

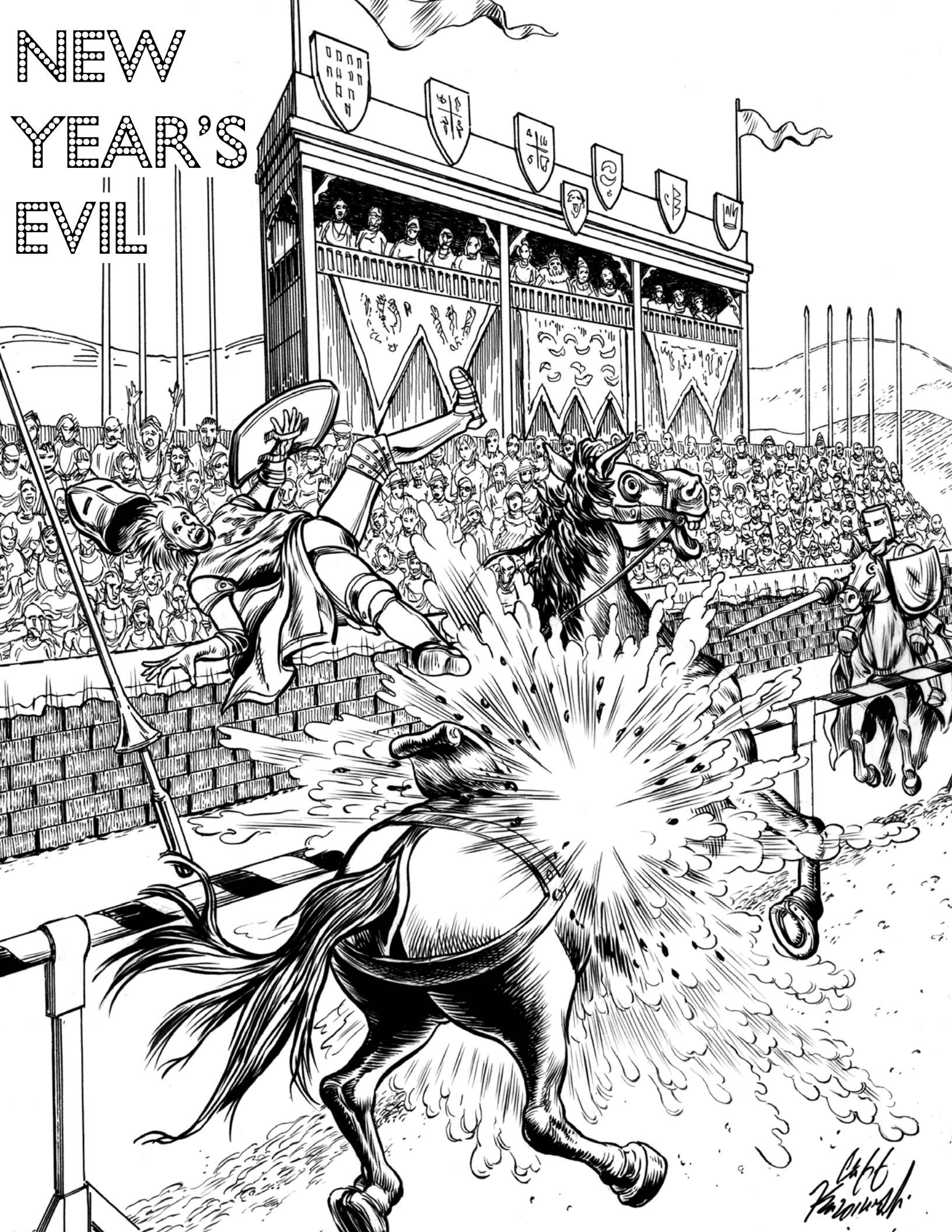
DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS

XCRAWL: NEW YEAR'S EVIL

2017 HOLIDAY MODULE
A LEVEL 2 ADVENTURE
BY BRENDAN LASALLE



NEW YEAR'S EVIL



Chit
Karnish

DELIRIUM:

Sing, oh Muse, of Apollo's pique,
Full and subtle, that cost the League
Death, dismemberment, scuttled sponsorships,
Contracts lost to force majeure,
Forcing Agents to smile and dial
For new Clients, as Pluto took his Due.

Began with the clash between Discordia –
Mother of Strife – and exalted Apollo.

Which of the immortals brought their cousins'
conflict to a head?

Bacchus,
Jupiter's son and Semele's, offended
By sobriety. Discordia struck first,
Scuttling Apollo's Division III pick, so the god
Narced on the Hannah Barbarians;
And Bacchus, so, so bored . . .

. . . decided to stir the pot.



adies and gentlemen, it's time for the game that remembers when electrom pieces just cost a nickel: Xcrawl Classics. The Old School Renaissance meets live on pay-per-view death sport insanity in a best possible combination RPG extravaganza. Strap on your sword, call your agent, and get ready for mayhem!

Xcrawl: New Year's Evil is a 2nd-level adventure designed for 4 to 7 characters. Party balance is a must – the PC team should include some up-front fighters, arcane support, a lock and trap expert, and magical healing for the best chance of success.

This is a very flexible adventure – feel free to add or take away enemies, or raise or lower the DCs of challenges, etc., in order to balance the adventure for different power levels. Best of all possible outcomes: the PCs just barely manage to win after a harrowing adventure.

Xcrawl? Is that like Colonizers of Malaar? Can I be the Lord of the Karthian Plains?

Shut it down. In Xcrawl, characters take the roles of superstar athletes taking their chances in a live on pay-per-view death sport. Xcrawl is short for Extreme Dungeon Crawl. The game is simple: the Dungeon Judge, or DJ, creates an artificial dungeon under controlled – but still potentially lethal – conditions. The DJ designs the rooms, stocks them with traps, secret doors, monsters, treasure, and prizes. The characters must go through the dungeon and fulfill whatever conditions the DJ puts forth in order to win. These conditions usually include defeating all the monsters, finding keys or other hidden items, bypassing obstacles, rescuing “captives,” and the like. DJs have a great deal of leeway in creating their dungeon but

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This book is for Joseph Leonard Auditore (January 17, 1981 - September 26, 2017)

“But not all men seek rest and peace; some are born with the spirit of the storm in their blood.” – Robert E. Howard

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most play fairly – DJs who make their dungeons too difficult (or too easy) do not get invited back.

Xcrawl is a sport and the challenges are manufactured, but the danger is nonetheless real. If you die, you die. There are no second chances. Citizens of the North American Empire tune in every week to watch their favorite crawlers get shredded, smashed, and slain . . . the nation's hunger for blood and mayhem grows with every contest.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Apollo and Discordia, two gods of Olympus, fight a war-by-proxy in the Xcrawl Division III league championship.

Mighty Apollo's favorite Division III team, the plucky Rock 'Em Sock 'Em Suckas, were contenders for Rookie Team of the Year. Discordia, fellow Xcrawl enthusiast, found the team's earnest heroism distasteful, and decided she hated them. The goddess struck out at the Suckas, blindsiding them with a lawsuit from a fan who fainted and gashed her head at an autograph signing, ultimately causing their break-up.

Apollo, flush with divine pique, retaliated; the Benefactor of Mankind caused local police to pull over Discordia's favorite mischief makers, the Division III Hanna Barbarians, on the way to the St. Louis crawl. The Barbarians were ultimately held overnight on suspicion of absolutely everything, forfeiting their match. The Mother of Strife was furious; and the ensuing feud between the two divine powers threatened to put a huge asterisk next to the entire 2017 crawl season.

Enter Bacchus, the Happy God of Wine and Merriment. Twice-born Bacchus had been a sympathetic ear for both Apollo and Discordia for thousands of years, and had been bored to tears with their constant bickering for centuries. From the depths of

TERMS TO KNOW

AVS: An AVS (Arcane Video Screen) is a magical two-way screen and camera. DJs can communicate with their characters via the AVS. All AVSs are networked, and while there are some live cameramen, most of the recording comes through these handy dandy technomagical timesavers. Few things can hurt them and characters are not allowed to attack them.

Banned Equipment: The following items are banned for use in Xcrawl: guns, acid, poison, lockpick guns, and mundane explosives other than standard alchemist's fire. There are limits on how many magic items and scrolls a character may take into the crawl, but all magical equipment they find in the dungeon can be used.

Break Room: Crawlers are safe in any break room. DJs may not put any hazards in a break room.

Disqualified: Disqualified characters lose 1d6 Fame and cannot return to the dungeon – not even on later levels. If the characters are unclear of their instructions or have other problems, they can call for a ref at any time.

Fame: A character's Fame score determines how popular they are at any given moment. Crawlers with a high Fame are celebrities who receive VIP treatment and high appearance fees.

No Go Doors: There are No Go doors throughout the dungeon. Characters may run through them to escape danger, but if they do so they are disqualified.

NonCom Badge: A NonCom badge has two functions. First, it tells characters that whomever wears one is not a target and may not be attacked (nor may they attack or hinder in any way, including aiding monsters). Characters who attack anything in a NonCom badge are disqualified and could face arrest. Second, creatures struck while wearing a NonCom badge are instantly teleported to safety.

Referee: There are referees around throughout the crawl. Their word is law. If a character breaks the rules they typically get one warning. Characters who disobey the ref are disqualified.

Surrender: Intelligent monsters may surrender – most refuse to (they are trying to earn Dead Crawler Bonuses), but those that do normally won't until it's clear they have zero chance of victory. Handlers remove surrendered monsters from the dungeon.

XCRAWL IN FLUX

Xcrawl Classics is coming! The final version will be a full, stand-alone game using DCC RPG mechanics, with new classes, spells, rules, and excitement! In the meantime, here are some new rules to enhance your game. Note that these are in flux, and as playtesting continues some of these might change when the final version of the game comes out.

The Mojo Pool: The Mojo Pool represents the unconscious power of teamwork that makes a good team greater than the sum of its parts.

At the start of play, every PC begins with 1d3 points of Mojo. Points from the Mojo Pool can normally be added to the following dice rolls: action dice for attacks or spellcasting, skill

checks, or ability score checks. Points from the Mojo Pool are added on a one-to-one basis, and there is no limit to how many points you can give out. For example, if a player has three Mojo points and the team's thief is about attempted to disarm a dangerous trap, they can give the thief one, two, or all three Mojo points, which bestows a +1, +2, or +3 bonus on their Disable Trap check.

The Catch: Players can never take points from the Mojo Pool for themselves; they can only give them to teammates! Points must be given on the recipient's turn *before* the die roll.

Players are not permitted to ask for points out of the Mojo Pool, and those that forget and do so are blocked from receiving Mojo points for the remainder of the current encounter.

Mojo points can NEVER be added to the following rolls: saving throws, critical checks, fumble checks, corruption checks, or deity disapproval checks.

Good stuff gives Mojo points. A nat 20 on an attack or spell check earns that player a Mojo point. Thieves earn a Mojo point for disarming traps; clerics earn one for destroying Un-dead with a turn check. *Each player on the team earns a Mojo point for every successful encounter.* Judges can give away any amount at their discretion for generalized coolness, superior role play, daring moves, cracking the table up with a great joke, etc. Judges can dangle Mojo points as well: "Tell you what, Wendolyn – if you DO jump off the top rail, and you manage to actually hit that ogre with the Commoner's Elbow, I'll give you three Mojo points." Judge, you can be extremely generous with Mojo points because . . .

Any roll of a natural 1 on an attack roll, spell check, in-combat skill check, turn unholy check, or Disable Trap check resets EVERYONE'S Mojo points back to zero.

Grandstanding: Grandstanding is the art of working the crowd.

Grandstanding check = 1d20 + Personality modifier + character level

The DC for this check is referred to as Crowd DC. The average Crowd DC is 14. Circumstances can raise or lower this DC. For example, a hometown crowd eager for a victory might be DC 11, while a hostile crowd could be DC 20 or higher. While crawlers can Grandstand whenever they feel like whipping the crowd up, twice per combat encounter they can earn a Fame point (see below) with a successful Grandstanding attempt:

- Once, the round immediately preceding combat. Success means they earn 1 point of Fame.
- Once during an ongoing combat. Characters can Grandstand as a move action on their turn. A successful check means they earn 1 point of Fame.

Fame: Fame is a measure of the character's current status in the world of celebrity. More Fame means more money. Fame is the % chance for the PC to be recognized in a public place, and it affects how much they earn and what kind of jobs they get offered. The complete Fame rules will be fully detailed in Xcrawl Classics – for now, it's role-play and bragging rights.

his ennui, He Who Prevails devised a way to use his peevish fellow immortals' feud to his long-term advantage. So Happy Bacchus made a decision: his fellow Olympians needed to have a drink, have a laugh, and hug it all out.

Bacchus decided to manipulate the Toronto New Year's Eve crawl, influencing the staff to start celebrating early with a few drinks, sowing chaos for both of the Olympians' favorite teams, and hopefully getting Apollo and Discordia to put aside their differences and have a laugh for once. And while they are thus distracted, without breaking Jupiter's edict that the Gods of Olympus not interfere (at least, not directly), he plans to resurrect a powerful member of his bloodline that will make a fantastic Xcrawl Messenger, giving him a real chance at Olympia bragging rights for the next season.

PICK YOUR POISON

This can be a fun one-shot adventure for any group, so feel free to use whatever 2nd-level characters your players have at hand. The PCs may originate in any DCC world you choose - Aereth, Nowhere City, Lankhmar, Terra A.D., all from the same planet, or mix and match. The PCs fall asleep in their home world and are drawn to the Xcrawl contest by Bacchus, who gets a wild hair (as he will) and summons them across dimensions for the event.

The PCs become conscious in the green room, and instinctively understand that they are an Xcrawl team about to start an event on New Year's Eve, a milestone date on the world where they find themselves; that if they refuse to compete, they can never go home; and that if they die here, they die in their own worlds. (Alternately, this could be a "dream sequence," and nothing that happens here matters.)

Judges can either give transplanted PCs equivalent and appropriate equipment to match the world they find themselves in, or just let them run with what they have. In this case, the PCs can use their normal equipment, and in the pocket reality they find themselves, whatever they currently possess - chainsaws, quantum grenades, etc. - are somehow both permissible in Xcrawl AND the effects of same are incapable of penetrating the force walls that protect the audience. Give the monsters like for like, too - for example, if the PCs are from Dark Trails and show up with six-guns and dynamite, the skeletons in area 1-13 might have repeating rifles with bayonets. Play fair but not nice!

If the PCs have patrons in their home world, those patrons have equivalents in this pocket dimension, and *invoke patron*-like effects work normally. If they have a roster of NPCs, those NPCs might show up here - their henchmen are now members of their entourage, the elder mutant of their village is their coach, the evil overlord main antagonist could be DJ Crunch Time, etc.

If you decide this a dream sequence with zero effect on regular play, once it is all over the PCs should wake up on their home world without any treasure. If the danger in this adventure is real and the PCs can die in this pocket dimension, then they wake up with treasure and prizes; either the equivalent of what is listed here in their world, or the actual treasure as suits your game and mood best (the sub-grub who shows up in Hell with a year's supply of beer is going

to be extremely popular till the tap runs dry). Either way, they should receive experience points as normal.

DRINKING AND CRAWLING

Happy Bacchus has seen to it that there are multiple chances for PCs to drink in this adventure, which might just affect their chances. In addition, the Amber Thane's lance attack (area 1-3) and a puzzle in area 1-10 cause inebriation. Keep track of the XUI factor with the Drunk Chart.

The PCs can have up to one drink per hour with no significant effect. After the first, PCs must make a DC 12 Stamina check for each additional drink they have, with the save DC increasing by one for every drink they take (judges are encouraged to keep a chart). Every failure means they move down one slot on the Drunk Chart (below), and possibly they might find themselves in extremely dire straits.

For every hour spent sobering up, the players move back up one slot on the chart, healing any ability damage they took from the previous Drunk level. A *lay on hands* attempt may be used to dispel inebriation. It takes the power of one entire use of that ability to sober up an individual (no hit points may be regained at the same time, one die per Drunk Chart level).

Drunk Chart	Penalty	Character believes they are:
Tipsy	1 point Int or Dex (50% / 50%)	Even better looking!
Drunk	1d3 Dex or 1d3 Per (50% / 50%)	Positively invincible!
Smashed	1d3 Int and 1d3 Per	On the best team EVER!
Wrecked!	Sick, 50% chance of passing out	Never drinking again!

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

The PCs are a Division III team at the end of their first year participating in lethal play. It's early November, and their year is on track to end in disappointment. Earlier in the year, they were the leading candidate for the Adventurer's Guild Rookie Team of the Year, an extremely prestigious award that would have increased their status and opened the way for them to be invited to career-building events the next year.

Alas, rival rookie squad The Order of Fortuna, a bunch of aristocratic yahoos sowing their wild oats before coming into their inheritances, quickly became the hottest Division III team in the Empire, scuttling any chance for the PC team to win the award this year.

However, in a shocking turn of events, the Order of Fortuna lost their Adventurer's Guild status after a shocking scandal involving too much wine and a public insult to the Archduke of Colorado. The status revocation disqualified the shamed Order of Fortuna from their last scheduled event of the year, the New Year's Eve crawl in Toronto with DJ Lazer Lightning, and the PC team gets a last-minute invitation to take their place, meaning that they have one last shot at Rookie Team of the Year - if they can finish the adventure before midnight, that is.

The PCs travel to Toronto, and the next day are escorted to the Toronto Memorial Athletics Center and brought to the green room. There they find out about a last-minute change: DJ Laser Lightning was hospitalized for injuries sustained after a bizarre laundry accident, and has been replaced with a former Division IV DJ.

DJ CRUNCH TIME

Sean Nokes, AKA DJ Crunch Time, was the 6th choice for this event. Mysterious circumstances and unpredictable accidents (Apollo and Discordia bumping off DJs they thought would give the other an advantage) disrupted the first five DJs offered Toronto. Eventually, there was no choice but Crunch Time.

Nokes never had eyes for the big time; he became the coach of his son's after-school Action League just to spend more time with his family, but found he had a real knack for adventure design and tactics. He began to branch out, designing and DJing Division IV non-lethal events.

Six weeks before the Toronto crawl, he got a call in the middle of the night: could he possibly DJ a Division III full-lethal event? The Duke of Toronto called him personally, and told him he would consider it a real favor. How could he say no?

Crunch Time is not aware of how Bacchus' influence is about to turn all of his plans inside out.

SPONSORS

The PCs' agent tells the team that, just on the strength of their being considered for the New Year's Eve crawl, there are three sponsors who have sent over preliminary contracts: Ajax Fitness, Descent Gear, and Raincat Brewery. All three entities wish to be the team's primary sponsor for the crawl, so the team can only choose one of the three, and the entire team needs to have the same sponsor.

Whichever sponsor they choose, the PCs receive the following benefits: the sponsor pays all of the team's transportation, food, and lodging expenses while they are in Toronto. Every member of the team receives appropriate logo gear for their individual look (armor patches, t-shirts, pointy wizard hats, etc.), which they must proudly display during the crawl. The crawlers are expected to act as "brand ambassadors," which includes attending a company meet and greet with their sponsors clients on December 30th, where they are expected to make nice, mingle, and pose for pictures. The morning of the crawl, they have a mandatory full-gear photo shoot to create images for the company's advertising.

Each sponsor also offers individual benefits, some with additional requirements. Failure to comply with any of the sponsor's requests means the sponsor withdraws their support – which not only puts the team on the hook for their airplane tickets and hotel bill, it means they won't receive any of the listed prizes for any given room (the sponsors provide all of the treasure, including magic items).

Ajax Fitness: Ajax Fitness is a 24-hour fitness chain that's looking to expand beyond its traditional Northeastern market. If the PCs sign with Ajax, their sponsors insist that they train in Ajax facilities exclusively, often with a photographer

present. Ajax also offers fantastic trainers who work with the PCs on every aspect of their game, which increases their initial roll for Mojo points from 1d3 to 1d5.

Descent Gear: Descent Gear is a local Toronto company that makes outdoors equipment for mountaineers, free climbers, and spelunkers. They had a huge spike in sales over the last ten years, and the tiny company discovered that Xcrawlers favored their static 7/16" rope. The Toronto crawl represents their first attempt to actually reach out to the market. They will provide the team with waterproof backpacks, excellent rope and grappling hooks, and a set of high quality thieves' tools that give a +1 bonus to Pick Lock attempts.

Raincat Brewery: Raincat Brewery hosts a huge party for every Xcrawl event, and they created a drinking game to go with their event. They ask the PCs to work the words "rain" and "cat" into their conversations as much as they can in the dungeon – both words triggering a "social drink." They will provide each PC with a year's supply of craft beer and a minor healing potion (cures 1d5 hit points).

AREAS OF THE DUNGEON

Dungeon Specs: Unless otherwise stated, all doors are tough security doors (DC 15 Strength check to bash down), and the ceilings are 12' high. The walls of all the corridors are lined with hovering AVS monitors, which generally project static advertisements for the viewers at home when not actively communicating with the PC team. The Crowd DC is 12 unless otherwise noted; they are partying hard and ready to be entertained.

Area 1-1 – Green Room: *Your green room at the Toronto Memorial Athletics Center is fairly utilitarian. You see a row of lockers, a changing bench, and two craft service tables. On the far wall you see the door to the dungeon, and an AVS overhead letting you know that it is No Go until the DJ starts the dungeon.*

Two things strike you as odd: one, the craft service table is mostly alcohol. There is a table with tiered shelves behind it, and you see rows of wine and spirits, a huge cooler spilling over with bottles of beer, and for food there only seems to be a cheese plate and crackers. Two, lots of the alcohol is open. You see a bottle of Scotch that is all but empty, flanked by an empty bottle of wine and a half-full bottle of Prosecco.

A woman wearing headphones and holding a clipboard stands over by the craft service table with a referee. They are guffawing at something they must find extremely funny, but as the door opens they try and fail to straighten up, both suppressing giggle fits.

The woman is segment producer Kerry L'astname. The spirit of Bacchus has taken her over, and she and head ref Tyrone Dwatman have been tipping since they arrived, along with most of the staff. They are sober enough to do their jobs, for now. If the PCs ask about any of the booze-related strangeness, Kerry apologizes and says that the entire staff seems taken with the spirit of the New Year. She then suggests they all have a drink to honor the Gods of Olympus.

If the PCs take the proffered drink, they feel a wash of power rush over them – mighty Bacchus blesses them each with a secret re-roll (when they fail something critical, just ask them to re-roll but don't explain why).

The PCs have half an hour to do whatever they like before the contest begins.

The event starts nearly ten minutes late, an almost unheard-of *faux pas*. The producer arranges the team in front of the AVS, and they get to watch the tail end of the opening ceremonies.

You hear the final notes of the anthem of the North American Empire, "America Super Potents Maximus," sung by (judge's favorite/least favorite singer). When the applause dies down, the announcer speaks up. "Ladies and gentlemen, it's time for me to introduce the man of the hour. He came to Toronto in her time of need, and the city shall ever be grateful for him. I speak of your DJ for the evening, come all the way from Indianapolis to give you the greatest show we could possibly give. Give it up for none other than DJ Crunch Time!"

The back wall of the stage with the Toronto crawl logo bursts open – it was only paper. DJ Crunch Time rushes in with a rowdy group of cheering staffers, animal handlers, referees, goblins, and what looks like a minotaur. He takes the microphone, seems to get lost in the applause for a moment, then focuses up.

"Wow! I never thought . . . wow! Thank you all very much. I'm Sean . . . no, tonight I'm DJ Crunch Time, your master of ceremonies for tonight's adventure, and it's a huge honor to be here.

"I'm not a big talker – I like action. So let's skip the preamble and get this dungeon started!"

Huge cheer from the crowd.

"Okay, our first team is a first-year Division III team. They are young but scrappy, and I wish them all success. Ladies and gentlemen, please give a warm Toronto welcome for the <PC TEAM>!"

Big cheer.

"Alright, <PC TEAM NAME>, I'm sure you are just as eager as me to see what's about to happen. So let's begin.

"In the name of Emperor Ronald I, the Uniter, I declare this contest open. Adventurers, from this moment forward your lives are forfeit in the service of the Empire. I humbly beg Mother Juno and Father Jupiter, the apex of Olympus, to smile upon this contest and bless our heroes so that they may demonstrate the courage and might of the North American Empire. Your task is simple, crawlers – defeat all the creatures you meet, solve any puzzle or riddle set before you, and survive to see your enemies die or surrender.

"Crawlers, I salute you. Begin!"

The PCs may begin the dungeon. The first door is locked (DC 11 Pick Lock check), but not trapped.

Area 1-2 – Into the Dungeon: *You see flagstone stairs, like you might see in a castle, leading up into the darkness. There are AVS advertisements along both walls, but they are unusually subdued and somber.*

The stairs are completely safe. The door to area 1-3 is trapped (DC 10 Find/Disable Trap checks), although the trap is a harmless one. If the door is opened or bashed down before the trap is disarmed, a huge fanfare of trumpets bursts from

the arena speakers, heralding them as they enter.

Observant PCs listening at the door hear the sounds of a huge and rowdy crowd, the stamping of horses, and rain (DC 12 Int check, higher results bringing more information).

Area 1-3 – Tournament of Honor: *The door opens onto a most unexpected sight. A gentle rain falls on a fairly authentic-looking medieval jousting field. There is a long track in the center of the arena, with a low rail running through its center. You hear a somber tune playing, a mournful fife accompanied by a marshaling drum.*

The field is ringed by what appears to be a low stone wall. Just outside the wall to the left is a raised gallery, seats rising like bleachers, full of humans, elves, and gnomes, all dressed in medieval finery. At the top of the gallery is a covered box, where you see a stout man dressed as a King of old, flanked by a Queen in exquisite gown and jewelry, and several courtiers and guards in full mail. Just inside the wall is a row of a dozen men-at-arms in archaic ring-mail, all turned slightly to face in your general direction. They stand stock still at attention, holding shields and spears ahead of them. The King and noblemen in the gallery are all wearing obvious NonCom badges, although their costumes cleverly incorporate them. The men-at-arms on this side of the wall do not wear NonCom badges, and you can barely see their eyes over the tops of their round shields.

Just beyond the gallery is a 30'-high crenellated stone tower. There is a door in the front of the wall and two smallish windows facing you.

At the far end of the list you see what appears to be a knight in amber full plate armor, barrel helm, and shield. He stands next to a huge spirited war horse in barding and raiment, snorting and high-stepping in the rain. A squire holds the horse's reins and a lance.

Off to your right, you see another squire holding the reins of another armored horse. The horse's caparison is a colorful quilt of your sponsor's logo, making your horse a sort of billboard. The squire holding this horse and lance wears a NonCom badge.

The crowd cheers like mad as you enter the room. You notice that the stands are only about two-thirds full, and that most of the crowd is on your right, the opposite side of the King's gallery. It's not raining on the crowd, and you see rare displays of joy and merrymaking up in the stands.

A jester in full motley approaches you from stage left, bedraggled and wet, his once-jolly face paint running in the rain, becoming something far more sinister. The jester wears a NonCom badge as well. He addresses you: "Well met, heroes. Choose a champion to ride against the Amber Thane. After the first pass in the list, the ground fight shall begin in earnest, so ready yourselves. Champion, your mount awaits."

The jester leaves the arena after his pronouncement. If a player asks about the people in the gallery, they can make a DC 13 Xcrawl knowledge roll (1d20 + Int modifier + character level) to spot several familiar faces amongst them: the King and Queen are the owners of a huge local car dealership that they have seen in television adverts; the jester is a local drive time DJ; the PCs' sponsorship reps are in the stands in costume; and the rest of the NonComs are all superfans honored with a part in this event.

The crowd is protected by force walls that repel damage and spells. **The Crowd DC in this arena is 10.** It's New Year's Eve at a major sporting event and the elite patrons of Xcrawl are celebrating excessively. If the PCs observe them, they will see the crowd engaged in behavior bordering on shocking for an Xcrawl event – extreme displays of public affection, dancing, shouting matches, hurling wine bottles at the force walls, etc.

The entire set up is a massive diversion – there will be no traditional joust at this event.

The PCs' horse is an old warhorse: seasoned and healthy, if a bit over the hill. If the PCs examine the saddle, they might find the dangerous trap set inside it (DC 13 Find Trap check; must specifically say they are checking the saddle). The saddle has a pressure trigger and shaped charges packed in under the seat.

If the PCs find the trap:

The actors try to keep the ruse of a fair contest going a little longer. The gallery erupts in shocked gasps and resounding cries of "Bad form!" and "Shame!" The King stands up and points an angry finger at the Amber Thane, shouting about how this base trickery dishonors the list. He then apologizes to the PCs with half-assed faux-Elizabethan eloquence (like the rest of the gallery and much of the staff, the man who would play King is more than a little in the bag), and declares that the PC now rides for the Queen, a great honor. If the PC champion mounts up for the tournament, the Queen beckons them over and gives the champion a green scarf as a favor.

When the joust actually begins, the Amber Thane rides up until he is thirty feet away from the PC rider, then blasts the PC's horse with his Whiskey Lance, and the room proceeds as below.

If the PCs simply charge and attack upon discovering the trap, the fighters reveal themselves as below.

If the trap is not detected:

The squire hands a PC the reins, then respectfully bows away. When the PC mounts without discovering and disarming the trap, several things happen at once.

The saddle explodes, doing 2d6 damage to the PC and blowing him 15' into the air. The horse is blown in half with the specially-shaped charge, and the rider comes down in the middle of whatever guts string the two parts of now-deceased horse together.

The rain stops, a needle-scratching-the-record effect plays, and the somber music is replaced by Drunk & Sailor's "Whiskey Johnny." The entire gallery swiftly moves back (it's on hidden wheels) and is pulled away by ropes from backstage, and the King and patrons leave in an orderly and clearly practiced escape through concealed exits.

The Amber Thane pulls off his full barrel helm – somehow his head is a huge bottle of whiskey with a cartoonish animated face, and he shouts that it's time to get the party started.

The men-at-arms all seem to whirl about, and the PCs see that they are actually just false facades on poles being held

by gold-skinned goblin warriors. They roar and prepare to charge.

The fight begins apace. The Amber Thane rides up to within 60' of the PCs and starts blasting away with his Whiskey Lance. Whenever a PC fails their save and must dance for a round, a graphic on the AVS scoreboard appears, showing that the crawl is donating 1,000 gp for every forced dance to the Jose Villalobos House for War Widows and Orphans.

The Cupronickel goblins fight strategically; depending on circumstances, they might charge and engage, leap behind the wall and fire their blowguns from cover, spread out amongst targets, or gang up, etc. No dishonorable tactic is beneath them, and they love to gang up and grapple, taking turns pummeling and picking the PCs' pockets.

Healing Serge is up on the tower where he can watch the adventure from behind cover on his multiple AVS rig, and as needed he spends his round rising from behind cover, blasting a hurt ally with healing lightning (up to 6 times, he can heal 1d6 points of damage for a conscious ally within line of sight). For his next action, he prefers to crouch down and take full cover until he needs to heal anyone, but clever PCs may find ways of targeting him before he can hide.

The door to the tower is locked but it's a plywood prop and easy to smash through (DC 12 Strength check, apply deed die to rolls) or blow off its hinges (3 hp). From inside, it's obvious that the tower is a wooden façade – there is nothing inside but a treasure chest covered in the PCs' sponsor's logo, a 30' ladder to the 8'x8' platform Serge waits on, and the door to the next room. Serge is not allowed to attack PCs until they either attack or breach the tower. If his chances look good, he might use a spell, but he can't heal himself with his special gloves and surrenders as soon he finds himself in any real danger.

The treasure chest is a gaudy thing with the PCs' sponsor's logo on an overlay wrap. The chest is trapped: the overlay wrap with the logo is a magical hazard, which can be spotted and disarmed by a clever thief (DC 13 Find Trap and DC 15 Disable Trap checks). To disarm it, the thief must carefully slide the entire wrap off without tearing it. Any failed attempt to disable the trap means it automatically activates: the chest suddenly becomes irresistibly sticky, and whoever tries to open it is stuck. What's more, the chest suddenly flies into the air with the stuck adventurer. It flies two full circuits around the arena, with the adventurer flopping along behind it, before it crash-lands in the list, doing 2d6 damage to its unwilling passenger.

Whether or not the trap is activated or disarmed, the referee announces the PCs' treasure. A local celebrity (judge's choice, or the King from the gallery) hands them the *Ret-Coin*.

The referees declare the room a Crawler Victory once it's apparent that the PCs are absolutely going to win. They blow an air horn, and any surviving monsters stand down (perhaps gratefully, perhaps with a little trash talk as appropriate).

Treasure: The team wins 2,000 gold pieces, and a pass good for a full year of movies for the PCs and one guest each. There is also one magic item that the PCs know from television – the *Ret-Coin*. The *Ret-Coin* is a shiny platinum coin

with an embossed rendering of Emperor Ronald the 1st on both sides, giving a thumbs-up on one side and a thumbs-down on the other. The holder of the coin can ret-con any one action – essentially a single combat round – for a foe, a friend, or themselves. The target re-rolls any dice checks they make (attack rolls, saving throws, etc.) and may even choose an altogether different action. The *Ret-Coin* disappears, returning to the Adventurer's Guild vault after each use, and is usually awarded several times a season.

In addition, if the PCs complete the room and their assigned jousting horse is not annihilated, the PC jousting horse, Dame Dulce.

The door to area 1-2 is locked (DC 12 Pick Lock check), but not trapped.

The Amber Thane, hobgoblin-construct hybrid: Init +3; Atk war club +3 melee (1d7+2); AC 17; HD 1d4+2d12+3; hp 20; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP Whiskey Lance, crit 1d8/II, fumble d16, infravision, construct traits; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +1; AL N.

The Amber Thane is a magical construct head on a hobgoblin host. In combat, he uses his horse as much as possible, staying mobile to keep his foes off balance.

The Thane's main weapon is his lance, which fires an amber ray of magical whiskey up to 60' away. Targets feel the warm rush of inebriation steal over them, and must succeed at a DC 12 Fort save or move one level down the Drunk Chart (p. 4), and spend their next turn dancing.

As a construct, the Thane is immune to *sleep*, mind control, illusion, and *charm* effects.

Cupronickel Goblins (12): Init +0; Atk handaxe +2 melee (1d4+1) or blowgun +2 missile fire (1 plus poison); AC 13; HD 1d7; hp 6; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP crit 1d6/I, fumble d8, limited thief skills, infravision; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will -1; AL C.

Cupronickel goblins are terrible miscreants of the Zurah'ah'zurah, hated by man and elf and goblin alike. They are stealthy and cunning, and have a +4 bonus to Climb Sheer Surfaces, Hide in Shadows, Sneak Silently, and Pick Pocket checks.

Their blowgun needles are poisoned – victims must make a DC 11 Fort save or be nauseated for 1d3 rounds, suffering a -1d penalty on attack rolls and spell checks during that time.

Serge "Healing Serge" LaJoie, 1st-level wizard: Init +1; Atk dagger +0 melee (1d4) or dart +1 missile fire (1d4+1) or spell; AC 11; HD 1d4+1d4+2; hp 9; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP spells (+3 spell check: *charm person, feather fall, magic shield, read magic, ropework, runic alphabet*), crit 1d6/I, fumble d4; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +4; AL N.

Spellburn stats: Str 11, Agi 13, Sta 15, Luck 16

Serge "Healing Serge" LaJoie, émigré from the Kingdom of France, is a pro Xcrawl wizard. DJ Crunch Time gave him a special item of power for this adventure: a pair of fingerless gloves that let him fire a blast of healing lightning at conscious allies within line of sight (healing 1d6 points of damage per blast; 6 charges).

Dame Dulce, medium warhorse: Init +1; Atk hoof +1 melee (1d6); AC 14; HD 2d8+4; hp 15; MV 60'; Act 1d20; SP crit 1d8/I, fumble d8, heightened senses; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +0; AL N.

Horses have sharper senses than humans, and roll a d24 for any check involving scent or hearing.

Use the above stats for both horses.

Dame Dulce is a costly prize: keeping a horse costs 600-900 gp per month on average. A warhorse is considered a very handsome gift, and if the PCs give it to a nobleman or celebrity with a higher fame score than themselves, they earn 1d3 points of Fame.

Area 1-4 – Dungeon Stairs: *The door opens to a flagstone stairway leading down into darkness. You hear spooky laughter, moaning, and the rattling of chains echoing upwards. The lights are low – you can only see by the faint glow of the hovering AVS advertisements that line both sides of the hallway.*

Dwarves can instantly tell that the "flagstone" stairs are concrete imitations. If the PCs listen a while, they quickly realize that the ghostly sounds are on a 30-second loop.

The door to area 1-5 is unlocked. PCs listening at the door hear animated conversation from the other side.

Area 1-5 – Not All Who Wander Get Tossed: *You open this door to a startling sight: a group of monsters and humanoids, fearsome and armed for battle, milling around. They stop talking when you enter. One of them, a red-skinned devil in a white jacket and yachting hat, holding a furious-looking oversized pug dog of evil aspect under each arm, waves as best he can to get your attention. On the far wall behind the group of creatures is a 20'-long splatter-painted warning: "BEWARE WANDERING MONSTERS." There are five doors leading out of this room . . . all of which are wide open.*

The creatures you see are the devil with the pugs, a 10'-tall ridiculously-muscled bull-headed humanoid in heavy armor, a female orc in modern sports armor holding a compound bow with a scope, an elderly goblin in robes folding paper, and a disembodied spectral face, like a Halloween ghoul painted on an animated sheet.

Under the influence of Bacchus, this series of encounters has gone completely haywire. Areas 1-6 through 1-9 were designed to be singular encounters that the PCs would discover one at a time. Monster Keeper Jed Alexander, nudged by Bacchus into sharing a case of beer with his manticores buddy, forgot to lock the doors leading to their encounters after his final check.

The "devil" in the yachting cap is Commodore Beelzebub, a corruption-marked former crawler who hires out as a monster. When he gets the PCs' attention, he lets them know that someone let them out of their individual rooms, and since they are all here they should get started. At this, he releases the war pugs and the battle begins in earnest.

This group has not trained together, so they just fall into their natural roles in combat. The Maxitaur charges whoever he perceives to be the greatest threat. Splitfoot fades back and fires arrows at likely targets, taking cover in the corner of a doorway if possible. Commodore Beelzebub might duel a spellcaster; otherwise he uses his magic to suppress the



fighters. The Origami Master creates creatures, hoping to throw chaos into the adventurers' ranks. The war pugs fight as a team – if they steal a limb from a PC, they both run off and hide it in area 1-7, then return to the fray.

The Master of Riddles, a projection from another dimension that cannot be physically harmed, floats about during the battle, asking the PCs if they are ready for his riddle. He and Commodore Beelzebub do not get along, and they may trade barbed insults during the fight.

If a PC agrees, the Master of Riddles shares this:

*"I herald Joy, deliver Madness;
Sacrificed at sea, a Naming;
Grapeshot to unleash the Dancers;
Siren to incite the lover;
Tomorrow – still as Death, forsaken.
Tonight – I dance, and woo, and sparkle.*

What am I?"

The answer is Champagne, and the PCs have as many chances as they need to guess it. The Master loves his work and is happy to repeat his riddle if the PCs request, but he will not give hints. The PCs must answer it before the door to area 1-10 will open.

A harried-looking referee runs in from area 1-4 1d3 rounds after combat begins. No one on staff was expecting this battle. The ref is worried about the effect of this unexpected fight on the overall contest, and might declare Adventurer Victory quicker than is strictly warranted (judge's discre-

tion). Assuming the PCs eventually win, he apologizes for the unexpected turn of events and tells the PCs to go on with the dungeon as normal.

Commodore Beelzebub, 2nd-level wizard: Init +1; Atk pitchfork +1 melee (1d8) or spell; AC 15; HD 1d4+2d4-3; hp 7; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP spells (+4 spell check: *enlarge* [unwanted attention, eye in forehead], *magic missile*, *magic shield* [cast with 1d24], *ropework*, *ward portal* [mundane animals flee in terror]), crit 1d6/I, fumble d4, sea captain; SV Fort -1, Ref +2, Will +2; AL C.

Spellburn stats: Str 12, Agi 15, Sta 7, Luck 9

Commodore Beelzebub has already cast *magic shield* (result 25: +4 AC; blocks *magic missile*; reduces damage from arrows, sling stones, etc., by 10 points each; remaining duration: 28 minutes).

Commodore Beelzebub (real name Pedro Cabral) is a former crawler who invoked voluntary corruption in order to win a match, and wound up looking like a cartoon devil. He has red skin, arched eyebrows, a pointy goatee, and a thin red pointed tail. His unique look brings him to the attention of a lot of DJs, including Crunch Time. The Commodore speaks English and Portuguese, and is a master mariner, making all sailing and navigation skill checks on a d24+2.

Bart the Maxitaur: Init +1; Atk battle scythe +4 melee (1d14+4); AC 17; HD 4d8+4; hp 33; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP crit on 19-20, crit 1d10/II, fumble d12, unerring maze sense, darkvision, heightened senses, tremendous strength; Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +0; AL N

The Maxitaur is a genetically-engineered minotaur. Trainers treat it with special muscle-building tinctures, giving it amazing strength (+4 Str bonus). It uses an oversized battle scythe, too large and heavy for a man-sized creature of normal strength to wield.

The Maxitaur has a perfect sense of direction; it never gets lost and can find its way unerringly through any maze or labyrinth. The creature can see perfectly in the dark up to 120' away. Its other senses are supernaturally acute as well, and the beast is +1d on any check for perception, scenting, tracking, or noticing an ambush.

Hell Pugs (2): Init +2; Atk bite +2 melee (1d4-1); AC 13; HD 1d8+3; hp 9, 11; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SP crit on 19-20, snatch limbs on critical hit; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +3; AL C.

Hell pugs are infernal pug dogs, oversized and magical creatures summoned from a far-off infernal plane. Their bite isn't extremely dangerous, but they have a strange magical effect men fear: on a roll of a 19 or 20, they snatch one of their target's limbs off (rolled randomly). This does no additional damage and leaves a bloodless wound – the arm or leg simply comes away, leaving a smooth stump instead of torn flesh and bone. Typically, hell pugs run off with the stolen limb and hide it while their victim is reduced to either crawling or fighting with only one arm. If the limb is retrieved, it can simply be touched back to the body and it instantly reattaches without complications. Hell pugs are beings of Chaos and can be turned by lawful clerics.

Splitfoot, 2nd-level orc warrior: Init +3; Atk composite longbow +1d4+4 missile fire (1d6+deed die) or trench knife +1d4 melee (1d4+deed die); AC 17; DH 1d4+2d12+3; hp 19; MV 25; Act 1d20; SP 1d4 deed die, crit on 19-20, crit 1d14/III, fumble d8, infravision, immune to poison and disease, Fame 27; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +0; AL N.

Splitfoot is an orc warrior from the Zurah'ah'zurah, an Xcrawl veteran and dangerous competitor with her own fan club. She wears light composite sports armor, has a composite longbow, a quiver with 37 arrows, and a trench knife. She is a smart warrior – she fights strategically, targeting arcane and divine spellcasters whenever possible. She puts her personal safety first, and she will absolutely surrender when things start looking sketchy.

The Origami Master: Init -1; Atk dagger +0 melee (1d4-1); AC 15; HD 1d8-1; hp 6; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP magic origami, origami armor, crit 1d6/I, fumble d4, infravision; SV Fort -1, Ref +1, Will +3; AL N.

The Origami Master comes from an ancient arcane tradition almost unknown on the surface world. This is a goblin who can use paper to create monsters to attack his foes. Similar to *monster summoning*, the Origami Master can create up to 10 HD of creatures per day, maximum 3 HD for any given creatures. Creatures remain for up to one hour and are perfectly loyal to the Origami Master. They differ from the creature they mimic in one important way – they are vulnerable to fire, taking x2 damage from flame attacks.

Area 1-6 – Shooting Gal's Aerie: *This hallway is well-lit, and the floating AVS advertisements you see are all for sporting and camping gear. As you take a left, you see a 4'-high steel barrier at the end of the hallway. Behind it is a rack filled with arrows. On the far wall is a cabinet with the crawl logo.*

This is where the PCs were to encounter Splitfoot. Behind the barrier are three bottles of Kaveshade Stout (a banned microbrew from the Zurah'ah'zurah, the underground cave kingdom ruled by the mysterious Alfar), three empty bottles, and a bag full of cold French fries. The cabinet is unlocked and not trapped. Inside is a gift certificate for 500 gp worth of tattooing, piercing, or colorizing from local studio, and a sealed vial containing an *elixir of stealth*. The *elixir of stealth* grants +1d on all attempts to be stealthy (including Sneak Silently and Hide in Shadows) for 1 turn.

Area 1-7 – Doghouse: *You turn the corner and see a huge doghouse, painted with the logo for Empire Pet and Farm Supply. There are two empty bowls out front, labeled "Diesel" and "Violet".*

This is where the PCs were supposed to encounter the war pugs. Inside the doghouse is a certificate for a year's supply of Serious Hunter Premium Dog Food and a *booster wand*. The *booster wand* is a minor magical item. It has six charges, and an arcane spellcaster can spend a charge to roll 1d16+4 for a spell check rather than 1d20.

Area 1-8 – Yacht Rock!: *As you turn the corner you are surprised to see a 60' yacht on a trailer parked along the south wall. The yacht is full of attractive men and women wearing sailing clothes and NonCom badges, who cheer and blast confetti poppers as you enter.*

This is where the PCs were to encounter Commodore Beelzebub. The cheers of the models on the boat are genuine; the Commodore had been a real jerk, ordering them around and criticizing the boat. The models wave the PCs over and hand them a certificate good for 10 sailing lessons from the Toronto Imperial Yacht Club, and an *inspiration gem*. If a divine spellcaster touches the *inspiration gem* to their forehead, they feel a rush of clarity, insight, and focus (it's like meditating for eight hours in a single instant). The next spell check, turn unholy checks, or *lay on hands* attempt they make is at +1d. The gem has six charges.

Area 1-9 – Cow Con!: *The corridor dead-ends, but there is an opening leading north. The passageway is designed to look as if someone burst in through the wall, complete with faux rubble. The area beyond the breach opens into a room with rough stone walls. The room has an intense smell of penned animals.*

This is where the PCs were supposed to encounter the Maxitaur. If the PCs declare they are searching the walls, they find a hinged "rock," the opening to a cubby. The cubby is trapped (DC 12 Find Trap and DC 13 Disable Trap checks; any failed check triggers). If the cubby is opened before the trap is disarmed, a hatchway in the ceiling opens and Tom, a second Maxitaur (see area 1-5 for stats), drops down in the center of the chamber and attacks, focusing on the PC who opened the cubby.

Inside the cubby are several prizes: a flask of *warrior tonic*, a *familiar's ladder*, and a genuine dwarven bash shield (increases shield bash damage to 1d4). The *warrior's tonic* increases battle prowess: the drinker's deed die is +2d for 6 rounds after drinking. The *familiar's ladder* is an elvish magic item, a thin knotted rope braided from the hair of magical beasts. The ladder has six knots, and pulling one tight unknots it and releases magical energy. Each knot can be expended to give the caster +1d when casting either their Lucky spell or *invoke patron*.

In addition, there is a note here: each of the PCs win a year's supply of figs, dates, and honey from Imperial Provisions of Reseda.

Area 1-10 — Locks, Shocks, and One Smoking Monster: *Beyond the door on the east wall of the Wandering Monster room is a stairway leading to a landing.*

If the PCs haven't solved the Riddle Master's riddle, then this ends in a blank wall. Once the PCs state the correct answer, then a door appears. When the PCs approach the door, an AVS activates on the north wall, and DJ Crunch Time – dressed like Sherlock Holmes, with a calabash pipe and deerstalker cap – says:

"Congratulations, <PC TEAM>, for making it this far. You have done well – you are a definitely a tough bunch. So we know you can fight, but can you think? This is the Crunch Time Escape Room. Here's how it works. The room begins in total magical darkness. Once your entire team is inside and the door is shut behind you, I dispel the darkness, and the countdown clock starts. You have 90 seconds to find the keys, unlock the locks, open the door, and escape. Failure to do so shall have fatal repercussions.

Some keys are hidden, some appear when you solve puzzles, and some require other skills to obtain. Hey, <PC THIEF> – you might be thinking about trying to skip finding the keys and just pick those locks. Word to the wise – think carefully about that. Okay, as soon as you are ready, step inside and shut the door. In the name of Wise Trivia, I wish you good fortune."

When all the PCs are inside and the door is shut, the lights go up and the PCs are looking at the escape room.

This is a 30'x30' room with a door on the east wall. Looking around, you notice that the door you came through is gone, and the west wall is now just a brick wall. On the north wall, you see six framed photographs of city skylines, each with a red button underneath. On the south wall, you see a framed photograph of a horrific monster. You see a square barred window on the south wall near the exit door. In the southeast corner of the room is a table dressed in crushed velvet, upon which stands a full bottle of Amber Thane Whiskey and a shot glass. On the east wall, next to the door, is a framed poster with some kind of number puzzle and a keypad built into the wall next to it. The door itself has six locks, each marked with different logos.

The entire ceiling is a giant AVS, currently showing a massive retro-future-style digital flip clock. It is currently at 90 seconds, but begins to count down.

The six locks on the door are each keyed to a sponsor. The



locks have the sponsors' logos next to them, and the keys have matching logos.

Picking the locks is discouraged, but not taboo. The first attempt to pick a lock earns a verbal warning from the AVS above. Subsequent attempts result in ten seconds subtracted from the clock. Locks picked in this manner still count, though, and a quick enough thief might just be able to open all the locks before the clock runs out.

Bashing the door triggers a magical pushback – figure out how much damage would have been caused; the damage kinetically backlashes against the basher.

The PCs need to use a different method to find each key, as listed below. When a key appears, a PC has to actually pick it up and use it to unlock the lock (normally taking a round). Judges are encouraged to track everyone's actions during the 9 rounds on the clock!

- BareFace Productions key: The six framed photographs of city skylines on the north each have a red button under them. In every picture they see words built in (on a billboard, or written across several windows of a skyscraper, etc.): "CHOOSE THE CITY WHICH DOES NOT BELONG." The choices are San Diego, Baltimore, Milwaukee, Austin, Utica, and Seattle. The answer is Austin (the only city in the list whose entire name doesn't end in a vowel). Hitting the button under Austin makes the picture shatter, and behind it is the key. Hitting a wrong button subtracts 10 seconds from the clock.

- **Dezi and Dani's Ice Cream key:** This key is hidden under a false panel on the floor. Elves passing within 10' have a chance to notice it as if it were a secret door (DC 13 Int check). PCs declaring they search the floor may also find it (DC 13 Int check).
- **Morson Motorcycles key:** The framed photo of the monster – a bat-winged ball of tentacles, glowing red eyes, and multiple mouths – hides this key. If a PC declares they are investigating the picture, they look into it and the actual monster materializes in front of the picture and attacks on the same round. Once the tentacle harrier is destroyed, it disappears and the key appears in its place, falling to the floor.
- **O'Hair Outsourcing Solutions key:** The square barred window on the south wall opens to a 5'-long shaft. At the end of the shaft, the key hangs on a peg on the wall. It's too far to reach, and the bars are too narrow for even the tiniest halfling to make it through. Bending the bars is allowed – extremely difficult, but possible (DC 23 Str check). Possible solutions include snatching it up with line and a hook, using a magnet, summoning a small animal, etc. A sufficiently powerful *cantrip* spell (spell check result 18+) allows an arcane caster to magically float it out.
- **Odyssey Motors key:** The number puzzle on the east wall has the following numbers, followed by a blank space: 8, 13, 21, 34, _____. There is a 10-key pad built into the wall next to the poster. A PC has to type in the correct number. When they do, the key falls out of nowhere and lands next to the door. The correct number is 55 (it's the Fibonacci Sequence). If the wrong answer is entered, a harsh buzzer sounds, but there is no ill effect.
- **Amber Thane Whiskey key:** If a PC pours a shot and drinks it, a word appears in the bottom of the glass: "Use." A PC can pour, drink, and read the word in one round. If they do it again, one more word appears, and again and again until eventually they have the full phrase: "Use Twice Key BareFace" (4 rounds total). The BareFace key opens the Amber Thane Whiskey lock as well. (This is the only key that can open more than one lock.) Note that each shot of whiskey means rolling against inebriation (see the Drunk Chart, p. 4).

When the clock gets down to 30 seconds, the flip clock turns red and the words CRUNCH TIME begin to flash under the display.

When the clock gets down to 20 seconds, the PCs get a chance to add time. An AVS appears on their side of the door reading: "MAKE A RESOLUTION! Resolve to not use one of your favorite spells or favorite weapons for ten bonus seconds." If the PCs declare one out loud (it can't be a spell or weapon they lost or have not used yet), ten seconds are added to the clock. If they use the weapon or spell anyway, whatever creatures they use it against in the final challenge (zombies, ghouls, etc), are replaced one round later, entering from the NoGo door on the east wall in area 1-13. They can do this up to three times, for a bonus of 30 seconds.

If the clock gets to zero, the room rattles as if experiencing an earthquake for one round (during which the PCs can still open a lock and escape). On the next round, several tons of rocks and dirt fall through the ceiling, crushing and smothering the PCs to death instantly.

Tentacle Harrier (1): Init +1; Atk tentacle +2 melee (1d6 plus poison); AC 11; HD 2d10; hp 19; MV fly 30'; Act 1d20; SP numbing poison, mental charm, crit 1d7/I, fumble d4; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +2; AL N.

This is a monster summoned from the Dungeon Dimension. It appears to be a 3'-wide ball of fanged tentacles, wicked red eyes, and obscene mouths with tiny, sharp teeth. It leaves foul black smoke in its wake when it flies, with a hideous scent reminiscent of a tire fire. The creature has bat wings but it flies and hovers through Willpower.

Creatures struck with its tentacle attack must make a DC 10 Fort save. Failure means the PC's limbs are numbed, making it difficult for them to manipulate objects. This results in a -1d penalty for melee and ranged attacks, and a -1 penalty to spell checks.

Once per turn, the creature can focus all of its eyes on an opponent within 30' and attempt to take over their will: treat as *charm person*, with the monster's check being 1d20+2. The harrier controls the PCs with mental commands; in this case, he forces them to protect itself, thereby preventing the PCs from achieving their goal.

Area 1-11 – Break Room: *The door opens to a fanfare of trumpets. You find yourselves in a break room. You see comfortable couches, a craft service table with food and drinks including several bottles of wine, a cooler full of soda, and a touch-up mirror. You see a young man in scrubs next to an examination table. He stands up as you enter, weaving a bit, and applauding. There is a door in the north wall, presumably going deeper into the dungeon.*

Paramedic Ravi Nandi is here to help wounded characters. Unfortunately, Bacchus's influence affected even this serious soul, who got talked into drinking Flaming Dr. Sappa shots with the catering crew at lunch. He can work on characters if requested, but he's not at his best – his total healing check is 1d20+0, and he needs a 12 or higher to heal a wounded PC (1 point per character level, max 3 hp; PCs can only benefit from this once per wound and not after they have received magical healing). If Nandi gets called on his drunkenness, he breaks down in shame; he never drinks, he's a hard worker who attends medical school at night, and he's never done anything like this before.

PCs can spend a maximum of 30 minutes in the break room, after which time they are first warned that they need to finish the dungeon, and then disqualified if they refuse.

Area 1-12 – Final Exit: *The door at the top of the stairs opens to a small room. You see a northern passageway leading to stairs going up. In the distance you hear the roar of the crowd.*

DJ Crunch Time himself is here, along with a referee, a cameraman, a producer, and several assistants. Crunch Time addresses the team and camera at once: "Hey, there you are! I just wanted

*to personally say, congratulations on coming this far! You guys rock, I mean that. When this is all over we HAVE to hang out, I'm not kidding! Okay, but that's for tomorrow – today you have one final challenge to face. Take those stairs up to the final room. Your challenge – defeat the creatures you see, and rescue the Baby New Year! How does that *hic* woah, sorry, where dit that come from? How does that sound? Kay-kay, go forth with the blessing of the Empire! Next Year needs you and the clock is ticking! Crunch Time, what! I love you Toronto! What? Whoooo!"*

Crunch Time and his entire staff are obviously more than a little drunk at this point. They all shamble back down to the break room. They will communicate with the team, but they are all still disciplined enough not to give away any secrets except one: if the PCs are cool and treat the DJ well, just before they leave he calls out *"Hey, last thing – the door in isn't trapped or locked or nothing. We ran out of budget! Hehehehe – division three, am I right? Kay-kay have fun!"*

The door is not trapped, nor are the stairs. The roar of the crowd gets louder and louder as they get closer to the door to area 1-13.

Area 1-13 – Office Party of the Damned: *You open the door and the crowd gives you a huge cheer. Looking around, you see you are in an arena with perhaps five thousand people in the stands, on their feet and screaming. You find yourselves on a 20'x20' platform, with a stairway going down from the east side.*

The arena floor has been set-dressed to look like an office space during its holiday party. You see many small cubicles in straight rows, grey carpeted floors, a water cooler filled with something red, and four glassed-in meeting rooms on the opposite wall. Balloons are attached to several desks, there is a huge sheet cake on a table near the water cooler, and crepe paper streamers hang all over the place. As you watch, humanoid begin to rise from the cubicles to stare at you. Each one's face has been covered with a yellow smiley-faced mask. Some have pointy party hats on, others clutch noisemakers. The humanoids all reach up toward you, and you see that their skin is grey – and in some cases, you can see bones through gaps in their flesh.

There is a large central cube towards the far wall. Inside you see two frames containing what appear to be several horrifying faces, all sewn together. Between the two frames is a cage with a little man in a top hat, patent leather boots, a toga, and a sash with NEW YEAR written across it. The faces in the screens are babbling at the figure in the top hat, who looks extremely dismayed to be stuck so.

In front of that large cubicle is a gang of skeletons in torn coveralls, each holding a longbow. They look up at you and begin taking aim. From the four glass meeting rooms, four humanoids in suits stare out through the glass – they are balding, fanged humanoids, unmasked and with the fierce looks of predators.

Hanging over the arena is a three-sided AVS scoreboard, slowly rotating. One side has an advert for Sappa-Kay soda, the next has your names and your statistics, and the third side has a flashing message – RESCUE BABY NEW YEAR!

The PCs must get past the creatures, open the cage, and physically remove Baby New Year in order to win the chal-

lenge. The cage has to be unclamped from the bottom, and then lifted off.

The creatures in the cubicles are office zombies. They start shambling out, trying to get to the nearest PC. If they can, they will grapple the PCs and force them into a cube, so the disembodied hand can grab them (see below).

The skeletons hold position and fire arrows at any targets they see. While the PCs are on the platform and stairs, the railing gives them partial cover against missile fire (+2 AC). Once on the office floor, the cubicle walls themselves may also provide some cover.

The four humanoids in the glass-walled offices against the north wall are ghouls. On their first turn, they slip out of their offices, then crouch down and sneak around through the cubicles, planning to sneak up behind the crawlers and attack with surprise.

The PCs must deal with other less obvious hazards. The X in front of the central cubicle (see map) is a 10'-deep pit covered by an illusion so that it looks like the rest of the floor. Characters attempting to move over it fall through to the bottom, taking 1d6 damage and setting off an alarm siren. When they hear the siren, all surviving ghouls stop whatever they are doing and charge as fast as they can to climb down into the pit to slay and devour the unfortunate. A special Pit Cam view shows whatever takes place on the AVS scoreboard.

The cubes themselves are protected by necromantic force. Any PC who enters a cube or attempts to run across the top of the cubes (which requires a DC 14 Agility check to do so without falling) becomes targeted by a **huge disembodied green hand** that attempts to grab them (grab attack +3; PCs face a maximum of one grab attack per round no matter how many cubes they enter, leave, or run across). Grabbed PCs are forced down into a chair in the cube and must make a DC 10 Will Save, or they start doing meaningless, soul-sucking office work. Victims can attempt to save at the beginning of their action to break free of the cubicle curse. PCs stuck working in a cube are seen as allies and ignored by the undead creatures until they break free. Note that this does not occur in the center cube with Baby New Year.

The water cooler filled with red is actually filled with wine. However, the power of Bacchus has infused it, making it five gallons of holy wine. Pouring it on an un-dead creature causes them 1d6 damage per round, and there is enough wine for 12 such attacks.

The two frames in the center cube that flank Baby New Year contain animated un-dead faces that have been sewn together and stretched to fit the frames. They are a harmless special effect, and just jabber at the protesting Baby New Year. A single slash from an edged weapon will destroy them, although they are more or less immune to blunt weapons and can take many arrow wounds before shutting down.

"Baby New Year" was supposed to be just a small actor. However, this fellow has been possessed by Mighty Bacchus himself, who decided that the actor's body was the best seat



in the house. Once the PCs free him, several things happen at once.

An air horn sounds, signaling the end of the room. The PCs are victorious, and the crowd goes wild.

Bacchus uses his divine power to put the entire stadium – including the PCs – into a kind of delirious fugue state. When they come back to, the world has changed:

- Somehow it is now ten seconds until midnight.
- All of the un-dead creatures, whether the PCs destroyed them or not, return to life – they are all young office workers, snatched from the Underworld and given a second chance at life. They realize what happened and are jubilant, overjoyed to be alive again.
- The whole stadium counts down the seconds to the New Year. The office workers, returned from the dead, cheer wildly.

When the clock strikes midnight, confetti and balloons rain down from the ceiling. Any of the PCs who wish it can find a willing partner for a kiss at midnight among the celebratory office workers. Once each player decides this, let them know that anyone who gets a kiss at midnight gets 1d6 Luck points as a special blessing from Bacchus.

One of the resurrected office workers is a blood relative of Bacchus himself, a distant relative far removed with only the most tenuous blood connection. Bacchus reaches him directly, and they become a powerful minion and Xcrawl

contender. If the PCs lost a comrade in this adventure, this new cleric might be convinced to join the team. They are especially powerful – roll 4d6 and drop the lowest die for their stats, choose their stat placement, and begin them with the minimum experience for 2nd level.

Office Zombie (15): Init -3; Atk fist +1 melee (1d3) or grab +1 melee (1 + grapple); AC 10; HD 1d18; hp 7; MV 20', single moves only; Act 1d20; SP grapple (pull target into cubicle), crit 1d4/I, fumble d4, un-dead traits, office work; SV Fort +2, Ref -3, Will +0; AL N.

Office zombies are special creations of the American Necromancer's Guild, created from the corpses of temps, accountants, and cube drones who died on the job. They have some semblance of their former memories, hate their existences, and want to drag other mortals down with them.

Office zombies are un-dead, and do not need to eat, sleep, drink, or breathe. They are immune to sleep, charm, and paralysis effects, as well as any sort of mind/emotion control. Office zombies can still perform basic office functions, such as copying and data entry (10 wpm).

Maintenance Skeletons (6): Init +1; Atk longbow +1 missile fire (1d6); AC 13; HD 1d8; hp 7; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP crit 1d8/II, fumble d8, un-dead traits, half damage from piercing/slashing weapons, maintain and repair; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +0; AL N.

Maintenance skeletons are minion un-dead, drawn from a labor pool of corpses. They retain vestiges of their former

thoughts, and are slightly more autonomous than other skeletons.

Maintenance skeletons are un-dead, and do not need to eat, sleep, drink, or breathe. They are immune to *sleep*, *charm*, and *paralysis* effects, as well as any sort of mind/emotion control. Maintenance skeletons can function as janitorial staff or odd-jobs men, and can understand and obey commands as complicated as, "Get all of the storm windows in, stopping only to kill any onlookers who show up."

Boss Ghouls (4): Init +1; Atk claw +1 melee (1d3) or bite +1 melee (1d3 plus paralysis); AC 13; HD 2d8; hp 12; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP crit 1d8/II, fumble d4, un-dead traits, command un-dead, light sensitivity, stealth; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +3; AL C.

Boss ghouls have failed upwards out of the grave and are here to make you pray for death. They are the foul middle managers of un-life, who exist only to feed on the living.

On a successful bite attack, the victim must make a DC 11 Fort save or be paralyzed for 1 turn. Paralyzed victims are usually dragged off to be devoured.

Boss ghouls are un-dead, and do not need to eat, sleep, drink, or breathe. They are immune to *sleep*, *charm*, and *paralysis* effects, as well as any sort of mind/emotion control. They are intelligent and fearless except for fire, which they flee from. Daylight and extreme bright light conditions weaken and disorient them, dropping them -1d on the chain for attacks and skill checks. Boss ghouls are supernaturally stealthy - the better to creep up and catch you goofing off. They are +1d for any sneak or hide check.

Boss ghouls can command lesser un-dead (fewer HD than themselves) through eye contact and gestures. Each boss ghoul can command up to 3x their HD in monsters at any given time.

CONCLUSION

Due to the strangeness surrounding this crawl, it is decided to end it early. The PC team wins by default! The victorious team is invited to the traditional dinner with DJ Crunch Time. Everyone is a little confused after the strange events of the Toronto crawl, and lots of folks decide to stick with diet soda. The PC team meets many local aristocrats and celebrities, including the Duke of Toronto and his family, local Xcrawl players (active and retired), and any number of other famous folks. If it serves your campaign, they can make important contacts at Crunch Time's dinner party.

The authorities conclude that all of the strangeness surrounding DJ Crunch Time's Toronto crawl was the work of the Gods of Olympus. As such, all is forgiven and chalked up to the incomprehensible ways of the Gods. Drunken staff members retain their jobs, Crunch Time keeps his new Division III DJ commission, and the PC team gets a bit of a reputation as being favored by the Gods - which directly leads to them winning the Adventurer's Guild Rookie Team of the Year! This earns them all 1d4 points of Fame, and brings them to the attention to many of the movers and shakers of the Xcrawl world.

Apollo and Discordia do indeed have a laugh over the entire affair - the kind of laugh that fails to touch the eyes. They both immediately saw through Drunken Bacchus' plan, but allowed it to go forward, each sensing that they can use the precedent of returning the dead to life in order to revive members of their own bloodlines in their future machinations. On the surface, it seems that their quarrel is ended, but in truth their intrigues are only beginning . . .

The PCs find themselves in demand. Can Division II be far off?

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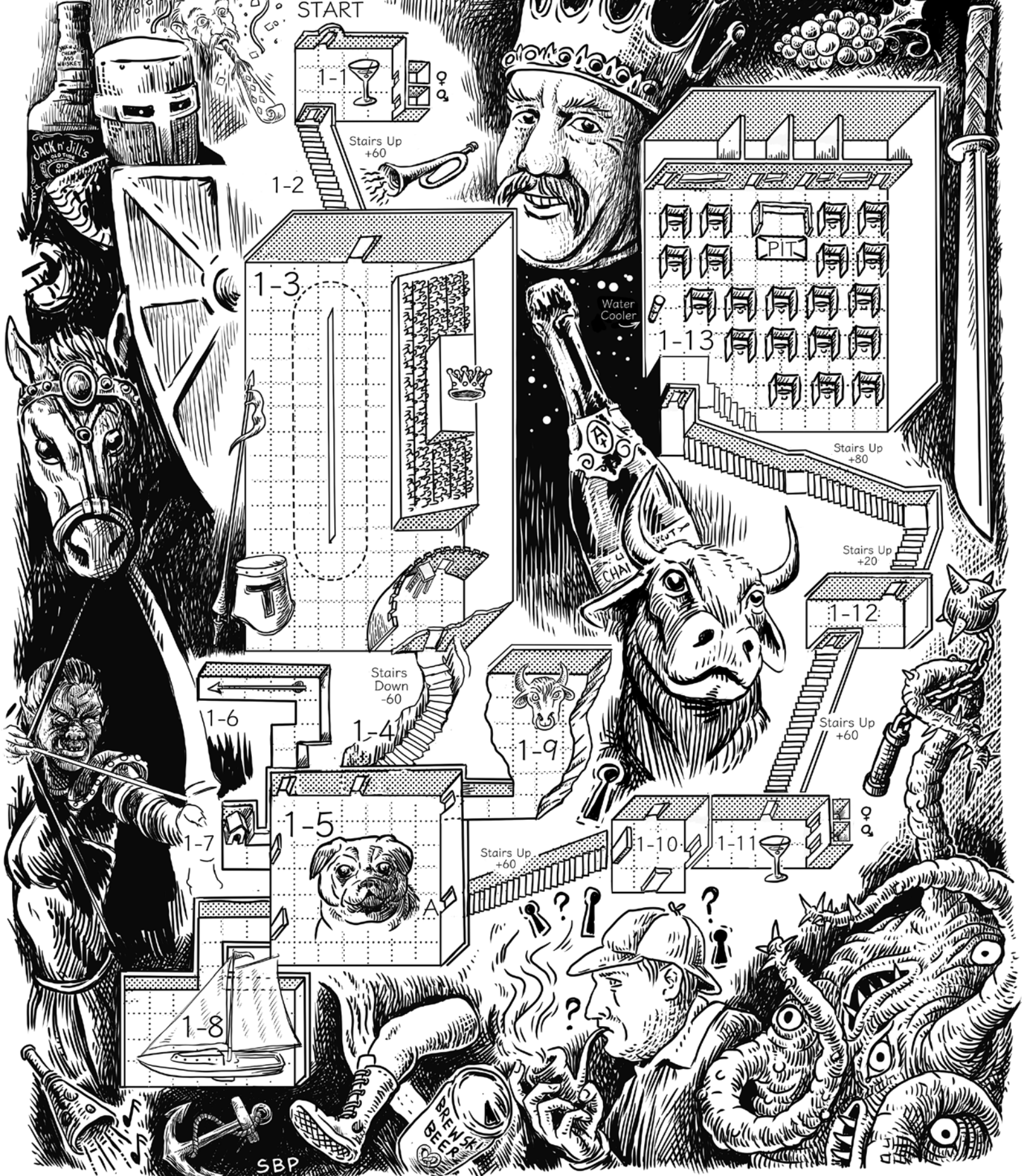
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CRAWL LANG SYNE



START

1-1

Stairs Up
+60

1-2

1-3

Water Cooler

1-13

Stairs Up
+80

Stairs Up
+20

1-12

Stairs Up
+60

Stairs Down
-60

1-6

1-4

1-9

1-7

1-5

Stairs Up
+60

1-10

1-11

1-8

SBP

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XCRAWL: NEW YEAR'S EVIL

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Start the countdown! *Nunc est bacchandum atque Xcrawl ludendum!*



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