



WEIRD SCIENCE-FANTASY HORROR SETTING

CARCOSA

by Geoffrey McKinney

Warning: For Adults Only!

Contains explicit descriptions and illustrations of vile black magic and violence



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Preview Document

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Introduction

You hold in your hands a weird science-fantasy supplement for traditional fantasy role-playing games, containing both rules and a setting. You will not find within long-winded histories or encyclopedic descriptions of countries, forests, and rivers. Instead, the world of Carcosa is presented as a numbered hex map filled with 800 encounters and the rules to use them.

Carcosa is a planet 153 light years away from Earth, orbiting a star in the Hyades Cluster. This is definitely a non-traditional setting:

- ⌘ It does not include clerics or magic-users. (Specialists can be used or not without affecting the feel of the setting.) The standard spell-casting classes are replaced by Sorcerers, who use horrific rituals to summon Cthulhoid entities.
- ⌘ There are no Dwarfs, Elves, or Halflings. Instead there are 13 races of men with outré skin colors (Purple Men, Orange Men, Ulfire Men, etc.).
- ⌘ The oozing and alien monsters presented herein are unlike those found in typical fantasy role-playing games.
- ⌘ Carcosa has no magic items to speak of, though there are various high-tech weapons and other items made by the Space Aliens or by things yet more inhuman.
- ⌘ The psionics system in this book is short, simple, and easy to use.



Carcosa is not Tolkien, high fantasy, or mainstream fantasy. It is equal parts horror, science-fiction, and swords & sorcery. It is H. P. Lovecraft's *At the Mountains of Madness*, Robert E. Howard's "Worms of the Earth" and "A Witch Shall Be Born," Lin Carter's "Carcosa Story about Hali," and Michael Moorcock's "While the Gods Laugh."

There is no right or wrong way to use Carcosa. Please feel free to add to this book, or to delete or change anything within. There is nothing in this book (or anywhere else) that is "official" Carcosa. Following are only some of the possible ways to use this volume:

- ⌘ Use it as-is for a ready-made campaign.
- ⌘ The player characters in your regular campaign have been transported by a curse to a terrible location: Carcosa.
- ⌘ Use Carcosa as a change of pace or for one-shot games.
- ⌘ Cherry pick contents (whether monsters, the psionics system, the dice conventions, various encounters, the sorcerer character class, or etc.) to use in your regular campaign.
- ⌘ Simply read the book as inspiration for your own creations.

Above all, enjoy yourself.

Editor's Note: The Armor Class notations in this book assume unarmored AC 12 and ascending armor class. *Carcosa* assumes a gold piece standard for treasure and experience.



Sorcerous Rituals

THE ACCURSED PITS OF SIGHING

to imprison
SHAMBLER OF THE ENDLESS NIGHT

This four-hour ritual will imprison the Shambler of the Endless Night in interdimensional pits. The Sorcerer must perform the ritual while standing within a boat 10' to 20' long and shaped like a miniature longship. The boat must be floating on the waters in a swamp and be made of the rare reddish wood that is as hard as iron found in hex 0509. From its stern must hang a lit lantern with a globe made of ruby (10,000 g.p. minimum value). At the ritual's end the Sorcerer must disembowel a Jale boy and slide his corpse into the waters.

ACCURSED SORCELLING OF THE POISONED ONE

to torment
FOUL PUTRESCENCE

This ritual can be completed in but an hour. Two Purple Men are the sacrifices, who must be scalded to death with lava. As the sacrifices writhe in pain, so does the Foul Putrescence (when imprisoned in the Pale Fungus Garden) as its body is similarly burned. At the ritual's end, the Foul Putrescence will be reduced to 8 HD and to subservience for 21–40 days.

THE ACCURSED SOUNDING OF THE VOID

invocation

This four-hour ritual attempts to contact the inhuman intelligences that brood in the deepest intergalactic gulfs. Two Ulfire youths (one male and one female, neither a virgin) are the required sacrifices. On a clear, moonless night, the Sorcerer must inflict upon the sacrifices the complex and intricate tortures devised by the Snake-Men using a set of implements made of black opal. (Such will have a value of at least 10,000 g.p.) The Sorcerer's piercing shouts, accompanied by the screams of the sacrifices, open the voids so the Sorcerer can hear the thoughts of the intergalactic minds. Note that the sacrifices need not be killed, and can be reused.

ADJURE THE FUNGOID ONE

to bind
FOUL PUTRESCENCE

This ritual takes seven hours to perform, and it can be performed only on nights of the full moon. The pale blue carnivorous fungus found in the forested part of hex 1302 is required, as is an ounce of the venom of cobras. Thirteen Purple Men are the requisite sacrifices, who must be poisoned with the cobra venom. At the ritual's end, the Foul Putrescence will obey the Sorcerer until the new moon, becoming ever more recalcitrant as the moon wanes.

DEEP GIBBERING MADNESS

to invoke
EVOCATION OF THE DEEP GIBBERING MADNESS

No. Appearing: Unique

Armor Class: 15

Hit Dice: 16

Move: 90'

Alignment: Chaotic

Miles below the sunlit surface is a noisome pit of utter blackness. Within gibbers and raves the Deep Gibbering Madness. This ever-churning, ever-mutating, protean horror causes madness in those who look upon it (save vs. magic to avoid). A second saving throw is also required vs. magic to avoid fleeing and shrieking in fear. Its attacks vary from round to round, as it is a shapeless mass of eyes, mouths, and appendages that swell and are absorbed by the moment. Each round it does 2-5 dice of damage.

DEEP ONES

No. Appearing: 1-100

Armor Class: 16

Hit Dice: 1+1

Move: 90' [land], 240' [water]

Alignment: Chaotic

Deep Ones are one of the six main spawn of Shub-Niggurath. They are immortal fish-men (6' tall) covered with light green scales, sporting fins on their heads and on the backs of their forearms and lower legs. They can function equally well on either land or in the water. All Deep Ones have infravision and a strength score of 18. They have cities on the ocean floor, from ocean shelves near the shore to the deepest trenches. Some Deep Ones estranged from their ocean-dwelling kin live in watery and damp cave complexes deep beneath the earth. The Deep Ones worship the Old Ones in general and Cthulhu in particular. They spread these vile cults among men, tempting them with treasures gathered from the floor of the sea. The Deep Ones will even interbreed with human females, producing infants of human appearance who gradually and completely transform into Deep Ones after the age of 20.

DESICCATING SLIME OF THE SILENT HALLS

to conjure
THE DESICCATING SLIME OF THE SILENT HALLS

to bind
THE FINAL CRIMSON SACRIFICE

to imprison
THE ENTOMBMENT OF THE FEARFUL MONOLITH

to torment
SUNDERING OF THE PRIMAL GLOB

DINOSAURS

No. Appearing: Unique

Armor Class: 14

Hit Dice: 13

Move: 120'

Alignment: Chaotic

This 10' diameter monster is mucus-like and of a sickly tan color. It attacks by enveloping its victim and sucking all the moisture out of it, causing 2 dice of damage per round. For every die of damage it causes, it regenerates one HD. Its domicile of the Silent Halls is an utterly lightless and soundless labyrinth of halls carved from the black rock miles below the planet's surface.

No. Appearing: Variable

Armor Class: 14 to 16

Hit Dice: 1 to 20

Move: Variable

Alignment: Neutral

These animals are not uncommon in the world of Carcosa, though they are not of the sort one would find in a textbook on dinosaurs. Rather, imagine mundane dinosaurs mutated by mysterious forces for tens of millions of years. Dinosaurs on the planet of Carcosa tend to have one or more unusual characteristics such as: being feathered, brightly colored, misshapen, poisonous, phosphorescent, covered in spikes, able to breathe radiation, able to shoot energy from their eyes, etc. All dinosaurs, even the plant-eaters, tend to be aggressive. Dinosaurs typically do 2 to 4 dice of damage.

0412

The ground for several miles consists of vitrified sand, melted into huge glossy sheets of pale white glass.

Sharp-eyed travelers may spy an Orange Man hiding in a small stand of bushes. He is an escaped slave, and promises a reward for anyone that can lead him back to his village in hex 1007.

0413

See ritual
**THE INNER HIERO-
GLYPHS OF DISSOLUTION**

See hexes
0911, 1108

389 Giant Jungle Ants.

In the center of this jungle stands a small rocky hillock whose northern face is pierced by the entrance to a system of natural caves. A handful of scrolls reports that these caves descend hundreds of miles into the planet's interior, where a fabulous world within thrives.

0414

Here is a catacomb of dozens of tombs of inanimate Snake-Men mummies. The inside of one of their coffins has been inscribed with the ritual for the **IMPRISONMENT OF THE ANGLED LABYRINTH**. Over the course of 2–4 weeks, a Sorcerer can daub the inscriptions with his own blood, thus learning the ritual. Another tomb has a dinosaur-skin scroll containing the ritual for **THE LURKER AMIDST THE OBSIDIAN RUINS**.

An abandoned village is slowly sinking into the sodden marshlands. Twelve giant ticks (AC 14, MV 60', HD 4, Neutral) lair among the buildings. Buried underneath a hearthstone is a kettle containing 400 s.p.

0415

Spawn of Shub-Niggurath (AC 15, MV 60', HD 10, Chaotic): a smooth green ophidioid with a suckered mouth. It is immune to poison.

A hunting party of 4 Blue Men is busy cleaning the carcasses of several large lizards. They are friendly and will share food and give directions to local landmarks to anyone that approaches them in a similarly friendly manner. They have 4 s.p. each.

0416

See monster
**FETOR OF
THE DEPTHS**

7 Giant Frogs giant frogs (AC 13, MV 120'/120' [swimming], HD 5, Neutral).

A huge dolm worm churns through the stinking, pulpy soil of the swamp. An exquisite fist-sized diamond, the fabled Egg of Moxitwi (25,000 g.p.), is lodged in its gullet.

0501

Here stands an abandoned temple of dull white stones shaped into the head and upper torso of a great toothed ape. Many have claimed to have heard (especially by night) or even to have glimpsed large, shambling ape-like creatures in and around the temple.

In a cramped grotto beneath the roots of a massive dead tree is a crab-like Spawn of Shub-Niggurath (AC 19, MV 30', HD 6, Chaotic): a black crustacean with four eyes and multiple clacking mouths. For each human corpse cast into its lair, it will serve reluctantly for 12 hours.

0502

Citadel of 83 Yellow Men led by a neutral 6th-level Fighter.

Campsite of 66 Dolm Men led by a cowed figure who will speak with visitors only from the concealment of its extravagant howdah. The figure is actually a mummy which deals in various lotus powders, sorcerous devices, and ancient Primordial One artifacts. His primary interest is wealth, and whether it spares the lives of strangers or takes them is determined by the cold calculus of eventual profit. The mummy lairs in a citadel deep within the rifts in hex 1104. This traveling party is well-armed and carries with it substantial treasures.

0503

A large boulder nearly 100' in diameter will occasionally bleed, and small areas of the rock will turn into living viscera for upwards of a minute before returning to stone.

This hex is a no-man's land. Craters pockmark the landscape, and the vegetation is scorched and inert. Space Aliens have a weapons platform in orbit around Carcosa that regularly surveils and bombards this area. Any living thing, or group, traveling through this hex has a 5% chance each hour of being fired upon by a cosmic radiation beam cannon. It hits automatically, and each target may save vs. breath weapon for half damage.



Fungoid Gardens of the Bone Sorcerer



This sample adventure is for beginning Carcosa campaigns. Herein are details of some points of interest in hex 2005 of Carcosa Campaign Map One.

A detailed map of hex 2005 is depicted in the endpapers of the book. As the large hex is 10 miles north to south, each sub-hex is 0.4 of a mile (or 704 yards) from one side to its parallel side.

The central swath of hex 2005 is sandy desert. The northern part of hex is the rocky, empty terrain of the Blighted Lands. The southern part of the hex is plains.

Blighted Lands

Wandering Monsters for blighted lands

1	Yellow Men
2	Ulfire jelly
3	Dolm pudding
4	Jale slime
5	Dolm ooze
6	Mi-Go
7-8	Spawn of Shub-Niggurath (randomly select or choose from the list of twenty spawn appended to this module)

Sub-Hex 0805

A bare human skeleton has been turned into an unknown black stone.

Sub-Hex 1503

Fungoid Gardens of the Bone Sorcerer. In a rocky defile is a wide crack in the stony earth, out of which a cool, steady breeze blows. See separate heading.

Men of 13 Races fight for life and power, ignorant of their common past.

When other tools fail, **Foul Sorcery** is wielded without compunction.

Enigmatic and inhuman **Space Aliens** have crash-landed on the world.

Psionic Warriors turn the tables on the uncaring **Great Old Ones** with **Strange Technology** from the stars and beyond time's provenance, risking **Blasphemous Madness** and worse to tame the **Hostile Planet** and push back the darkness... for a time.

On Carcosa:

Carcosa is a science-fantasy roleplaying game setting with a sandbox approach: whether heroic or opportune, adventurers of all stripes will find freedom and consequence worth their mettle in a horrifying milieu mixing adventure fantasy, the Mythos, and comic book sci-fi with no punches pulled.

Carcosa is compatible with Lamentations of the *Flame Princess Weird Fantasy Role-Playing* game and other old school fantasy adventure games. This expanded edition details 800 encounters on the 400-hex map and includes the starter adventure *Fungoid Gardens of the Bone Sorcerer*.

Whatever one may think of Carcosa, there's no denying that it has proven itself to be a seminal work of the burgeoning Old School Renaissance.

—*The Underdark Gazette*

I'd rank Carcosa right up there with Adventure Games Journal #1 and Encounter Critical in terms of setting fire to my brain and putting me on edge to want to play.

—*Jeff's Gameblog*

Carcosa stands as the best single supplement ever published for the original fantasy role-playing game.

—*Dragonsfoot review*



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