved into the cliff to the right of the waterfall stare stonily across the valley. A twinkle of sunlight catches on the rocks ... is it the spray from the falls? or could it be the glint of metal moving up the cliff? There's only one way to find out ... Adventure awaits!

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ARDEN VUL

The ruined city and dungeons Arden Vul were designed as part of the author's home-brewed world of Archontos. The history, names, cultural practices, and political background that define the dungeon thus reflect that setting. Still, it is easy enough to plunk Arden Vul into most other settings with a minimum of GM tweaking. All that's needed is a setting with ancient civilizations and brave adventurers willing to loot their buried treasures! The following text and time-line provides the briefest of overviews of the history and development of Arden Vul and, to a degree, the world around it (for more, see the World of Archontos appendix).

The site of Arden Vul has been inhabited for some 3,600 years. The first settlers were the inimical heqeti (see new monsters), who traveled here from their Underearth dwellings and built their great ziggurat to the demon prince Kauket. The rudishva arrived some 600 years later, bringing with them their servitor races

(the varumani, kaliyani, and varuda). In canonical Arden Vul, the rudishva are starfarers who arrived when their starship, the Shining Beacon of Glorious Heaven, crash-landed into the cliff of Arden Vul [Note: for those nervous about mixing sci-fi with their fantasy, the Customizing Arden Vul section provides suggestions on how to remove the sci-fi elements]. For the next 160 years, the rudishva dominated Arden Vul, pushing the heqeti back to the Underearth while attempting to engineer a way to escape the planet. The heqeti struck back some 2,800 years ago, destroying the rudishva hegemony almost overnight with deadly bio-weapons (slimes) and with the treacherous aid of the kaliyani. A remnant of the varumani escaped to found a new culture in the middle levels that survives to this day. The heqeti ruled in Arden Vul for the next 700 years.

While the struggle between heqeti and rudishva was transpiring below ground, the rise of the human Archontean empire was taking place on the surface. The lords of the city of Archontos struck an alliance with the seven princes of dragonkind (the Compact of Ennius) at about the same time that the rudishva arrived at Arden Vul. This alliance allowed the Archontes to unify the human cultures of their home island and to enslave the goblins of the same island; unification occurred roughly as the rudishva were (mostly) being exterminated in Arden Vul. For the next several centuries, the Archontes expanded across the Wine-Dark Sea, bringing the territories of Irthuín and Ostraliós under their rule. Eventually this expansion brought the Archontes - in the form of the heroes Arden and Vul - to discover the cliff of Arden Vul. A city was established on the cliff face 2,100 years ago, and the Archontes began exploring the caverns below. Making use of some found rudishva devices, the archons of Arden Vul began to push the heqeti back; this campaign culminated with the great victories of the archon Marius Tricotor, who drove the heqeti from their ziggurat. The varumani thegn offered fealty to the human archon, and for the next 975 years the Archontes reigned supreme. During this golden age, the Archontes delved deeply beneath the cliff, erecting tombs, temples, shrines, and administrative chambers therein (but failing to penetrate the Obsidian Gates). Ultimately rivalries within the empire, between the conservative forces known as the Thesosophs and radical egalitarians known as Sortians, broke into open conflict; the ensuing civil war crippled the Archontean empire, and the city of Arden Vul was sacked 1,210 years ago. Twenty years later, the emperor ordered the formal abandonment of Arden Vul and the withdrawal of all remaining legions from Irthuín.

A dark age for Archontos set in. The varumani became the dominant faction within Arden Vul, even as monsters moved into many of the darkened Halls. The heqeti returned to their ziggurat some 300 years ago, even as the Archontes returned in muted triumph to Irthuín. A formal Archontean expedition to reclaim Arden Vul, under the leadership of Adrienic, was dispatched from Narsileon 250 years ago; within a decade, it had foundered, destroyed in a foolish assault on the varumani court. One cohort of imperial soldiers were trapped and enslaved by the witch, Deino, who transformed them into beastmen.

In the present, the Halls are thus home to several vibrant and unusual ‘native’ factions: ferocious albino baboons led by quasi-intelligent 4-armed baboons and a deluded druid (Level 2); a small goblin community (Levels 3 and 5, and Sub-Level 4); the beastmen and Deino (Level 3); lizardmen (Sub-Level 4); the varumani thegn and his court (Level 7); and the heqeti with their terrible ziggurat of Kauket (Level 10). Interest in the Halls from the outside is also growing, with numerous parties eager to exploit the riches and hidden secrets of the Halls. Among these groups are the newly

reformed cult of Set (Levels 3 and 4), who have partially restored their ancient halls and shrine; a group of secretive Priscians, who claim (wrongly) to be the philosophical descendants of the ancient Sortians (Levels 3, 6, and 9); numerous sorcerers seeking **arcanum** (e.g., Kerbog Khan on Sub-Level 12, see new magic items); a band of evil halfling thugs (Level 3), a group of renegade kaliyani who have fled their Underearth city to seek their ancient heritage (see Sub-Level 9); and a sect of fearsome lone knights led by their mysterious Master Malachite (Sub-Level 10).

TIMELINE OF ARDEN VUL AND ARCHONTOS

AEP = ‘from the pact of Ennius’; SP = ‘before the pact’

Archontean Reckoning (see World of Archontos appendix)	Approx. years in past	Important Event
2993 AEP	0	Present
2992 AEP	1	Phlebotomas Plumthorn (3-5) seizes some of the entry halls of Level 3
2990 AEP	3	Kronos Kettle-Belly and Estelle establish a roadhouse named the Sign of the Broken Head in the ruined city of Arden Vul (see AV-22)
2978 AEP	15	The Set cult in Arden Vul makes contact with the kaliyani
2972 AEP	21	Tsilliv (SL9-77) leads a group of renegade kaliyani to Arden Vul and founds the Twelfth Consortium (see Sub-Level 9)
2968 AEP	25	Lady Alexia Basileon (AK-2) leads a sept of the Knights of the Azure Shield to a tiny Thorcin community named Gosterwick, located near the falls of Arden Vul. The knights restore an ancient fortress (the Azure Keep) and Lady Alexia renames the community Vetucaster; she proceeds to expand the community rapidly, offering residence, citizenship, and services to adventurers and others
2943 AEP	50	The archmage Nerub Null, one of the secretive Priscians, arrives in Arden Vul searching for Sortian lore and power (see 9-64)
2936 AEP	57	The arch-mage Cerbactos Kalthetos arrives in Arden Vul, locates the medical pod of the Beacon, and transforms himself into Kerbog Khan (see SL12-25)
2900 AEP	93	A group of Set cultists re-colonizes areas of Level 4
2810 AEP	183	Alarmed at the threat posed by the beastmen, Narbisto the Huge persuades the several tribes of goblins living in Arden Vul (descendants of Archontean slaves) to unite. Narbisto naturally becomes the first Grand King of the United Goblins
2784 AEP	209	The Order of Priscians is founded in Archontos
2759 AEP	234	Deino (3-158) enslaves a kentarchia of the 3 rd Cohort of the Imperial Tagmata as it retreats from the disaster of the Cave of Blood (7-76), and transforms them into the beastmen
2759 AEP	234	The Archontean attempt to recolonize Arden Vul ends in complete failure, as Adrienic’s forces are destroyed by Girbala, the 31 st thegn of the varumani, in a massacre at the Cave of Blood (7-76)
2743 AEP	250	A dragon is spotted in the skies west of Narsileon for first time in centuries
2742 AEP	251	Emperor Phocion IV dispatches an expedition led by Adrienic to reoccupy the halls of Arden Vul. With Adrienic are several contingents of imperial soldiers, including the 2 nd Legion of scutarii and the 3 rd Cohort of the Imperial Tagmata. Among Adrienic’s chief advisors are Lankios, Kaitor, and Guivrel (c.f. 1-6 and 5-11)
2718 AEP	275	Archonteans settlers found a new town in Burdock’s Valley, naming it Noviomagus. It is colloquially known as Newmarket, and becomes the largest community in the valley
2682 AEP	311	The Heqeti return to Arden Vul and begin restoring the ziggurat of Kauket (10-32 to 10-37)
2661 AEP	332	The secret revival of the cult of Set commences in Archontos

2639 AEP	354	Empress Juliana X Bellatrix leads a triumphant Archontean return to Irthuín; imperial forces reoccupy Narsileon and Arcturos, which are named the seats of Archontean exarchates
2495 AEP	498	Livraka, the 26 th thegn of the varumani, establishes a system of lifts along the Great Chasm; the system comes to be known as the Troll Lifts
2493 AEP	500	Deino arrives in Arden Vul and lays claim to the abandoned administrative centers of the temple of Thoth (3-158)
2450 AEP	543	The Archontean Silver Age begins with a renewed period of military expansion
2400-1900 AEP	593 to 1103 years ago	The Archontean Dark Ages commence; the empire retracts to Mithruin and the Grain Islands and much ancient knowledge is lost
2093 AEP	900	Javaka, the 20 th thegn of the varumani, re-establishes control of Middle Halls of Arden Vul
1991 AEP	1002	Niravairi members of the Order of Planar Explorers searching for the god-corpse of Horus use Sub-Level 1 as a base for exploring the Astral Plane
1855 AEP	1138	The Archontean empire formally adopts a new pantheon of deities, known as the Twelve (see Gods of Magae in the World of Archontos appendix)
1839 AEP	1154	The worship of Set is proscribed within the Archontean empire
1833 AEP	1160	The embassy of the elven lord, Gilleshorn Ellagelsson, to Archontos ends in disaster, when a mob kills him in the streets; many elves withdraw from imperial lands
1818 AEP	1175	Emperor Drusus VII Fusus withdraws the weakened legions from Irthuín, abandoning imperial citizens in Narsileon, Arcturos and elsewhere; jubilant Thorcinga occupy these worried cities
1803 AEP	1190	Emperor Drusus VI Tenax orders the abandonment of the city of Arden Vul; the archon, Pellas the Last, oversees the evacuation
1801 AEP	1192	The arch-mage, Kel Bormol, is imprisoned in his own chess set by his rival, Hithra the Paleologue (see SL3-2A)
1793 AEP	1200	The war of Sortians and Theosophs comes to an end
1783 AEP	1210	The city of Arden Vul is brutally sacked by dragons and renegade Sortians during the war of Sortians and Theosophs. The archon, Uriel Basileon, dies in her palace. The varumani revolt under the mountain, expelling the Archonteans from the Lower Halls
1775 AEP	1218	The city of Agoreon, the Archontean empire's 'second capital' located on the edge of Ostraios, is sacked by Theosophic troops during the War of Sortians and Theosophs
1729 AEP	1264	Alcibiades the Hunter, archon of Arden Vul, orders the priesthoods to arrest all suspected Sortians. Berenib, the high priestess of Bastet, refuses, and the Bastet cult flees to Level 8
1713 AEP	1280	Priscus Pulcher, the leader of the Sortians, is executed by Gordion ('the Impaler'), archon of Arden Vul
1701 AEP	1292	Zhorak, the great dwarven smith (see 8-97), dies inside Arden Vul, although his death is unknown to imperial authorities
1698 AEP	1295	Emperor Vaslotus IV formally accuses Priscus Pulcher of stealing the Compact of Ennius from the imperial treasury, thus setting off the War of Sortians and Theosophs
1687 AEP	1306	The Order of Thoth votes to democratize its membership following pressure by Priscus Pulcher and other soi-disant Sortians. Certain conservative members of the Order of Thoth announce the formation of the first new collegium, the New Imperial Academy
1680-850 AEP	1313 to 2143 years ago	The Archontean Golden Age
1679 AEP	1314	Priscus Pulcher emerges as a leading voice seeking to democratize the teaching of magic throughout the Archontean empire; he becomes one of the most important leaders of the emerging Sortian party
1588 AEP	1405	Emperor Basil III Piso breaches the Compact of Ennius, ending a long relationship between the emperors and the Seven Princes of Dragonkind
1123 AEP	1870	Melok-Ri slays all his human spawn and founds his third order, the Order of the Sun-Scarred Knights. Melok-Ri becomes known as Master Malachite (see Sub-Level 10)

1051 AEP	1942	Marius Tricotor, the archon of Arden Vul, defeats the heqeti and drives them from Level 10 into the Underearth
1043 AEP	1950	Refta, thegn of the varumani, submits to the archon, Marius Tricotor; the varumani will pay tribute to the Archonteans for almost 800 years
901 AEP	2092	Melok-Ri forms his second paramilitary order, the 'New Harmonious Brotherhood,' this time using human recruits
893 AEP	2100	The city of Arden Vul founded by imperial decree, and the emperor appoints Fretevus of Haldur as the first archon of the city
829 AEP	2164	The Archontean heroes, Arden and Vul, discover the place of power that later bears their name, namely the cliff and cavern systems of Arden Vul
523 AEP	2470	The Archonteans establish the thematic system, which includes exarchates located on Irthuín at Narsileon and Arcturos
483 AEP	2510	The Archontean empire quietly abandons efforts to colonize Borealios
471 AEP	2522	The Archontean empire initiates the colonization of Borealios
417 AEP	2576	The Archontean empire conquers the Grain Islands and settles numerous halflings there
357 AEP	2636	The Archontean empire establishes the city of Agoreon on a set of islands located just off the coast of Ostralios
303 AEP	2690	The Archontean empire establishes its second province on Irthuín, with capital at Arcturos
276 AEP	2717	The Archontean empire establishes its first province on Irthuín, centered at Narsileon
197 AEP	2796	The Emperor, ruling from Archontos, completes the unification of Mithruin
193 AEP	2800	The rudishva hegemony in Arden Vul is destroyed in a sneak attack planned by the heqeti and the kaliyani. The varuda are mostly slain, while the varumani survivors flee; eventually ending up on Level 7. The kaliyani depart for a new home in the Underearth. The Harmonious Brotherhood is dissolved
179 AEP	2814	The rudishva, Melok-Ri, founds his first paramilitary organization, the Harmonious Brotherhood, with the help of Isok-Crix
77 AEP	2916	The rudishva lead the varumani and varuda in a war against the heqeti, driving them from the majority of Arden Vul
36 AEP	2957	Unable to reassemble the Beacon, the rudishva delve quasi-permanent dwellings within Arden Vul (e.g., the Midnight Road of Level 5) and commence long-term scientific programs designed to develop a new fuel source
32 AEP	2963	A rudishva starship, the <i>Shining Beacon of Glorious Heaven</i> , crashes into a mountain on Magae; the location of the crash is later known as Arden Vul
1 AEP	2992	Seven sorcerer-lords of Archontos swear oaths and a blood-pact with the Seven Princes of Dragonkind; one of these sorcerer-lords, Ennius, assumes the title of Emperor. The pact comes to be known as the Compact of Ennius
371 SP	3364	The heqeti construct the ziggurat of Kauket beneath Arden Vul (10-32 to 10-37)
490-510 SP	3483 to 3503 years ago	The heqeti construct the system of pukel-manders within Arden Vul (see new magic items)
606 SP	3599	The heqeti arrive in Arden Vul from Underearth and construct their first fanes to Rimmaq-Isfet and Kauket

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

When I began the decade-long process of creating the Halls, I had four principles in mind. The first was that the dungeon needed to be large. This meant not merely big, but truly large. Inspired by a spate of message-board threads and blog-posts about mega-dungeons, Arden Vul was intended from the beginning to be one of the largest mega-dungeons published for old-school gaming. To

our delight, we appear to have met this goal. The Halls comprise more than 2,000 keyed encounter areas spread across ten main levels and fifteen sub-levels. That's a lot of adventuring! While not quite on the scale of the Mythic Underworld beloved of some old-schoolers, the Halls are so large that they ought to be properly understood more as a campaign product than as a typical dungeon

adventure. The scale of the Halls and the variety of adventuring experiences available within them ensure that no two groups will encounter the Halls in the same way. In fact, the same group might well be able to run several different parties through the Halls and never replicate their own experiences.

The second guiding principle behind this product was coherence. A dungeon might be large, but its size won't mean much if it doesn't also offer a gripping and inspiring context and setting for adventure. With Arden Vul we have attempted to provide a rich backstory (well, really, many rich backstories) which adventuring parties can use as inspirations for unlocking secrets, confronting powerful foes, and 'liberating' great treasures. What is more, the product is self-referential in numerous subtle ways. This means that actions taken by adventurers one level can and will affect their adventures elsewhere in the Halls, sometimes in ways that they may not even realize. We have provided numerous cross-references which the GM can use to help keep track of how foolish or clever actions in one place might affect actions taken elsewhere. In this sense, the Halls are a living place, and the adventurers only one of many inputs that affect how the site evolves and changes. Some GMs and some parties may be less interested in backstory, history, and/or interconnections. That's fine. The Halls work perfectly well without paying attention to such matters. But for those GMs wishing to get the most out of the product, that background is fully available, both in the appendices (World of Archontos, Arden Vul books) and in some of the introductory chapters (Factions of Arden Vul).

The third guiding principle was that the Halls ought to offer a loving homage to the tropes of old-school gaming. The Halls attempt therefore to offer plenty of the familiar in terms of monsters, traps, puzzles, and treasures while simultaneously offering new interpretations of and variations on those tropes, all intended to challenge even the most grizzled grognard. So, while there are some familiar motifs (like pit traps), there are also scores of new traps, designed solely for this product. Similarly, while many of the foes found in the original three monster books can be encountered here, so too can some 200 new monsters, all designed in the old-school vein. Other old-school tropes abound. The Halls are dangerous. PCs will undoubtedly die. Such is the way of it! In addition, while the product generally follows the old trope that dungeon levels get tougher the deeper they are from the surface, this is only a guideline and not a rule. Indeed, there's nothing more annoying than players confidently asserting that since it's the 2nd level of the dungeon, they can expect to face only 1st or 2nd-level monsters! PCs adventuring in the Halls will need, to the contrary, to be extremely cautious; they will need to gauge each situation carefully, and be prepared to flee if (as is likely) they stumble across a hidden location that is clearly out of their league. Of course we have not been purposefully sadistic. In most cases, it should be clear from context clues that PCs have stumbled into dangerous areas, even if it is 'only' on Level 3.

The fourth guiding principle was that the Halls should offer the opportunity for lots of styles of role-playing. For those who prefer combat, the Halls have plenty of opportunities to 'use the axe', and several of the possible culminating encounters provide suitably epic, campaign-defining combats. And yet the Halls are also ripe for negotiation, plotting, and politics: twelve factions of sentient creatures can be found within, many of which are willing to negotiate with like-minded parties. In addition, the Halls contain two major trading centers, a strange "inn" for travelers,

and an arena, all of which can serve as neutral grounds in which parties can catch their breath, heal, and exchange goods and information. For those parties who like to unravel secrets, the Halls provide fertile ground for investigation; such investigations are, in most cases, not merely satisfying to the players' sense of curiosity, they also can prove extremely lucrative to the PCs of such players. Ultimately, the Halls are designed to provide a little bit of everything (or, perhaps, a lot of everything!). In so doing they attempt, humbly, to emulate the great works of the early designers of dungeons.

NOTE ON DESIGNATION OF KEYED LOCATIONS

All keyed locations in this product are designated by a two part code: the first part is a prefix indicating the chapter or level in which the location may be found, while the second is the numbered location within that chapter or level. So, for instance, the famous Obsidian Gates are designated as area 5-6D; this means that they may be found on Level 5, and in area 6D of that level. Similarly, AV-15 indicates the great pyramid of Thoth found in the ruined city of Arden Vul; it is found in the AV (city of Arden Vul) chapter, under area 15.

STARTING LEVELS FOR PCs

The Halls of Arden Vul should provide challenges and fun to PCs of any level from 1st to 12th. Those GMs wishing to start a new campaign with 1st-level PCs should be forewarned, however: the design principles described above mean that fragile new characters need to be exceptionally cautious in adventuring within Arden Vul; the multiple entrance points to the dungeons and multiple interconnections between levels make it entirely possible for cocky PCs to quickly end up in areas that greatly exceed their capabilities. Even in those areas more appropriate to low-level parties, the design principles sketched above mean that PCs should be careful in exploration; they should be ready to flee if (or when) they encounter something beyond their capabilities. Of course, these points lie at the heart of old-school play, and experienced players will know exactly what to expect.

New 1st-level parties should probably have received the rumor that the most accessible entry point is through the Pyramid of Thoth (AV-15). Such information would lead them to Level 3, which was always intended to be the 'default' starting level for 1st-level PCs. If the players are relatively inexperienced, however, the GM might wish to guide them towards Level 1 (perhaps by Kronos Kettle-Belly in AV-22, whose men may have discovered the stairs at AV-17), which was specifically designed as a 'starter' level for players new to the pleasures of old-school gaming. While such weak parties might well discover other enticing secret entrances to the Halls, they should probably know better than to tempt the fates by descending too deeply into the dangers below the mountain.

The GM could also easily drop the Halls into an existing campaign. PCs who have already gained a few experience levels (2nd to 4th levels) will be able to breathe more easily in the lower levels (Level 1, Level 3, Sub-Level 3), and will find Levels 2 and 5

challenging. PCs who have already reached the first edition 'sweet spot' (level 4-7) will find the lower levels relatively easy (at least in most sections), and might be encouraged to delve more deeply, perhaps by revealing one of the direct routes from the surface or cliff face to the middle levels (Level 4, Level 5, Level 6, etc.). Still, as noted above, each level has a mixture of challenges, so even more powerful parties might find themselves needing to work carefully to pass through portions of the lower Halls.

While keeping in mind the principle that every level will have a few challenges above what might be expected, the following chart offers some suggested PC levels for a few of the most accessible upper levels of Arden Vul.

Arden Vul Location	Suggested PC Experience Level	Typical Entry Point(s) to Arden Vul Location
Ruined City (AV)	1 st to 4 th	EX-8 to AV-1
Pyramid of Thoth (UP)	1 st to 3 rd	AV-15
Tower of Scrutiny (TS)	6 th to 9 th	AV-8
Level 1	1 st	AV-17
Level 2	3 rd or 4 th	AV-14, or 3-21
Level 3	1 st to 4 th	AV-15/UP-5, or EX-11, or 1-21
Level 4	2 nd to 5 th	EX-15, or several entrances from Level 3
Level 5	3 rd to 5 th	3-12, or 3-7, or the Great Chasm (5-34)
Sub-Level 3	2 nd to 3 rd	EX-12, or 2-56F, or 3-123
Sub-Level 8	4 th to 7 th	EX-16
Sub-Level 13	6 th to 9 th	EX-17
Sub-Level 15	3 rd to 6 th	AV-46, or 2-33

GENERAL CONSTRUCTION FEATURES

The subterranean regions of Arden Vul have been worked for thousands of years by a series of different peoples. Each of these cultures left a distinctive imprint on the physical space of the Halls. The descriptions below proceed from the first delvers within the halls to the latest.

In what follows, however, it should be remembered that the central feature of the Halls is not man-made at all, but is rather a natural feature, the Great Chasm. Extending more than 1,500 feet between Level 2 and Level 9, the conical Chasm provides the most direct (but dangerous!) means of traveling vertically throughout the dungeons. Unsurprisingly, the Chasm also provided the starting point for most of the cultures that delved beneath the cliff face: heqeti, rudishva, Archonteans and varumani typically used the Chasm as the focal point for their subterranean halls.

Heqeti

The heqeti were the first to delve within Arden Vul. Arriving from the Underearth about 3,600 years ago, they erected the

colossal ziggurat of Kauket within the mephitic marsh (10-15) and colonized the floor of the Great Chasm (i.e., Level 9). Limited delving of upper sectors of the Great Chasm, including the pukel-manders (see new magic items), the Obsidian Gates (5-6D), the Hall of Forty Pillars (5-6), and an upper temple to Kauket (7-79), proceeded. The heqeti were driven from Arden Vul twice, first by the rudishva in 32 AEP and again by the Archonteans in 1942 AEP. They returned 300 years ago (2682 AEP) and immediately restored the ziggurat; they now seek to reclaim their former dwellings.

Stonework: Most of the heqeti construction is ancient, dating to the period between 32 and 1942 AEP. Surfaces are worked (with hand tools), but not smoothed; indeed, surfaces have a pebbled, bumpy texture. The heqeti also spread a special non-lethal slime across these surfaces that gives them an oily, greasy feel.

Doors: Doors are stone and typically unlocked.

Ceiling Height: 10', unless otherwise indicated.

Sculpture and Art: The heqeti do carve statuary and relief images, but infrequently. When they do, the subject matter tends to be struggle against their enemies and/or images of their great dread lords, Kauket and Rimmaq-Isfet. The great pukel-manders (see new magic items) are indicative of the heavy, oppressive feel of heqeti artistic programs.

Locations: 2-48, 2-49, 2-56C, 3-51, 3-117, 4-51A, 4-51B, 4-74, 4-151A, 4-152, 5-6, 5-18, 5-25, 5-41, 5-42, 5-46 to 5-49, 5-52, 5-104, 6-1, 6-50, 6-51, 6-54, 6-68, 6-92 to 6-98, 6-104 to 6-107, 7-78 to 7-84, 7-138, 7-139, 8-25, 8-26, 8-76, 8-159, 8-162, 8-165, 9-31 to 9-48, 9-76 to 9-82, 9-108 to 9-126, all worked areas of Level 10, SL5-32, SL5-36 to SL5-42, SL6-4, SL6-6, SL6-35, SL9-27, SL9-30. Mention should be made of the pukel-manders scattered throughout the upper levels. Finally, although areas 6-41 to 6-43 and 6-55 to 6-91 were originally heqeti areas, they have been repurposed over the millennia and have thus lost some of the pebbling and most of the oiliness of typical heqeti chambers.

Rudishva

The rudishva arrived in 32 AEP when their starship, the Shining Beacon of Glorious Heaven (aka, the Beacon), crashed into the cliff, its matter-phased pieces scattered at various depths. Once it was clear that rescue was not imminent and that the Beacon would never fly again, the rudishva began constructing permanent dwellings. They drove the heqeti from the upper reaches of the Great Chasm and established a base on what is now Level 5, locating it behind the ancient heqeti Obsidian Gates. These dwelling were connected to the surviving modules of the Beacon by a network of teleportation nodes. As the years of exile turned into decades and the heqeti resistance stiffened, the rudishva established breeding nests for the varuda and growth tanks for the varumani (the Troll Pits, 5-132). With these additional forces, the rudishva went to war against the heqeti and drove them from Arden Vul (77 AEP). Over the next century, the rudishva expanded into other portions of the halls, delving new halls on Level 9 and elsewhere while hegemony scientists attempted to engineer a new propulsion formula for their shuttle craft (SL13-37). During these years, the heqeti returned in secret to Arden Vul. Allying themselves with the traitorous kaliyani, the heqeti launched a surprise attack on the rudishva hegemony in 193 AEP; the heqeti slimes were deadly, and wiped out the rudishva, the varuda, and half of the varumani. The rudishva halls have remained unoccupied ever since.

Stonework: The rudishva favored a modernistic, 'clean' style in which right angles were absent. All rudishva chambers and halls therefore have rounded corners and no ninety-degree angles. The style has the effect of rendering corridors tunnel-like and chambers ovoid. The surfaces of rudishva chambers are typically sheathed with highly polished marble, either in pure white or dark black; the sheathing is formed of octagonal tiles, which fit together perfectly without grout lines (thanks to the advanced mining and cutting tools available to the rudishva).

Doors: Rudishva doors are always 6'-diameter oval dilating irises made of grey plasteel. An oval panel 6" high is set into the wall on the right side of the door; this panel flickers with a colored light that runs successively through the color spectrum. Each door was originally installed with security protocols that allowed only those crewmen of a particular rank to open the door. In game terms this means that a rudishva identity plaque (see new technological items) of the correct color must be placed against the panel, at which point the plasteel irises open.

Ceiling Height: 12', unless otherwise indicated

Sculpture and Art: The rudishva did not typically adorn public areas with sculpture or painting, so most of the ancient areas connected to the survivors of the Beacon are featureless. A few exceptions exist, especially in areas connected with the kaliyani, as the kaliyani culture did favor sculptural art (see below). One important exception is the Midnight Road itself (5-91), along which runs a kaliyani-inspired frieze of complex, kinetic sculpture of writhing figures surrounded by floral and geometric patterns.

Locations: 3-39, 4-156, 4-157, 4-158, 5-30, 5-31, 5-53, 5-54, 5-84, 5-86 to 5-98, 5-105 to 5-138, 6-4, 6-5, 6-27 to 6-38, 6-95A, 6-99, 6-100, 6-102, 6-103, 6-109 to 6-111, 6-113 to 6-124, 6-162 to 6-164, 7-4 to 7-6, 7-35 to 7-44, 7-108 to 7-111, 7-143 to 7-146, 8-29, 8-35, 8-46 to 8-48, 8-51 to 8-53, 8-56, 8-59, 8-62, 8-157, 9-29 to 9-30, 9-88 to 9-97, SL2-2, SL2-3, SL6-3, SL6-27, SL6-32, SL6-37, SL9-41, SL9-41A, SL9-43 to SL9-49, SL9-52, SL9-53, SL10A-30 to SL10A-33, SL12-4 to SL12-12, SL13-37 to SL13-39, SL14-6 to SL14-14

Varumani

The varumani survivors fled the collapse of the rudishva hegemony in 193 AEP. After wandering in the middle levels for several decades, they finally settled into a series of caves halfway down the Great Chasm (Level 7). Over the following centuries they developed a powerful, if insular, society centered around the four clan-holds (7-17, 7-18, 7-25 and 7-26), the thegn's court (7-75), the audience hall (7-27), their 'great pit' (7-32), and a trading center known today as the Troll Market (7-76). As befit security personnel on the Beacon, the modern varumani have labored to ensure that entrance to their halls is protected by a handful of choke-points. Aside from the system of troll lifts developed close to 500 years ago, the varumani have seen little reason to expand beyond their carefully-guarded hold.

Stonework: The varumani halls feature carefully-worked and polished native stone (granite, mostly).

Doors: Varumani doors mimic Archontean ones; that is, they are formed of wood with iron bands for extra support.

Ceiling Height: Varumani ceilings are 10' high unless otherwise indicated.

Sculpture and Art: Influenced by long centuries as tributaries to the human archons, varumani art is clearly modelled on Archontean forms and styles. It includes brightly painted walls,

life-sized statues, the occasional fresco representing a thegn or some heroic feat of arms, etc. In terms of quality, though, varumani sculptors and painters are more enthusiastic than skilled.

Locations: 7-1, 7-8 to 7-33, 7-65 to 7-77

Archontean

The Archontean arrived at Arden Vul in the century after two Archontean heroes, Arden the Defender and Vul the Sorcerer, 'discovered' the area in 829 AEP. The surface city was chartered by imperial decree in 893 AEP, and, seeking arcanum (see new magic items) and ancient artifacts and knowledge, the Archontean began delving into the subterranean areas shortly thereafter. The powerful and wealthy temples of Thoth and Set were major pioneers in this effort, together developing much of Levels 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, and Sub-Levels 2, 3 and 8. Building projects sponsored by the (secular) imperial administration were responsible for developing sections of Levels 6, 7, 8, and 9, and Sub-Levels 4, 6, 7, and 13. Individual Archontean officials also developed tombs and other hidden retreats throughout the complex; two of the most significant were the famous tombs of the Drowned Canyon (SL6) and the almost unknown tomb of Isadora (SL11).

Stonework: The quality of Archontean masonry is generally high, with neatly trimmed native walls covered (originally) in plaster. Most plastered surfaces were painted with bright colors, with some carrying painted frescoes appropriate to the purpose of their chamber.

Doors: Doors are wood, with iron bands for support.

Ceiling Height: 10' unless otherwise indicated.

Sculpture and Art: The ancient Archontean favored representational art. As a result, important public chambers were typically plastered and then either painted with frescoes depicting scenes appropriate to the function of the chamber, or painted simply in a vibrant color. Sculpture was typically highly realistic, taking either the form of free-standing statues or of relief sculptures of varying depth. Modern Archontean art is frequently less realistic, although still representational, favoring wispy, elongated, ethereal depictions of idealized persons; it is typically found only in those areas occupied by the failed expedition of Adrienic (e.g., 5-15, 5-16, 5-19 to 5-24, etc.). It is possible for a viewer well-versed in ancient iconography to deduce the builders and purposes of individual chambers from the garb of figures depicted in frescoes: regions built by the priesthood of Thoth, for instance, will include images of priests in tall cylindrical headdresses and heavy vestments (in orange), as well as repeated use of ibis, baboon, and other appropriate images.

Locations: All of the ruined city (AV map), all of the Tower of Scrutiny (TS map), all of the Pyramid of Thoth (UP map), all of Level 1, all worked areas of Level 2 (except 2-48, 2-49, and 2-56C), all worked areas of Level 3 (except 3-39, 3-51, 3-117, and 3-192), 4-1 to 4-51, 4-52 to 4-62, 4-101 to 4-111, 4-118 to 4-120, 4-122 to 4-150, 4-159 to 4-164, 4-167 to 4-171, 4-177, 4-180, 4-181, 4-183, 4-185, 4-187, 5-1, 5-6 to 5-17, 5-19 to 5-24, 5-26 to 5-29, 5-35 to 5-40, 5-56 to 5-64, 5-66 to 5-81, 5-83, 5-85, 6-7 to 6-16, 6-18 to 6-20, 6-40, 6-44 to 6-49, 6-52, 6-53, 6-130 to 6-160, 7-100, 7-119 to 7-130, 7-136, 8-1, 8-3 to 8-21, 8-28, 8-30 to 8-34, 8-36 to 8-41, 8-69, 8-70, 8-77 to 8-79, 8-83 to 8-86, 8-95 to 8-107, 8-119 to 8-127, 8-133, 8-142 to 8-149, 8-168, 9-58 to 9-64, 9-98, and 9-100 to 9-107, SL2-1, SL3-2 to SL3-11, all worked areas of SL4, SL5-43 to SL5-47, SL6-2, SL6-5, SL6-7 to SL6-10, SL6-16, SL6-17, SL6-17A, SL6-20 to SL6-23, SL6-28, SL6-29, SL6-31, SL6-33, SL6-34, SL6-

36, SL6-38 to SL6-48, SL6-55, SL6-58 to SL6-63, SL6-65 to SL6-98, all of Sub-Level 7, SL8-9, SL8-13A, SL8-17 to SL8-24, SL10A-1 to SL10A-6, SL10A-12 to SL10A-28, all of Sub-Level 10B, all of Sub-Level 11, SL13-4 to SL13-27, SL14-1 to SL14-5, SL15-4, SL15-7 to SL15-10, SL15-13, SL15-17

Kaliyani

Although their ancestors were an important part of the rudishva hegemony that built sections of Level 5 (and elsewhere), the modern kaliyani have only a limited footprint in Arden Vul. Arriving in Arden Vul some twenty-one years ago (in 2972 AEP), Tsilliv’s band of renegades have developed a small consortium in the kaliyani style on Sub-Level 9. While they are eager to locate traces of their former presence in Arden Vul, they have so far been unwilling to expand beyond the well-guarded precincts of their new consortium.

Stonework: The kaliyani are expert stone carvers. Walls, ceilings and floors within the consortium are neatly worked, and all feature the distinctive “no 90-degree angles” style inherited from the ancient rudishva days. As noted below, the kaliyani prefer to carve low-relief sculptures into all stone surfaces, including floors (although they may place mats atop such carved floors to protect the ceremonial carvings).

Doors: Kaliyani doors are oval in the tradition of the ancient rudishva dilating iris doors, although kaliyani doors are made of stone and do not require identity plaques or high-technology to open. These doors are rarely equipped with locking mechanisms (an exception is SL9-73); most can be pushed or pulled open easily.

Ceiling Height: Ceilings are 15’ tall unless otherwise indicated.

Sculpture and Art: For public areas, the kaliyani favor busy, low-relief sculpture that covers every square inch of walls, floors and ceilings. The subject matter of such sculpture is typically kinetic, depicting kaliyani (and other allies) writhing in contest with foes; surrounding and interspersed among the action are floral and geometric images (e.g., 6-32, 6-33, SL9-60 to SL9-63, SL9-66, etc.). Private quarters are typically left un-carved. The kaliyani do produce statues, but rarely; their statues are designed to enhance the glory of a consortium, and are placed accordingly.

Locations: SL9-60 to SL9-77

ICONIC LOCATIONS

Although specific knowledge about the ruined city and dungeons of Arden Vul has mostly faded into oblivion over the last millennium, a few locations remain better known and exercise a talismanic attraction among the civilized peoples. These “iconic locations” are those which the cognoscenti might be expected to remember, even if in only a partial or even faulty manner. It should be noted that almost no common folk outside of Burdock’s Valley will know anything about Arden Vul; iconic locations are those likely to be known by sages, scholars working in the imperial or collegial libraries, and a handful of retired adventurers. The following list provides the current scuttlebutt about each location, that is, what makes each place ‘iconic’. In addition, the list describes the veracity of the scuttlebutt, and the degree to which the information is widespread (i.e., how prevalent it is).

Adventurers and sages are those mostly to have heard of the iconic locations. The GM should feel free to select the locations known by such NPCs to fit her/his needs. Still, if randomization

is desired, the following tables can be used to determine which iconic locations are known to a particular NPC. Table I ranks the chance of knowing about a location by the type of location; Table II provides an equal chance to know any of the locations.

Table I: Iconic Locations By Type

d20	Type	Possible Iconic Locations
1-9	Common	The Arena, the Forum of Set, the Glory of Thoth, the Great Cavern, the Great Hall, the Inn of the Lost, the Pyramid of Thoth
10-15	Uncommon	The Court of the Goblin King, the Great Chasm, the Howling Caves, the Obsidian Gates
16-18	Rare	The Drowned Canyon, the Hall of Forty Pillars, the Red Bridge, the Sundered or Imperial Span, the Well of Light
19-20	Esoteric	The Forge of Zhorak, the Troll Market, the Ziggurat

Table II: List of All Iconic Locations

d20	Location	d20	Location
1	The Arena	11	The Howling Caves
2	The Court of the Goblin King	12	The Inn of the Lost
3	The Drowned Canyon	13	The Obsidian Gates
4	The Forge of Zhorak	14	The Pyramid of Thoth
5	The Forum of Set	15	The Red Bridge
6	The Glory of Thoth	16	The Sundered or Imperial Span
7	The Great Cavern	17	The Troll Market
8	The Great Chasm	18	The Well of Light
9	The Great Hall	19	The Ziggurat
10	The Hall of Forty Pillars	20	Roll Twice, ignoring results of 20

The Arena (6-68)

The Scuttlebutt: A neutral ground deep within the mountain, where gladiatorial bouts are presided over by a fearsome undead warrior. It’s a good place to gain experience by fighting, as well as the best spot to gamble and seek information. Bring your purse, because the arena isn’t cheap. Although anyone can participate in arena bouts (if they dare), the house gladiators rarely lose. The Arena is hard to find within Arden Vul.

Veracity: Mostly accurate. The Arena Lord (6-85) is not undead, however, and the house gladiators do actually lose. The Arena Lord enforces peace within the Arena precincts, and anyone is permitted to participate ... if they dare. The Arena is actually easy to find, especially if one employs the Troll Lifts (e.g., 5-55 and 6-1)

Prevalence: Common

The Court of the Goblin King (SL4-23)

The Scuttlebutt: A powerful goblin refugee from Archontos holds court in set of halls located in the upper levels. The goblin

king's powerful sorcerers and ogre guards are the source of his power. The court is a swirling hotbed of intrigue, backstabbing, and information-trading. It's necessary to propitiate the goblin king in order to travel to the deeper levels, where the real wealth is to be found. The goblin court is best accessed through the pyramid.

Veracity: Partly accurate. The court of King Weskenim (SL4-22) is busy, but its rituals are mostly empty, and the king is eager to talk to (and impress) visitors. The goblin halls do not actually block access to the lower halls, although befriendng the goblins will make it easier to access the chasm and the Sundered Span. Many informants seem to have conflated the goblin court with the larger and more dangerous court of the varumani thegn (7-75).

Prevalence: Uncommon

The Drowned Canyon (SL6-24)

The Scuttlebutt: The Drowned Canyon is an El Dorado-like location, where the un-plundered tombs of ancient imperial officials lie ripe for the looting. Most informants will confidently claim that one of the great lost treasures of antiquity is definitely to be found there: e.g., the iron circlet of Ghanor, the bone ring of Jagri-Naz, the armor of Sulla, or any of the unique, named magic weapons (see new magic items). Of course, most of those rumors are not true. Reports about why the canyon is 'drowned' vary, with most speaking of a vast lake that covers the tomb entrances. Most reports claim that there is only one entrance to the canyon, and that it is to be found in a hidden location within the old temple precincts (e.g., Levels 3 or 4).

Veracity: Some of the general information is accurate, including access routes found at 3-87 and 5-115, but the information about specific treasures is entirely false.

Prevalence: Rare

The Forge of Zhorak (8-100)

The Scuttlebutt: Attracted by the magical properties of Arden Vul, the legendary dwarven smith Zhorak set up his forge under the cliff of Arden Vul. The forge can be used to create magical items to this day, provided the smith knows the correct formulae, is strong enough to operate the forge, and/or can master the magical stone within which the forge was carved. Reports vary about Zhorak's fate: some think he is still living within Arden Vul, forging esoteric items. Others believe that, having been betrayed by imperial authorities, he 'took to the stone' somewhere within Arden Vul, leaving his stash of enchanted equipment to be plundered by the canny and bold.

Veracity: The basic report that Zhorak's forge remains open and usable is true. The report that Zhorak 'took to the stone' is interesting, if ultimately incorrect (for Zhorak's fate, see 8-97); it's interesting because most Archonteans don't know almost anything about Dwarven culture, let alone this closely-guarded secret. Of course, most rumor-mongers don't really know what 'took to the stone' means. The other details are mostly fabulous.

Prevalence: Esoteric

The Forum of Set (4-2)

The Scuttlebutt: Although it has been proscribed for centuries within all civilized territories, a cult of the god Set (one of the Twelve) has risen again, and has reoccupied the old market forum within Arden Vul. The forum is easy to access through a hole on

the cliff-face. The cultists welcome those who show respect to their dread Lord, and particularly to those who bring valuable goods to trade in the Forum. The Forum is the best site from which to outfit expeditions to other parts of the Halls, at least for those strong enough to resist the nefarious slavers guild, known as the Guild of Service. The high priest of Set commands the loyalty of lots of monsters, who provide security for the Forum.

Veracity: Mostly accurate, especially about the trading function of the Forum and the access point on the cliff-face.

Prevalence: Common

The Glory of Thoth (3-2)

The Scuttlebutt: A glorious, bejeweled statue depicting the god Thoth (one of the Twelve). The statue is said to lie directly beneath the Pyramid of Thoth (AV-15). One must beware, for the Glory comes to life to protect followers of Thoth and to smite evildoers. It is said that placating the Glory with gifts of gnostic knowledge will secure a blessing from the god.

Veracity: Mostly accurate. The statue is located directly beneath the pyramid, and offerings of scrolls do produce a blessing of sorts. The statue does not come to life but is, however, part of a complex puzzle leading to the hidden treasury of Thoth (3-23 and 3-24).

Prevalence: Common

The Great Cavern (3-163, 3-172)

The Scuttlebutt: The priests of Thoth discovered in antiquity an enormous underground cavern containing a river, lake, and giant grove of mushrooms. Strange creatures lived in the groves, but the Thoth priests tamed them. The temple used the fungal forests not only for food, but also as a site in which to conceal the tombs of their favorite priests, including the legendary Ptarmis, who discovered the grove. Today the Cavern is nearly empty, and ripe for pickings. Watch out for the dragonflies, though!

Veracity: Almost entirely true. The dragonfly reference refers to the automatons of Kerbog Khan (SL12-25), which can be either helpful or harmful.

Prevalence: Common

The Great Chasm (2-63A, 3-38, 5-34, 6-108, 7-3, 8-2, 9-1)

The Scuttlebutt: A giant chasm at least 1,000' deep bisects all the underground region of Arden Vul. It's the best way to travel between the multiple levels, especially since a giant staircase has been cut into the walls of the chasm. The only danger are the cave worms that dwell within holes in the chasm wall. It is said that six waterfalls plunge down the chasm! One hot tip is that the shrine to the great Archon Marius is located just off the chasm about halfway down the shaft.

Veracity: Partly accurate. The chasm does extend from level 2 to level 9, and does provide the surest method for quick ascent or descent. While the staircase is a myth, the system of troll lifts (5-55, 6-1 to 6-5, 7-1, 8-1) provides a relatively safe way of traversing the chasm. The shrine of Marius (6-154) is not really located 'just off' the chasm. The story about the cave worms is a total urban legend, created centuries ago by bored adventurers; other threats, including cavern cephalopods, do lurk within the chasm, though.

Prevalence: Uncommon

The Great Hall (3-123)

The Scuttlebutt: A giant hall of crucial importance to the exploration of Arden Vul. Some argue that the Great Hall is the same as the Hall of Forty Pillars, while others claim it holds the Obsidian Gates, and still others speak of it in hushed tones as the punishment hall of the priesthood of Thoth, where the barks and whoops of dead prisoners still echo today. Only a handful describe it as two- or three-story hall filled with broken pillars and strange statuary, lying moreover in a strategic position on the borders of the territory of some deadly humanoid warriors. All agree, however, that the Great Hall is an essential landmark, one that provides a jumping off point to [fill in the blank with a specific location - the most reputable accounts accurately note that it leads directly to the Great Cavern].

Veracity: Mixed, mostly because the name of this location is vague enough that explorers have been willing to identify many locations (2-35, 5-66, 6-68, 8-7, etc.) as the 'true' Great Hall. After all, any imposing hall may well seem 'great' to a visitor. The GM could use the general confusion about this location to seed false rumors, or, conversely, to provide useful information to those exploring the upper levels. Ironically, none of the accounts realize that one of the greatest treasures lost within Arden Vul - **the iron circlet of Ghanor** - is located in a secret tomb just off the Great Hall (3-127).

Prevalence: Common

The Hall of Forty Pillars (5-6)

The Scuttlebutt: A dark, ominous hall filled with heavy, squat pillars. Croaking sounds emanate from the very pillars! Although the Hall of Forty Pillars contains no treasure itself, it is essential to locate, since it leads directly to the fabled Obsidian Gates. Some dark rumors suggest that the souls of dead adventurers are imprisoned within the pillars. The Hall is said to lie on the level below the old Archontean temples. A few claim it was not built by human hands.

Veracity: Mostly accurate, although the rumors that the pillars contain souls are false. The croaking noises come from the strange toads that inhabit the hall.

Prevalence: Rare

The Howling Caves (2-56)

The Scuttlebutt: A series of natural caves abutting the old precincts of Thoth in the upper levels. They take their name from the howls and moans that emanate from them. Explanations for the howling vary. Most attribute them to the hunger of a battalion of ghouls created from the corpses of long-dead priests abandoned during the Archontean retreat. Others claim the howls are produced by a series of mutant dogs that roam the ruins. All, however, claim that it is best to exercise extreme light- and noise-discipline when exploring the precincts of Thoth. No treasure rumors are associated with the Caves; they are mostly cited as a sort of 'bogey-man' designed to frighten or intimidate new explorers.

Veracity: Mixed. The literal Howling Caves are indeed found to the south and east of Level 2, but most explorers use the phrase to describe all of Level 2. The ghoule story is erroneous (although some nasty ghouls can be found nearby, at 2-20 to 2-22). The 'mutant dog' story is closer to reality, as the howls are produced by the large albino baboons that hunt in packs. Most accounts are

hazy about which parts of the precincts of Thoth are affected by the Howling Caves; for instance, Level 3 is part of the precincts of Thoth but lacks baboons and howls.

Prevalence: Uncommon

The Inn of the Lost (6-7 to 6-20, 6-28)

The Scuttlebutt: A welcome beacon of refuge amid all the hazards of Arden Vul. This inn is operated by a kindly old gentleman, whose magical abilities ensure that no monsters enter the Inn. Rates are reasonable, given its location, and the common room even features decent entertainment. Look for the Peace Door (6-7A), which is located in a corridor lying just east of the Chasm.

Veracity: Accurate. It is true that the Inn offers protection versus all external threats; the rumors do not reveal, however, that the proprietor, Thegan Whitemane, is not always as kindly as he seems (nor is he a sorcerer).

Prevalence: Common

The Obsidian Gates (5-6D)

The Scuttlebutt: A gigantic pair of black, stone doors, beyond which lies the fabled wealth of several lost civilizations. Although famously difficult to penetrate, each report about them usually includes a 'sure-fire' way to get past them. Some of those schemes include tracing the strange glyphs on the doors three times, sacrificing to the correct god in front of the gates, locating a stone guardian whose fingers act as keys to the gates, and so forth. Regardless of the variety of methods for breaching the Gates, the reports uniformly describe vast and unique treasures to be looted behind the Gates. The more sophisticated reports add that these treasures come from an ancient lost civilization that predates the Archontean. A handful of accounts reveal that the Gates are warded against most ordinary magic, including knock and teleport. The rumors place the Obsidian Gates at the end of, or just beyond, the Hall of Forty Pillars, in the middle levels of Arden Vul. All agree that the Gates were never penetrated by the great sorcerers of antiquity.



Veracity: Accurate, except concerning the methods of penetrating the Gates (some of which are downright dangerous!).

Prevalence: Uncommon

The Pyramid of Thoth (AV-15)

The Scuttlebutt: A huge pyramid standing in the ruins of the above-ground city of Arden Vul. The pyramid was a central site for the worship of Thoth, and still contains a bejeweled cult statue. More importantly, the pyramid contains the best and most reliable way of entering the dungeon levels. It is said that placating the cult statue is the way to open the route to the dungeons. Wise speakers might comment on the strange fact that the pyramid is one of the few structures in the city that was not ruined by the [dragon, Sortian magic, giants, divine anger - the cause varies by speaker] that destroyed the city.

Veracity: The basic facts are accurate, except for the causes for the city's destruction.

Prevalence: common

The Red Bridge (4-120A)

The Scuttlebutt: A bridge made of red stone spanning a depthless chasm and leading straight to the Forum of Set. Reaching the Red Bridge is a sign that one is safe within the precincts of Set. Most agree that the Red Bridge is also enchanted such that it prevents those intending harm to Set from passing. The Bridge is best accessed through a cave on the cliff face, to the west of the waterfall; one must traverse several ruined halls before reaching it.

Veracity: Mostly accurate. Although located on the southern borders of the safe zone delimited by the cult of Set, the Bridge is not entirely safe, as cavern cephalopods often threaten those who traverse it. The Bridge is enchanted, but not in the manner suggested by the rumors; instead, it amplifies footfalls so as to alert the Set guardsmen of approaching visitors.

Prevalence: Rare

The Sundered, or Imperial, Span (5-35)

The Scuttlebutt: A prominent landmark within Arden Vul, this bridge crosses the Great Chasm at a point about halfway down the chasm's vertical distance. It marks the boundary between the territory of the goblins to the west and the vicious trolls to the east. The name given to the Span varies by the teller; those of a more historical or scholarly bent might accord the bridge the name 'Imperial Span' as a memory of its role in helping ensure the Archontean hegemony; more casual or more recent travelers might call it the Sundered Span, noting that it has been broken in the middle (although a jury-rigged repair job still allows passage). A few accounts warn of the swarms of goblins and/or Arden Vul trolls that guard either end of the Bridge; these enemies must either be defeated or bribed to allow passage. There's a small chance that an interlocutor describes an 'island' floating in the chasm below the Span (i.e., 6-4).

Veracity: The basic facts of the Span's location, status (sundered), and proximity both to the goblins and the varumani are accurate. The stories about hordes of goblins and 'trolls' are alarmist; the goblins to the west welcome visitors willing to pay a small toll, while the varumani outpost to the east is in fact the topmost station in the system of troll lifts (5-53 to -5-55).

Prevalence: Rare

The Troll Market (7-76)

The Scuttlebutt: An exotic market in the lower levels where all manner of bizarre goods - from coins, statuary, gems and magic, to living creatures and strange plants - are sold by traders hailing from deep beneath the earth. The Troll Market is operated by the band of vicious trolls that control the lower levels; they patrol the market atop giant riding lizards and tolerate no disturbances. In fact, unless they are well lubricated with coin and/or information, they are likely to take offense and sell the incautious into Underearth slavery. Still, the Market is said to be the best place to acquire relics from the lost civilizations that occupied Arden Vul before the Archonteans. To reach the Market, one needs to pass the Sundered Span and traverse the Great Chasm almost to the bottom.

Veracity: Partly accurate. It is true that exotic goods are traded here, and that the market is located a good ways down the chasm. The scare stories about the vicious trolls are exaggerated, however; the varumani warmly welcome those traders whom they have invited to the market (by granting them a troll thegn's passport).

Prevalence: Esoteric

The Well of Light (2-1)

The Scuttlebutt: A man-sized well leading from the surface of the ruined city to the private precincts of the old priesthood of Thoth. By all accounts, the Well is extremely dangerous, and only the most experienced and well-warded adventurers are advised to even consider testing it. Some accounts emphasize the blinding glare or even burning interior surface of the well; other accounts focus on the troops of undead, including magic using creatures, that lie at the foot of the well. Still, a common refrain about the Well links it to the lost library of Thoth, which is said to contain much lost and valuable knowledge (2-7); for this reason, there seems to be no end of adventurers willing to risk the well. It is easy to find the mouth of the well amid the ruins of the northeastern quadrant of the city, not far from the pyramid of Thoth.

Veracity: The basic facts are fairly accurate, as the well is located near the pyramid, and does debouch near both the library of Thoth and the secret library of Thoth (2-72). The dangers of climbing up and down the well are largely exaggerated, as are the threats awaiting those who successfully make the climb: rather than undead, it is the packs of feral baboons who pose the greatest threat to adventurers.

Prevalence: Rare

The Ziggurat (10-32 to 10-37)

The Scuttlebutt: A cursed ziggurat built of cyclopean blocks of pitted, greasy stone occupies the lowest levels of Arden Vul. The ziggurat serves as the focus for a demon-prince of great power and malevolence. His servitors periodically restore the shrine, from which emanates great evil and corruption. The archons of old cleansed the ziggurat thoroughly, but (say some) evil has crept back into the site. Perhaps a new alliance of heroes is needed to cleanse it for good? Reports are vague about the location of the ziggurat, except to note that it lies below the foot of the Great Chasm.

Veracity: Mostly accurate as far as it goes. The ziggurat is devoted to the worship of the demon-prince Kauket, and the heqeti have indeed restored the site. The ziggurat can be accessed through tunnels leading downwards from the chasm floor (see 9-82).

Prevalence: Esoteric

RUMORS

The following two tables offer 200 hooks designed to entice PCs into adventuring in Arden Vul. Table 1 contains the usual sort of rumors that might be derived from conversation with other adventurers who braved the Halls or from tired barkeepers who have had to listen to adventurers whine about their failures (or boast about their successes). Table 2 contains more historical rumors, of the sort that might be gleaned from first-hand research or conversation with knowledgeable scholars.

It is recommended that each PC new to adventuring in Arden Vul be allowed at least one roll on each of the two tables. These base rolls reflect the background knowledge specific to that PC. Suggestions for how many rolls to allow per PC per table are provided below.

It is also possible that PCs may seek additional information about Arden Vul from NPCs in Burdock's Valley (or elsewhere). In such cases, the GM should use his/her discretion in deciding which table to use to generate rumors. If the person queried is a bartender or ex-adventurer, then Table 1 is appropriate. If the person queried is likely by virtue of his/her occupation or status to possess historical information about the Halls, then Table 2 might be appropriate. If the GM wishes to randomize the generation of subsequent rumors, he/she should roll d10 on the following chart.

Rumor Table 1: Adventuring Rumors

d100	Rumor
1	The old Pyramid of Thoth (AV-15) is the most accessible - and safest - means of entering the Halls of Arden Vul (mostly T). The long staircase through the pyramid that leads to the first dungeon level (3-1) is worn with age and covered with layers of graffiti; some of that graffiti is really useful! (T).
2	The upper dungeon levels under the pyramid were looted centuries ago (T/F), so it's best to find an alternate entrance. For instance, those creepy soldiers that look like animals must have their own entrance (T, see EX-11). In addition, there seems to be an unlimited supply of those white baboons - but where are they coming from? (T, EX-12)
3	The Great Chasm is an important route to the lower levels (T). Or so my sources said. The problem? A tribe of trolls lives in the chasm (F). They ride on top of tamed giant spiders so they can scamper up and down the chasm walls (F). Avoid it, mate! It's death to try the chasm.
4	There's a goblin city in the middle levels somewhere (T, see Sub-Level 4). The main entrance is a huge iron gate built into the wall of that Great Chasm that extends down into the depths (F). Find the great stone seat near Sundered Span (5-35), and you can rappel down from there (F). But be sure to bring tribute, as the goblin king requires a suitable gift to let you in (F).
5	The beast-soldiers hate the goblins (T) and the halflings (F). Those beasties are dangerous, especially the dog-men; they are stealthy and also use good military discipline (T). They even use poison! (F) They worship an obscure goddess named Dayn (T/F; her name is Deino, but she's not a goddess).
6	Bring lots of rope, since there's a massive chasm that extends throughout multiple levels. (T). It's the best way to get from the Thothian precincts to the lower levels (T/F), but it's extremely dangerous, since a tribe of flying baboons inhabits it (F).
7	Some talk about a chasm within the mountain, and claim it's a safe way to travel through the levels (T). This is a lie, as the 'chasm' is actually the mouth and intestines of an enormous underground serpent (F).
8	Powerful artifacts from the glory days of the Archontean empire are still to be found within (T), including the Orb of Krieg (F), the Ebon Spear (T; see SL5-13B) and the Bone Ring of Jagri-Naz (T, 5-74). The best source of information on their location is the Sage of the Middle Levels, a strange fellow named Gog (F, 5-2). Feed him some beast-flesh, and he'll set you straight.
9	Beware the Howling Caves! They're filled with ghouls that make this weird hooting and howling sound (F). I heard the ghouls are twice as strong as normal and howl in that way because of the strange enchanted, orange-colored rocks that stud the walls of their cave (F).
10	You should avoid the Shining Well that leads into Arden Vul. Unholy lights strobe up its length, causing permanent blindness in all and madness in a few. Even if you make it to the bottom, the ghouls are sure to make short work of you in the demonic light (F).

D10 Roll	Result
1-6	Table 1 (Adventuring Rumors)
7-10	Table 2 (Historical Rumors)

Table 1: Adventuring Rumors

The items on this table are of the sort that might be provided by experienced NPC adventurers, or by inhabitants of Burdock's Valley with good reason to know something about the Halls (e.g., bartenders, innkeepers, rangers, certain priests, etc.). These rumors are thus likely to be based (at least theoretically) upon relatively recent practical experience or on recent hearsay; in this way, this table differs from the second, which contains more abstract, historical information.

How to Use This Table: It is recommended that every PC new to adventuring in Arden Vul roll 1-3 times on this table, using d100 to determine results.

Key and Organization of Sub-Table: The rumors are grouped according to their rarity. Rumors 1-30 are Common (C); rumors 31-60 are Uncommon (U), rumors 61-80 are Rare (R), rumors 81-99 are Very Rare (V), and rumor 100 is special. Such a grouping based on ascending order of rarity allows a GM who wishes to drop a further rumor during play to quickly locate rumors of a suitable sort.

11	<p>Watch out for lingering magical effects! They're all over the place. For example ... (roll d6)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. there are mists on the entry level that teleport you to a random location (F) 2. a lot of the doors are false. When you open one, you'll see a mirror that turns you to stone (F) 3. some areas are inaccessible due to permanent walls of incredibly hot fire. Each wall of fire has a weird, dancing figure inside it (T-ish) 4. giant dragonflies - an escaped wizard's experiment - fly around the whole place, blasting people with lightning from their eyes (T/F) 5. you've heard of magic mouths? That place has magic bodies! I'm talking about enchanted frescoes that step off of the walls and chase you (F) 6. the Thoth priests loved teleportation. Watch out for doors marked with an ibis, since they'll teleport you to a new location if you step through one (F)
12	<p>The goblins hate the beast-soldiers with a passion (T). We struck a deal to help the goblins eliminate the walking beasts, but it proved too difficult, mostly because those dog-men have built some sophisticated fortifications and are pretty good with missiles (T). Then the goblins got mad at us and we had to run. My advice? Don't negotiate with anyone. Kill 'em all (F).</p>
13	<p>The priests of Mitra are looking for some chumps to track down one of their missing clergy, a priestess named Lillian. It seems she went missing by that huge overgrown Thicket down near the cliff of Arden Vul. We ran into a shepherd who claims he saw her being taken by walking pigs up the cliff into the ruins of Arden Vul (T/F). If you can find and return this Lillian, there's a big reward posted in Newmarket.</p>
14	<p>Everyone uses the old pyramid of Thoth (AV-15) to enter the halls (by the way, check out the gems used for that statue's eyes! My party leader wouldn't let me grab 'em. Superstitious fool). But because everyone uses that entrance, the areas beneath the pyramid have already been picked clean (T-ish). I'd suggest finding another route - I heard there was a Shining Well (T, 2-1) that leads straight to the sweet loot (F).</p>
15	<p>I saw some dodgy-looking tinkers and tradesmen making their way for something they called 'the Forum' (see 4-2), saying that Stephania (4-51) paid good money for the most basic supplies (T). They said: "If you want to go to the Forum, shine two lanterns from the left side of the river at night-time. Then look for the basket on the cliff face" (T)</p>
16	<p>Last week an adventurer collapsed in the street just in front of me. She was charred and badly wounded. She said she had just escaped from the Halls. Her last words? "Beware the Pyramid! The Eyes! The Eyes! They were everywhere ... and then, fire, lightning and swirling lights" (F)</p>
17	<p>There are some pretty bad people in there, each with his/her own band of followers. The worst of them is (roll d6):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the Red Witch, Steffie, with her hordes of zombies 2. the troll king Weskim, whose trolls ride giant spiders into battle 3. the bad-tempered sorcerer Carabog, who commands a horde of giant insects 4. Okanda, an ape the size of a building, with its ape-man servitors 5. the Mummy-King, Lotharius the Stern 6. Master Meteorite, leader of a band of soulless, undead knights <p>[Note: these are all F as written, although the names Steffie, Weskim, Carabog, and Master Meteorite are corruptions of actual individuals - High Priestess Stephania of the cult of Set (4-51); Weskenim, king of the Goblins (SL4-22), Kerbog Khan (SL12-25), and Master Malachite, leader of the Sun-Scarred Knights (SL10A-32). Okanda and Lotharius do not exist]</p>
18	<p>That place attracts wizards and priests like dung attracts flies (T). A crazed wizard named Khan rules the second level from the top with the aid of an army of ghouls (F). It's said he needs new souls to keep him alive; his ghouls do the procuring for him (F). The worst part? He pretends to be helpful ... that's when the ghouls strike!</p>
19	<p>A psychotic halfling thug named Plummie, Plumit, or Plum-something has taken over the top level, just under the pyramid. He won't let anyone pass unless they buy an 'exploration license' (T, see 3-5). I'd pay up, because his goons are armed with potent magic wands (F).</p>
20	<p>The ibis-priests from the old days had an incredible library of rare books (T) on the fourth level down from the surface (F). The library is still filled with books, including ritual manuals, spell books, and obscure histories (T). The problem is that it is defended by the spectral form of the last librarian, who won't let any items be removed from the shelves (F).</p>
21	<p>Strange dragonflies flit about the underground areas. Their eyes appear to be formed of gems. Some of them can actually speak! (T) The speaking ones will try to bargain with you - offering information or healing in return for gems (T-ish).</p>
22	<p>At the foot of the chasm is a huge cistern the size of a lake (T/F - there is a lake at the bottom of the chasm). The cistern is 100' deep and covers the area of a small town. It is ruled by a terrible kraken (F).</p>
23	<p>A terrible dragon is the ruler of the surface ruins of Arden Vul (T). To access the dungeons you need to sneak past her in the dead of the night, when she's sleeping (F). I've heard that she extorts a toll on all those she catches exiting the Halls (T-ish). If you can't pay, she burns you up (T/F).</p>
24	<p>Everyone talks about the Drowned Canyon and all its wealth, but I don't know any adventurer who admits to actually having found the damned canyon! (T) The entire thing is a myth (F).</p>

25	We visited the Forum of Set and saw the sites. You know, the big statue of Set and the pitiful slaves at his feet, the marketplace, and so forth. We paid up to attend the First Mystery. Huh, pretty lame! No, I won't tell you what it is ... it's a mystery! But the Second Mystery ... that was impressive! I heard there's supposed to be a Third Mystery, but when we asked the Deacon about it he told us to shut up or we'd be sold as slaves. (T)
26	A dueling arena exists (T) on the seventh level beneath the cliff (F). It is accessible through a gate set into the Great Chasm (F). The arena hosts bouts between gladiators and monsters (T). If you can't pay your gambling debt, you have to face a hydra in the pit (F).
27	The Set priests are slavers. Anyone they encounter on the Long Stairs leading to their Forum is liable to be enslaved. If you make it to the Forum, though, you're safe (T).
28	The beast soldiers sometimes visit the kobolds who live in that massive thicket southwest of Arden Vul (T). It's the best time to ambush them, when they're far away from home. Sometimes the beastmen bring captives from the Thicket to the Halls (T).
29	A fortified roadhouse exists within the ruins of the old city. You can get a bed and a meal there, and can sometimes sell extra loot to some traders who hang out in the common room. It's run by an Archontean fellow named Kettle-Belly (T). He's a good bloke (T/F).
30	The Green Lady who runs the town of Gosterwick is hiring adventurers to locate some important treasure inside Arden Vul (T). She'll outfit you with equipment and let you keep everything except (roll d6) 1. the iron circlet of Ghanor (3-127, see new magic items) 2. the bone ring of Jagri-Naz (5-74, see new magic items) 3. the ebon spear of Kentillian (SL5-13B, see new magic items) 4. the ebony egg of Firuz (F) 5. the tablet of the Beacon (9-107, see new technological items) 6. the sword of Marius the Conqueror (F)
31	We met a crazy hermit in the ruins of the city (T; Lankios). His stew is foul, but if you eat with him, he'll give you some good directions (T and F). For instance, there's a staircase hidden behind a painted image of a baboon; it leads down to what the hermit called 'the scene of the crime' (T, see 3-12 and 5-11)
32	A patrol of those animal-soldiers told us about a series of elevators operated by intelligent trolls. The elevators can take you from the upper levels to the lower levels, easy as pie (T, see 5-55). Only those who secure the permission of the troll thegn can use them, though (F).
33	A massive ziggurat exists at the floor of the Great Chasm (T, 10-32 to 10-37); it's inhabited by undead giants (F).
34	We knew some folks who climbed down a well from the surface into the secret halls of Thoth (see AV-14). All but one never came back, and the one that did was blind and mad! He kept babbling about the dark and the hooting ... the hooting (T/F)
35	No one has made it past the Obsidian Gates (T, mostly), since even knock spell is unable to open them (T). The best treasures are said to lie behind those gates (T).
36	Most of the archons of Arden Vul built their tombs under the city, in odd corners of the Halls (T). So it's best to keep an eye out for strange construction and secret passages. I've heard that the tomb of [roll d10 on list below] is located within a grove of underground almond trees (T/F; the tombs below are all real, but none are located in a grove of almond trees). 1. Metion the Stern (5-17) 2. Basil the Archon (5-23) 3. Muirasso (5-36 to 5-40) 4. Julian Grex (5-85) 5. Liskon the Mad (8-133) 6. Phocion the Builder (8-142 to 8-144) 7. Agaperion Martel (9-128) 8. Zoferus Felix (SL6-42) 9. Hesezion the Red-Handed (SL6-59) 10. Borsella Iron-Fist (SL6-63)
37	There's a massive flooded canyon in there filled with tombs that predate the empire (T). The tombs are still loaded with treasure, just waiting to be looted (T). The canyon is easily accessible from the shrine of Marius (T/F) and is practically undefended due to the water (F).
38	A tribe of advanced lizardmen controls access to the lower levels (F). Although they worship a giant snake (T/F), they are more intelligent than the usual sort (F), and have advanced weaponry and magic (F).
39	It's worth trying to get information from anyone who is willing to talk. Most intelligent sorts will be willing to parlay, and a few have seriously good info! Look for a strange half-troll called Gog - he'll steer you right (T/F; see 5-2). It's the non-intelligent things that you have to watch out for.