

Those Who Scream
Into The Abyss

New occupations, backgrounds and rituals.

Mother

An incursion about trying to go home.



TROPHY

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Those Who Scream Into The Abyss

The following are new options for treasure-hunters for use with the *Incursion Mother*, or any other session of *Trophy*.

OCCUPATIONS

Geomancer (*skilled in construction, omens, rituals*)

Miner (*skilled in appraisal, paths, stone*)

Spider (*skilled in pests, stealth, traps*)

BACKGROUNDS

Grounded Sailor (*skilled in ropes*)

Indebted Butcher (*skilled in slaughter*)

Runaway Kingsguard (*skilled in tracking*)

RITUALS

Knock (*open nearby normal and sorcerous locks*)

Silence (*deafen all nearby for a few minutes*)

Switch (*touch to swap bodies with another*)

Unfall (*temporarily reverse gravity in a small area*)

Ward (*stay concentrating to protect a small area*)

INCURSION

Mother

Content warning: This incursion explores themes of pregnancy and body horror.

If you ask any treasure-hunter who has been at this for a while what the most terrifying thing they've seen in the forest is, there is one location that comes up more often than not. It goes by many names: The Fall, The Pit, The Well, The Quarry. Despite its many names, it's always described the same way.

The ground ahead of me had a slight decline, the descent eventually opening up to a massive hole as wide across as ten-score men lying foot to head. I got closer to see what might be down there. Every step forward filled me with vertigo, that I might fall in at any minute. I couldn't see to the bottom. But I heard it. A thousand hammers tapping against a thousand chisels—plink, plink, plink.

Here the stories diverge. Some say there are miners down there, looking for gold, silver or precious gems. Others say sculptors, crafting idols and rare artifacts for their chthonic gods. Whatever is down there hasn't seen the light of day for hundreds or thousands of years, and anything brought back would surely be a unique trophy capable of fetching a sizable sum.

Oddly, the precise location of this vast opening never seems to be identified in the same place. Some say it is only a few miles off the south bank of the Naveh River, while others place it well to the north, nestled in the depths of the forest. These conflicting reports can almost certainly be attributed to the disorientation nearly all treasure-hunters suffer after time spent in the forest.

THEME

Labor

MOMENTS

- ◇ Your shoulder brushes against the clay, leaving a blood red smear
- ◇ The twisting and straining of your rappelling rope: your lifeline
- ◇ Tapping, steady and powerful like a titanic heartbeat

INCURSION: MOTHER

- ◇ Warm, moist cave air collects on your brow and mingles with your sweat
- ◇ A tight crawl that constricts you like a smothering blanket and suffocates, then the sudden and joyous release into fresh air
- ◇ Catching yourself caressing the cool, delicate face of a stone statue
- ◇ The desperate wail of a frightened child ringing through abandoned tunnels
- ◇ Tears staining the granite face of your pursuer
- ◇ The pulsing red heat of something primordial, unknowable and abundant
- ◇ The eldritch tongue in which the children sob as they are forced to chisel into the face of their mother

CONDITIONS

- ◇ A desire to pick away at the rock face with your fingers or small tools
- ◇ You are suddenly out of breath and coated in sweat, as if after intense work
- ◇ A writhing bulge in your abdomen, which bursts as maggots spill out
- ◇ Persistent nausea and imbalance
- ◇ Everything must be worked and crafted and shaped by your hands
- ◇ You become violently aggressive when anyone slows down or rests
- ◇ The earth calls to you with the voice of your mother
- ◇ You only feel safe when you go deeper, so dig deeper
- ◇ You can't touch anything because your hands are covered in calluses
- ◇ The elemental language of stone and earth grinds away at your brain
- ◇ You are convinced that you can bury your severed limbs to be reborn
- ◇ A crippling fear that every crack stepped on will lead to a rock slide
- ◇ Water the earth with blood
- ◇ You see the stone children for what they really are: bound earth spirits
- ◇ Return everything and everyone to "Mother" by any means necessary

RING 1

TERRORS: The incursion begins just after the treasure-hunters have found the quarry. They cannot see to the bottom, and dropping rocks down never results in a returning echo. They are strapped into their harnesses, rope in hand, rappelling down the face of vast opening. Horizontal veins chase around the wall, indicating the layers and layers of history that have built up this land. Most of the veins are some shade of brown or gray, except for one, which is a bloody red clay.

INCURSION: MOTHER

Questions to ask the treasure-hunters:

- How did you overcome the vertigo that hit you upon seeing the quarry?
- Why are you uncertain about how securely the rope is fastened?
- What legend do people share about the vein of bloody red clay?
- When your rope snaps, who tries to catch you?

TEMPTATIONS: While rappelling down, someone notices a pocket carved into the wall, not far off their line and just wide enough to crawl into. Echoing from deep within the pocket is a rhythmic tapping, like hammer on chisel.

Question:

- One of the following gives you a strange comfort: the steady rhythm, the warmth of the earth, the tight space. Why?

RING 2

TERRORS: Crawling through the pockets in the wall leads to a series of dead ends. Doubling back leads to undiscovered paths and eventually the tapping gets louder, seemingly coming from below. The path is precarious, and any failure or complication on a Risk Roll here leads to a cave-in that splits the party.

Questions:

- How do you push against the darkness?
- How do you know the darkness is stalking you?
- What did you hear just before the cave-in that should have alerted you?
- What makes you think something untoward is happening to your missing companions?

TEMPTATIONS: One half of the split party (preferably the part that was drawn away or further ahead due to the cave-in) finds a well-used hammer, and the head and part of an arm of an exquisitely carved, life-size granite statue of a child. Recovering an unbroken statue would more than fund this expedition.

Questions:

- Who does this statue remind you of and why do you miss them so?
- Why do you neglectfully overlook the residual evidence of binding and bottling sorcery on the statue?

INCURSION: MOTHER

RING 3

TERRORS: After what seems like hours, the treasure-hunters find their way back to each other. But each side believes that something seems different about the companions who were away.

Questions:

- What proves to you that they're not who they say they are?
- How far are you willing to go before you are convinced otherwise?

TEMPTATIONS: The tapping re-emerges, though it doesn't appear to be quite as steady. A studious listen will reveal that there are in fact two speeds of tapping, like one regular and one accelerated heartbeat. Additionally, a thin red vein is discovered along the ceiling. It's hard to get to, but it's rough ruby. The vein widens the deeper the treasure-hunters go, presumably leading to the mother lode.

Questions:

- Chunks of unpolished ruby would be easier to transport than a large granite statue, so why does that statue still compel you?
- When do you realize your heart is beating in sync with the accelerated tapping?
- Why does the tapping seem more important now than the reason you originally came here?

RING 4

TERRORS: By following the vein deeper, the source of the tapping is finally visible: hundreds of masterfully carved stone figures the size and shape of children, hammer at the earth. Occasionally one stops and cries out, seemingly lost and afraid, like a child for their mother.

One stone child's hammer breaks, and they fall to their knees and begin digging. Their fingers smash repeatedly against the hard earth and break into pebbles. Another child trips over them and gets in the way of their sibling's stump-like hands. The digging one smashes the fallen one to bits, oblivious to their presence. The screams of the fallen one are pulverized as soon as they escape their granite mouth. The earth itself trembles.

INCURSION: MOTHER

Questions:

- What folktales are told about little people living in the earth?
- What ancient parable do you recall about a greedy king who imprisoned the earth itself to mine treasures for him?

TEMPTATIONS: Veins of red stone are briefly visible in the holes the children make, warmed and illuminated by some interior source.

Questions:

- Why would it be so easy to grab a handful of the warm red stones?
- How close do you think you could get to one of the children before they notice you?
- Which member of your party are you willing to sacrifice to the children so you can get closer to the warm red stones?

RING 5

TERRORS: Eventually the stone children will notice at least one of the treasure-hunters, likely as the result of a Devil's Bargain, failure, or complication. They refuse to let them take from "Mother" and will fall upon them with hammers. Shattering the children is possible, but every strike lands with a heart-wrenching scream and causes the earth to quake, threatening a cave-in.

Using a ritual to push the earth spirits out of the stone children's bodies is also possible, but the released spirits will only flow into the earth and bring to life a larger and more terrifying stone monstrosity, which will target the caster.

The earth itself will try to put out the party's torches, crack and rumble, and try to misdirect the party into attacking each other.

TEMPTATIONS: Someone gets into a position to touch the warm red stones. Touching one washes the toucher's body in comfort and peace. Nothing hurts anymore and nothing else matters: not the children's hammers, not the boulder crushing the air out of your lungs, not the blades of your companions. Your breath and heartbeat slow until they match the earth itself: still and eternal.

