

ROLLING DEEP KEEP

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A B/X Scenario for Player Characters Levels 1-3

Inspired by “Wavestone Keep” (Kevin Conyers, Flooded Realms Adventure Press, 2022). Be a good human; pick up a copy for just \$1.00 USD.

The night is dark and stormy. Terrified riders have arrived from the south, gasping desperate warnings from foaming lips. A dreadful stone tower roams up the coast, somehow riding the waves, disgorging swarms of ravenous lizardmen at every seaside town. Fear the tide, fear the tide!

THE FLOATING KEEP COMES: A barnacle-encrusted keep does indeed approach. The hoary haunt sits atop a sea turtle of tremendous size, a **zaratan**. The dreaded **Lacertilian Mother** directs the behemoth, launching a withering series of raids along the coast and unleashing the bounty of her frightful **parturition pods** (AREA 6).

The party has the night to prepare for the floating keep’s arrival. Late the next morning, it appears, impossibly looming over the waves, a woolly quilt of fog pushed before it. Permit the PCs to come up with any plan they desire. If they canvass the town, they can easily rouse 1d6+6 seamen (0 level; 1d4 hp, armed with clubs, axes and gaffs (1d6 damage)) and 1d3 men at arms (1-6 hp, armed with cutlasses) to aid them. They can also commandeer boats to intercept the keep.

The keep enters the harbor at noon bringing a wreath of fog with it. Unless intercepted, it stops within 200 yards of shore. Keen-eyed observers can see dark, loping shapes cluster at the base of the keep before disappearing into the vapors. This is the **lizardman raiding party** diving into the drink and racing to emerge at the shore!

27 **transmogrified lizardmen** (AC: 5; MV: 60’ (20’)/120’ (40’); HD: 2+1; HP 14x2, 13x2, 12x3, 11, 10x3, 9x5, 8x7, 7, 6x2, 5; #ATT: 1 harpoon (1d8+1 due to strength); Save As; F2; ML: 12; AL: N).

Bounding out of the waves beside them is a **giant carnivorous marine iguana** (AC: 4; MV: 60’ (20’)/120’ (40’); HD: 5; HP: 26; #ATT: 1; DM: 2-8; Save As: F3; ML: 7; AL: N)!

The lizardmen will each seek to slay a victim and haul the body back to the keep to be placed into their abhorrent birthing pods. The iguana will devour up to 5 HD worth of victims before returning to the keep.

- **If the party intercepts the keep before it enters the harbor:** The party will prevent the raiding party from attacking the town but will instead encounter them all at once assembled in AREA 2 readying for war.
- **If the party assails the keep after it enters the harbor:** The raiding party will ignore the party, trusting in the ‘Mother to deal harshly with any interlopers. The PCs may see their saurian forms darting under their boats towards shore.

If the party raids the keep and allows the raiding party to attack the town, after 20 rounds on the “island,” 0-3 members of the lizardman raiding party will begin to return to the keep each round until all 27 raiders (minus 2d4 casualties) have returned. They make for AREA 3 to strip the bodies before hauling them to AREA 6.

The giant iguana will return to the keep 2d10+10 rounds after the PCs reach the island and shamle back to its lair in AREA 3.

- **If the party intercepts the keep at sea:** Enterprising PCs may not wait for the keep to roll into view; they might assault it that very night, boating down the coast to encounter it

en route. In that event, the keep's inhabitants will be caught unawares! The raiding party members will be spread throughout the keep. The DM should add 1d8 lizard men to AREAS 2, 4, 5, and 6 until all 27 have been allocated.

- **If the party waits on the shore:** They will be present when the raiding party erupts from the foaming waves. The entire group will not engage the PCs; the reavers spread out to capture as many townsfolk as they can. However, a party of armed and armored adventurers will attract the immediate attention of 5-8 lizardmen and after the 3rd round of combat, 1-3 more will engage the party. The giant iguana does what it wants; the DM should roll randomly if it decides to attack a PC or if it galumphs into the town in search of food.

The DM may elect to run a mass battle, pitting the raiding party against the PCs and a group of brave 0-level townsfolk. Optionally, after the 3rd round of combat, each round 0-3 lizardmen not fighting the party lope back into the waves, bodies draped over their shoulders.

If the raiders lose 15 members (or the iguana + 10 members), they will fall back to the keep.

NOTE: Attempting to engage the raiding party members in the lizardman tongue will be fruitless; they do not speak lizardman.

TO THE ROLLING KEEP: The same fog the 'Mother employs during her assault (see AREA 7) can obscure the PCs' approach. If the keep is intercepted on its way into the harbor three lizardmen are at AREA 7-A watching the zaratan approach the town. Once the raiding party is employed, the 'Mother is readying the parturition pods. If the keep is intercepted at sea, there is no fog, but the keep's inhabitants are also not expecting an attack.

The keep remains 200 yards from shore but is not still; unfathomably, it continues to move in

THE ZARATAN

Daryawesh by name, this titan (AC: -6 (carapace)/0 (head, tail and flippers); MV: 60' (20')//150' (50'); HD: 50; HP: 400; #ATT: 1 bite; DM: 10-100; SA: Swallow victim whole on a 'To Hit' roll 4 or more than needed (1d10/round until dead – AC: 5 on the inside); SD: immune to poison, Saving Throw of 2 against all forces; ML: 12; AL: N) is intelligent, speaks the language of its kind and forty-seven others – although its slow, deep voice is difficult to follow.

Daryawesh isn't hostile and is rather resigned to his lot in life; ambivalent about the lizardmen occupying its back. He assumes he will outlive this nuisance as he has all others. If the party can stop the "infernal poking" (AREA 4), however, it would be most grateful. If asked, it will direct the PCs to "Phaeno Foam-Eyed" (AREA 9), "she'll know what to do."

(The zaratan first appeared in the Al-Qadim appendix to The Monstrous Compendium (TSR, Inc. 1992))

languid circles. When the PCs close, they can see that the keep is set on a smallish (350' diameter) oval-shaped island of smooth greenish-black rock. The cyclopean fortification is itself made of pink-orange slabs; much of it collapsed into ruin. Numerous yawning windows gape empty. Seabirds circle over the shambling wreckage screaming.

If the island is reconnoitered, there appears to be no place meant to tie off boats. The keep has a main entrance (AREA 1) and a nearly-completely collapsed structure closer to the "shore" (AREA 9). The edge of the island is crowded with massive fist-sized barnacles and bearded with mats of seaweed. The DM should note where the PCs are in relation to the

zaratan. As they approach the front of the beast, the island impossibly turns slightly and a Brobdingnagian shape sweeps in the blue-black depths beneath their boats! There is a 5% cumulative chance per turn while the PCs are in that area that the zaratan raises its head (fully 40' long and 30' wide!) to the surface for a colossal breath.

The keep is constructed of coral blocks. Entire sections have crumbled away into ruin. There are multiple entryways, and the PCs can clamber up to various levels if they choose. The rough coral surface grants a +10% bonus on CLIMB WALLS checks.

Once on the island (if the PCs have not yet met the zaratan), the surface is a glossy unknown stone, seemingly made of great green-black slabs set within a smooth light green mysterious mortar, all nearly impervious to harm (AC: -6). The island is moving, which causes everyone to stumble from time to time and sends broken bricks of coral tumbling.

1. ENTRANCE: The crumbled keep slouches in the center of the island; the ruin surrounded by a ring of debris and coral bricks. It has one obvious and daunting entrance. The floor of the entryway is a dazzling mosaic made from varicolored abalone shells, marred by time and neglect but gleaming still and creating the illusion that one is walking over a spinning Charybdis. The arched entryway is ringed with weird runes and symbols, pictographs of men with nautilus heads among them.

2: FOYER: Five **transmogrified lizardmen** lounge in this room (AC: 5; MV: 60' (20')/120' (40'); HD: 2+1; HP: 14, 13, 12, 11, 4; #ATT: 1; DM: 1d6+1; Save As: F2; ML: 12; AL: N), two on the steps and the other three milling about the room. If the raid is underway, they are awaiting fresh bodies for the pods. Loud combat will draw the lizardmen from AREA 5 down.

An unnerving wailing and crying floats down the stairs from above. The room itself is empty, all debris has been swept to the perimeter leaving the floor open. The ceiling above features a huge round bas-relief face grimacing down upon the room's occupants. It is cracked and damaged; whether it is a human face can no longer be discerned but the huge empty oval eyes are haunting. What may be a moustache may instead be a ring of tendrils around the contorted mouth.

The copper-banded doors to the West and North hang open. The door to the East is blocked with tons of debris from the outside and cannot be forced.

3: SOLARIUM: Gulls screech and scatter out the gaping windows as the party enters. The room stinks, some unpleasant sour reek. A huge pile of cloth and fibers squats in the NE corner.

If the island is intercepted before the raid, the giant iguana is here, coiled on its bed and it will return after the raid, gluttoned on flesh. The lizardmen strip all corpses of clothing and dump their victims' effects here.

Sifting through the pile of rent apparel is unpleasant. There's no telling how many victims were stripped. All manner of torn, soiled, and spoiled garments are heaped here, together with: 100 cp, 24 sp and 3 gp, 2 silver rings (10 and 15 GPV), a gold earring (5 GPV) and a gold locket with an ivory cameo of a child (55 GPV).

4: OPULENT WASTE: Three **transmogrified lizardmen** toil here (AC: 5; MV: 60' (20')/120' (40'); HD: 2+1; HP: 13, 9, 8; #ATT: 1; DM: pick axe (1d8+1 due to Strength); Save As: F2; ML: 12; AL: N), with two more at the bottom of the shaft (HP: 8x2); they will be surprised unless an alarm has been raised. The walls and ceiling are alive with vibrant abstract murals, comprised of vivid cowrie shells. The archway to AREA B is emblazoned with inset pearls of every color.

The room is filled with debris, but fantastic (and thoroughly uncomfortable) furniture survives – fashioned from enormous polished conch and Venus comb shells.

Also scattered across the floor are picks, augers and shovels, together with tailings of green-black “stone” (actually shell fragments). A gaping hole in the floor almost seven feet across descends through the coral structure, through the island material, to a depth of 18’. Thick greasy ropes have been lowered into it, and the lizardmen hack at the grey-white walls. At the very bottom, a hole has been augured down further and a wooden pike thrust through.

This is the most crude and disgusting of all steering mechanisms. The Lacertilian Mother’s directions are passed down fire brigade-style to this room, where the lizardmen prod the zataran in the desired direction. The lizardmen constantly work to keep the shell from healing.

The seventeen pearls set into the archway are together worth 900 GPV. The four pieces of fantastic furniture are obscenely cumbersome but, if removed, are worth 2d10x50 GPV apiece.

A: A narrow archway opens to a flight of crumbling coral stairs that zigzag down the rounded island surface to a tumbled structure (AREA 9). The stairs are cracked and slick. A successful DEX check (thieves may make Climb Walls rolls) is required when descending to avoid a spill. Anyone slipping may save vs. paralysis (DEX bonuses applied). If successful, they slide and flip into AREA 9 (and suffer 1d3 points of damage). If they fail, they slide off the “island” entirely!

B. These broken gilded portals hang open. The chamber beyond is completely smashed and filled with coral tumblings. Whatever might be buried underneath is up to the DM. 350 GPV worth of gold plating can be scraped off the double doors.

5. GUARDS AND WARDS: Five **trans-mogrified lizardmen** lurk here (AC: 5; MV: 60’ (20’)/120’ (40’); HD: 2+1; HP: 13, 11, 9, 8, 7; #ATT: 1; DM: 1d6+1; Save As: F2; ML: 12; AL: N), mumbling obscene chants. The horrific screams are ear-splitting; they come from beyond the Western archway.

A portion of the NE wall has collapsed and the outside can be seen over an 8’ high mound of rumbled coral. The N archway is fashioned to depict a roaring beast, the keystone of the arch its one unblinking eye (made of colored glass, 25 GPV). The W archway completely lacquered in mother-of-pearl (250 GPV can be scraped off).

6: BIRTHING CHAMBER: The air is thick with stink and screams. An abomination labors over a hideous, indescribable monstrosity. Three lizardmen are fussing over humanoids that writhe and shriek on the floor.

The **Lacertilian Mother** (AC: 3; MV: 120’ (40’); HD: 5; HP: 28; #ATT: 2 bites or 2 tails; DM: 1-4+poison x2 or 1-6+constriction x2; SA: spit poison; Save As: F5; ML: 12; AL: C) is a horrid thing; a mockery of nature. At a distance, it might be mistaken for a medusa. A fine-scaled and comely female torso, above which honey-yellow eyes glare from a tangled crown of vicious snakes. Her trunk culminates in pair of sinuous tails. Venomous serpent heads hiss where her hands out to be. Each bite from its serpent-hands requires a save v. death poison (at a +1 bonus). Each tail can constrict a human or smaller size opponent for an automatic 1-6 points of damage per round following a successful hit. She can divide her attacks among opponents and can spit venom at a range of 6 feet (save v. poison for be blinded) thrice per day. Her snaky hair is not venomous; only unpleasant.

The three **transmogrified lizardmen** (AC: 5; MV: 60' (20')/120' (40'); HD: 2+1; HP: 17, 10, 6; #ATT: 1; DM: 1d6+1; Save As: F2; ML: 12; AL: N) labor over four recently transmogrified lizardmen, just emerged. These are covered with revolting filaments and goo and are non-combatants. It will be several hours until the process is complete, and they arise as new lizardmen.

Set in the middle of the floor and dominating the chamber are the **parturition pods**. Something like bioluminescent pitcher plants, something like cancerous growths, all bound with fine metallic wire. It is affixed with silvery byssal threads to the floor and ceiling. Who knows where the Lacertilian Mother found its obscene seed? Now this horror grows and festers here. It has seven large "pods." Four are occupied; the semi-transparent lids revealing twitching humanoid figures engulfed with viscid sludge, their screams loosing torrents of bubbles that float lazily to the tops of the pods. The plant-thing spasms and shudders. The room is uncomfortably warm.

This atrocity is essentially a biomechanical reincarnation machine, currently set to "lizardman." It grows and hungers the more it is used. Using it requires an abhorrent interface; whether the PCs can discover how to use it is up to the DM. It can be harmed (AC: 7; MV: 0"; HD: 10; HP: 60; #ATT: 1; DM: 2-12; Save As: F5; ML: 12; AL: N) and will shiver and quake if damaged. Every other round, it can loose a bio-electrical shock at attacking opponents within 2". Neither the transmogrified nor the soon-to-be can be saved.

7: ATHENAEUM: The third level of the complex is obtained either from the broken stair on the second level (requiring a DEX check at a -3 penalty or a thief's CLIMB WALLS roll) or by clambering over the ruined keep.

Three archways make this chamber seem open to the air. To the N is the only intact window in the structure; a round stained-glass vision of deep-blue, purple and electric pinks. It depicts a vaguely humanoid figure gesturing from within a whirling wreath of impossible growths and toothy fish; it elicits an indescribable atavistic shudder from all that behold it. The walls contain built-in bookshelves from floor to ceiling, now little more than stains and scraps remain.

Dozens upon dozens of cracked and ruined scroll-cases are still here, their contents ruined. At the DM's discretion, a **treasure map** or clue to a future scenario can be found here.

A: Huge sections of the balcony have crumbled away. This portion overlooks the front of the island/shell and Daryawesh's flippers and head can be discerned from this vantage. At the location marked "A," three **transmogrified lizardmen** (AC: 5; MV: 60' (20')/120' (40'); HD: 2+1; HP: 9, 7, 5; #ATT: 1; DM: 1d6+1; Save As: F2; ML: 12; AL: N) lounge at all times, watching over a massive chest.

The chest is constructed of an uncanny bluish wood, bound on all points and along its seams in electrum, bearing rings on either side for carriage. It bears no lock. This is the **casket of vapors**, stolen from by the Lacertilian Mother from some distaff baronet of the winds. It is unlocked (indeed, it cannot be locked) and unseemingly heavy (1500 GP weight). If opened, it is empty making its weight inexplicable. However, if the command phrase is spoken when closed and it is then opened, a never-ending cascade of thick cottony fog billows out until it is closed, ultimately creating a 36" diameter (and 60' high) circle of fog. It obscures all sight beyond 2'. Although impressive, the fog is subject to dispersal by anything more than a strong breeze and will last only 30 rounds once the chest is closed.

B: This area is overhung by the balcony of AREA 8, above. A **giant boxer crab** (AC: 3; MV: 60' (20')//60" (20'); HD: 3; HP: 11; #ATT: 2 anemone stings; DM: 1-3/1-3; SA: victims must save versus poison or lose STR equal to sting damage; 0 STR or less = paralysis for 10-40 rounds; Save As: F2; ML: 12; AL: N) feasts on a transmogrified lizard man. A close look reveals the corpse is wearing a gold ring. The raiders couldn't remove it, it is a cursed **ring of idiocy** (recues INT to 3). It is reluctant to give up on its feast and will first attempt to drag it over the balcony and escape to a lower level with its bounty. If attacked, then the PCs will have asked for it, for it has affixed anemones to each claw.

8: HERMITAGE: This room is open to the elements. A degraded spiral staircase ascends in the NW corner. A nest, of sorts, has been made in the center of the room, constructed of rope, mussel and oyster shells and what appears to be sail-cloth.

The Lacertilian Mother has taken this room for her own and reposes here when not transmogrifying victims. Her ill-gotten wealth is scattered around the space:

7 gems in an ornate copper and amethyst bowl (350 GPV): azurite (10 GPV), malachite 915 GPV), rhodochrosite (25 GPV), moss agate (50 GPV), rock crystal (75 GPV), sardonyx (75 GPV), zircon (100 GPV); 480 cp, 310 sp and 120 gp in an unlocked chest), a leaded-glass bottle stoppered in wax (**potion of plant control**), a tarnished silver flask (20 GPV) (**potion of healing**), a scroll (**invisibility 10' radius**), and a scroll (**light, speak with animal, growth of animals**).

A. The tower groans when ascended; it offers an unparalleled view of the sea – and of the gigantic beast the keep is magically mortared upon.

9: RETREAT. A crumbled tower squats at the water's edge. Clusters of goose barnacles the size of real geese lap hungrily at the waves. Small glittering white birds wheel and shriek at the party's approach. Only a sliver of roof remains. Inside, the corals floor and walls are shockingly pink and besides the detritus littering the floor and the shattered staircase leading up to nowhere, the only item is a coral couch of sorts up against the far wall, directly under the slice of roofing. A green-eyed unclad woman with a cascade of soaking black tresses reclines on the couch, embracing a cloaked corpse.

This is **Phaeno Foam-Eyed**, an Oceanid (sea nymph) (AC: 5; MV: 120' (40')//180' (60'); HD: 3; HP: 10; #ATT: 0; Save As: MU4; AL: N). She wears a coral ring set with a perfect pearl (400 GPV). The corpse is male, little more than a skeleton wrapped in flaking papery skin. It wears a slick olive-colored mantle with weird sigils embroidered along its hem. An elaborate copper-banded wooden staff leans against the wall beside the couple. Phaeno is impossibly, heart-achingly beautiful. She remains with her lover, the Rime-Druid who once haunted these ruins, and will not part with him, nor any part of him. If the party will not accept that or perturbs her in any way, she can cast a powerful **charm person** spell once per round (-2 on the saving throw) and will sweetly ask any charmed interlopers if they would not enjoy a swim.

If directly threatened, she can command the coral in this room, which is very much alive, and the walls and floor will froth with tens of thousands of tiny stinging tentacles. Anyone touching the room's surfaces suffers 1-2 points of damage each round. If sorely pressed, Phaeno can meld with the coral just as a dryad may meld with a tree.

If the party relates that they were sent to her by Daryawesh or if they can otherwise persuade her that they are here to put an end to the

lizardman attacks, Phaeno can assist. She despises the Lacertilian Mother. From time to time, lizardmen are dispatched to this area and Phaeno sends them all swimming into Daryawesh's mouth. Phaeno can relate the general layout of the keep, let them know that the lizardman's leader is a horrid abomination, that it controls the zaratan's movements from AREA 4 and that the lizardmen are being "birthed" (in her words) in AREA 6.

Phaeno will attempt to charm any male PC with a CHA of 18, regardless of their actions and, so charmed, he will remain with her and defend her to the best of his ability. If the Lacertilian is defeated, Phaeno intends to reclaim the keep for herself and her new paramour.

The Rime-Druid's cadaver wears a **cloak of the selkie** (as a **+1 cloak of protection** and allows one to assume the form of a seal 1x/day for up to 6 hours, swim at 180' (60'), hold one's breath underwater for 60 rounds) and a **ring of water walking**, together with a pearl ring (that matches Phaeno's (400 GPV)). Leaning beside the couch is a **staff of the electric eel** (as a **snake staff** but transforms into an electric eel on command AC: 5, HD: 2; HP: 10; MV: 60' (20')//120' (60')) and while it cannot constrict, it can inflict an electric charge every other round for 1-8 points of damage. NOTE: If used on land, the transformed eel begins to suffocate and dies in 4 rounds).

EPILOGUE: If the PCs eliminate the Lacertilian and her minions, then they have ended the immediate menace. Daryawesh will be free to seek out distant waters unless the PCs instead desire to become his new captor.

As to who built the keep, no doubt Daryawesh knows - although that will be a long tale to hear. Phaeno's beloved Rime-Druid was not the builder; they found it unoccupied only a few decades before. Tracking down its founder may entail further adventures.

THE ZARATAN (REDUX)

Can Daryawesh Submerge?

Yes, he can, although it will probably result in the majority of the keep's treasure washing away. The lizardmen, the Lacertilian Mother and the giant iguana will have to resurface eventually. Phaeno (AREA 9) will not. If alive, the Lacertilian Mother will painfully coax the zaratan back to the surface (AREA 4),

Can Daryawesh Come Ashore?

Of course! He can lumber ashore and, if he wanted to, effect great destruction all around him (effectively a trample for 10-100 damage), effortlessly destroying any fortifications, but that would take an enormous amount of coaxing and would probably result in a lengthy submersion (see above), regardless of pain, as he clears his conscience.

Thundering around on dry land will also result in the collapse of the keep's remains.

If the party keeps the chest of vapors, weird elemental forces will eventually track them down.

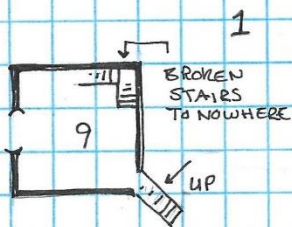
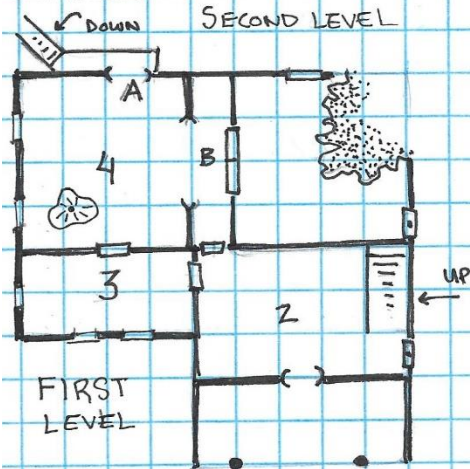
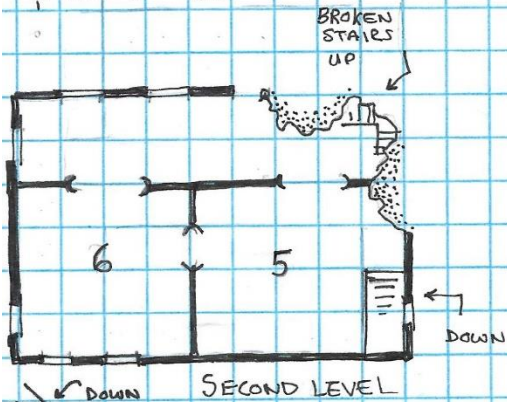
Where did the horrible parturition pods come from? Does the party dare to look?

Lastly, if Daryawesh is freed, he most certainly knows of secret places and hidden treasures – and will be willing to take them there! (THE ISLE OF DREAD is recommended)

HERE ENDS ROLLING DEEP KEEP

KEY

	WINDOW		PILLAR		SPIRAL STAIR
	DOOR		HOLE		RUBBLE
	BLOCKED DOOR		STAIRS		= 10 FEET
	ARCH				



ROLLING DEEP KEEP

