

Dark Village

**A One Round AD&D Living Jungle Tournament
for mid-level and high-level heroes**

by Tom Prusa

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This is a standard RPGA Network tournament. A four-hour time block has been set aside for this event. It is a good idea to ask each player to put a name tag in front of him or her. The tag should have the player's name at the bottom, and the character's name, race, and gender at the top. This makes it easier for the players to keep track of who is playing which character.

The actual playing time will be about three hours. Make sure you use the last 20 to 30 minutes of the event time block to have the players capsule their characters for each other and vote. The standard RPGA Network voting procedures will be used. Complete the Judge's Summary before you collect the players' scoring sheets. This way you will not be influenced by their ratings and comments.

The players are free to use the game rules to learn about equipment and weapons their characters are carrying.

A note about the text: Some of the text in this module is written so that you may present it as written to the players, while other text is for your eyes only. Text for the players will be in *bold italics*. It is strongly recommended that you paraphrase the player text, instead of reading it aloud, as some of the text is general and must be adapted to the specific situation or to actions of the player characters.

Introduction

The Living Jungle is a tournament campaign exclusively for members of the RPGA Network. Be sure that you distribute scoring sheets at the *beginning* of the round, and make sure that each player at your table has a membership card (or at least remembers his or her membership number).

This is a mid/high-level Living Jungle adventure; only characters of sixth level or below may participate in it. If a player brings a higher-level character to your table, explain that he or she must use a lower-level hero (or start a new hero) to play in this event. If your players do not have heroes, help them create new ones (see your event coordinator for character creation instructions, if you don't have them).

During the course of the adventure, the heroes will earn experience points based on their accomplishments. Some of these points are for overcoming obstacles, finding information, defeating monsters, and recovering treasure. After each encounter an experience point value is listed. This is summarized at the end of the adventure as well. *All characters contributing to the success of an encounter receive the listed experience points.*

For example, if an encounter lists an experience point value of 100, then each hero participating earns 100 points. All experience points are awarded at the end

of the tournament. Do not award experience points after each encounter.

In some places the characters can gain treasure. For common items, like normal weapons and equipment, the players must simply record the new items on their character sheets. But for magical or other special items, you must hand the appropriate Treasure Certificate, included with this tournament.

The actual playing time of the event is about three hours. You must stop in time to let your players vote. Begin this process by letting players explain a little bit about their character. You should be completing the judge voting form while they do this. Next, remind the players to complete their own scoring forms, then collect them all for your event coordinator.

DM Background

In this adventure the heroes are tasked with obtaining a rare flower needed to save the life of Bengoukee himself. They gather when word goes out that Bengoukee is dying. They must recover the flower of immortality in order for him to have a chance to live.

The flower is located on an island in the center of Lake Kovo, over 700 miles away. Their travels take them past several Garuda encounters, then a meeting with hostile Yuan-ti.

As they approach the lake, they meet a creature out of legend, a great white saru. They may help him bury his son, who was slain by servants of the tiger. A chase ensues, culminating in an ambush by the kretch.

Once they reach the lake, they must appease the guardian, a noble water elemental. After making it to the island, they find the flower, and are transported to the dreamlands. There, they face a series of tests to secure the cooperation of the Amaranthus, the spirit of life. If they succeed, they may take the flower back to Bengoukee, where they must make a decision about Bengoukee's fate.

Players Introduction

They say that the speed of the jungle grapevine outpaces the wind in the sky or the speed of the river. Never has it been truer than now. Bengoukee has been wounded by servants of the tiger, and is not expected to live. Bengoukee is dying!

A steady stream of shamans, mages, heroes, and leaders of the many tribes of the jungle come. This is not out of love, for Bengoukee does not inspire love. Fear, yes. Respect, in some case, yes. But love he does not inspire. However, if the jungle had a leader in the fight against the coming of tiger, it could only be Bengoukee. The jungle needs him, and all recognize this.

From the swamps of the Snakemen, the yuan-ti send their best shaman. From their hidden places no one else has ever seen comes a 9' tall plantman, with bundles of never before seen herbs and flowers. Swooping in overhead are five aarakocra, come hundreds of miles to bring Medicine Feather, their wisest shaman. Familiar faces as well walk the village, many members of the council of Elders, currently led by Trueblood, the un-speaking mage of the lacerials.

The story of the attack is confusing, but as best as you can piece it together from the many rumors, it goes like this. Bengoukee fell victim to a traitor. The shamen of the Katimaya, Kural, lured him into an ambush. A group of kretch set upon him. Kretch are large four-armed creatures, terrible in combat. They are the warriors of the Tamara, and are said to infest the jungle of Lost Tribes.

The faces of the council of elders are grave as they meet in Bagoomba's hut. Even Bagoomba himself is not allowed into the meeting.

After a full day, the council sends a messenger, requesting the presence of a select group of heroes. To your surprise, the messenger stops at your fire, and asks you to join the council in Bengoukee's hut.

When all the heroes are gathered, they should introduce themselves. They have a few minutes while everyone is gathered. When they are ready, continue with Encounter One.

Encounter One: The Council

The council represents some of the wisest inhabitants of Malatra. In addition to Trueblood, you recognize Syanya, shaman of the Simbara, M't'lak, chief of the Rudra, Booda, chief of the Simbuki, and Ffft, sage of the jungle. Also present are Flood and Lana, junior members of the council, and Mali, the great hunter of Malatra. You know there are other members, but this is the majority of the council.

Trueblood steps forward clutching a medallion that allows him to speak. "Bengoukee is dying. We have tried all the spells and prayers we know. The Tamara have stuck." At your questioning looks, he goes on. "The kretch serve tiger as they are a warrior race. Bengoukee was able to escape them, but he has had all of his life drained from him by the Yaksha, and it has gone to speed tiger's return. No one has been able to heal this, although the plantman witch doctor, whose name best translates to Many Branches, has been able to slow the decline. Bengoukee may be able to linger on for a month, even two, but not longer.

Our last hope is centered on a legend. Once in a generation, the legends say, a flower blooms, the flower of immortality. The legend says that it is the host for a powerful jungle spirit, the Amaranthus. Only this spirit could restore to Bengoukee the life he has lost and grant him the time to defeat Tiger.

Many Branches knows of a hidden place from which the flower can be reached. It is on a small island far to the southeast, an island in the center of Lake Kovo. The lake is two hundred miles southeast of the Swamp of the Snake Men, so the journey is long. The Snake Men will be told of your coming, they will let you pass, provided you leave them alone.

We need a group of heroes to travel swiftly and recover the flower of immortality, and bring the Amaranthus to save Bengoukee. Will you undertake this quest?"

PC Note: Some of the PCs on the council are also player characters. If Ffft, Mali, Lana, or Flood is present (as a player character), modify the above to indicate that they are coming along. None of these characters has any more information than the other characters can get below.

The council tries to answer any questions the heroes may have.

- *That's a long ways, can we get there and back in time?*

The journey is just over 700 miles, but the first 400 of it can be on the River of Laughing Idols. You should be able to make 60 miles or more a day on the river, and 20-30 miles a day in the jungle. Thus, it should take about three weeks to reach Lake Kovo, although it will take longer coming back upriver. The villages along the way will gladly lend aid, the lacerial village of Lilac, the Rudra, and the Tenanga.

- *How will we know the Amaranthus?*

It is probably not very tall, 3' high or so. It resembles a century plant, blooming with a rare white and purple speckling on its petals. It should radiate peace and intelligence, something most flowers don't do. Finally, if a person of good heart speaks to it, it will talk back. In fact, such is the goodness of the flower that evil creatures cannot even see it.

- *How do we find it, on a whole island?*

Ffft steps forward and hands a hero a small gourd. It is a potion to allow one person to fly (as the spell). When you reach the island, the location of the flower should be visible from the air. It will have a circle of grass around it, no trees or shrubbery will grow near the Amaranthus. It knows it must be found. Be careful, this potion last for ten minutes, no more. (If the party

contains an aarakocra or mage with a *fly* spell, skip the potion.

• *What if the kretch try to stop us?*

If the party brings this up themselves, they are congratulated by M'tlak, who mentions that he knew he choose the right heroes for the job.

The servants of the tiger may well try to stop you. The kretch are an unknown monster, but from the ramblings of Bengoukee, it seems that they are quite powerful. That is why you were chosen.

Any supplies the heroes need are swiftly brought. This includes canoes, normal weapons, spare arrows, and plenty of food and water so that the party need not hunt.

Before the party leaves, Flood makes a point of telling them that he has heard legends of the guardian of Lake Kovo. *"It is said to be a most terrible monster, and it will have to be appeased before you can pass. More than that I do not know."*

If the party presses him for methods to appease a lake monster, he suggests food, pretty stones and trinkets, or even just talking their way past them. Without more information, he can't give good advice.

His last bit of advice is another legend. *"You know what they say about the jungle around Lake Kovo. It is said to be the home of the mythical great white sarus. Watch the trees."*

He knows no more about the great white sarus than he has said.

Encounter Two: Inoffensive Garuda

The first week of travel has gone swiftly. With the hopes of Malatra riding on your shoulders, you have been tireless. The miles have flown by, and yesterday you left the River of Laughing Idols and struck out for Snake Man country.

The jungle has been quiet, and with the plentiful supplies you brought along you have not had to hunt. This changes when you come upon a small herd of Onehorns, large garuda with a single prominent horn on their snout. It is apparent that you stumbled on to a feeding ground with several young guarded by the elders. The elders react aggressively.

Onehorns, monoclonius (8): Int non; AC 3/4; MV 6; HD 8; hp 41 (5 adults), 14 (3 young); THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 2-16; SA trample for 2d8; SD nil; MR nil; SZ H (18' long); ML 11.

The onehorns don't really want to attack the heroes, but unless the heroes back off immediately, two of them charge. These two fight for two rounds, and if combat is

still going on, another adult joins the combat. The rest of them flee.

The heroes don't have to just run away, moving quickly back is fine, but if someone specifically states they are moving away slowly, the onehorns charge.

This should be a quick encounter. The onehorns don't really want to hurt the heroes, they just want them to go away. Anyone who does so should be left alone. Even if one of the heroes severely injures a onehorn, it still lets him flee. If opposed strongly, the onehorns fight to the death to defend the young.

Encounter Three: Offensive Garuda

It is your tenth day on the trail, and you are nearing Snake Country. In spite of the truce, you are watchful, for the snakemen are not to be taken lightly. Thus, when the pair of small gnashers come charging through the jungle at you, you are ready for them.

A pair of megalosauri have decided that the heroes would make good eating. They attack until wounded losing 1/2 of their hit points.

Little Tyrants, megalosaurus (2): Int non; AC 5; MV 12; HD 12; hp 76, 48; #AT 3; THAC0 12; Dmg 1-3/1-3/3-18; SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SZ H (30' long); ML 11.

Little tyrants run on four legs. They are quite fast, and are surprisingly quiet for such large creatures. These two have managed to get within charging distance of the heroes. By the end of the round the tyrants can close to attack a hero.

If the party is too weak to handle both tyrants (all 4th level or below); reduce it to just the weaker tyrant lizard.

Encounter Four: Yuan-ti patrol

A few hours after meeting the tyrant lizards, the heroes meet a yuan-ti patrol. The patrol consists of four yuan-ti abominations.

As you continue through the jungle, you are suddenly aware of four snakes with human arms rising from the undergrowth to your left. They do not move, but each holds his spear ready while the forked tongue flicks out at you.

Yuan-ti Abominations (4): Int 17; AL CE; AC 4; MV 12, slither 9; HD 6; hp 34; THAC0 15; #AT 2; Dmg 1-6

(spear), 1-4 (constriction); SA nil; SD nil; MR 20%; SZ L (10' long); ML 14.

These abominations all have human arms. They are otherwise completely snakes. They do not speak to the party, just watch them. When the party responds, the snakemen speak.

"To the south lies your path. You come to the lands of the one true people, enter not. Go now to the south, or we will feast on the flesh of vermin."

These snakemen are not interested in negotiating, they are not interested in the fate of Bengoukee, they just want the party to go away. If the party does not turn south (or at least sharply southeast), the snakemen will follow them for a mile or two, warn them again, and attack if the party still doesn't turn.

Inform the party that turning to the south now will take them at least a day or two out of their way. It is up to them to decide if keeping the truce is worth the time lost.

If the party attacks

This should be a tough battle. If the party is all high level, or having an easy time of it, a backup group of yuan-ti is waiting. They attack after combat has been going on for three or four rounds. If it doesn't take that long for the party to finish off the snakemen, then make the backup party six yuan-ti abominations instead of four.

At any time during the combat, if the party flees to the south, the snakemen let them go. They can justify attacking if the party does not leave, but they cannot justify (to their leaders), pursuing and killing the party.

If the party defeats the yuan-ti patrol, the truce is broken. Note this in the results at the end.

Encounter Five: New Acquaintance

After detouring around the land of the snakemen (if they did), you feel like time is pressing. Another six days have passed, and you have left the lands known to your people.

For the last three days, you have had the feeling that you are being watched. At first you thought it was the yuan-ti, but their lands lie a hundred miles to the northwest. You have tried to spot them, to no avail.

The jungle here is different as well. Perhaps it is the contrast with the swamps of the snakemen, but the jungle seems almost ... well... friendlier. There do not seem to be nearly as many garuda as you are used to, and the predators you have seen seem well fed and uninterested in you. If it wasn't for that unseen watcher, this part of the trip would be pleasant.

As you move through the lush undergrowth, the singing of birds and hum of insects abound. A pleasant background quickly shattered when you spot a small bundle lying at the base of a forest giant. It appears to be a body of a saru, perhaps a young one. But the saru is completely white, both hair and skin!

The servants of the tiger, the same band of kretch that wounded Bengoukee, are tracking the heroes. They encountered this young great white saru, and slew him. Let the party examine the body for a few minutes, then bring in the ape's father.

The young ape was literally torn apart. Only something of great strength could have made these wounds. A tiger katanga, perhaps a saru, or a large garuda would be able to cause this kind of damage.

On a successful healing proficiency, the heroes can determine that the young ape has been dead about two hours.

One other note, if the party states they are examining the body closely, is that the ape had brown eyes. It is not an albino. The young ape also has a bigger braincase than a normal saru, indicating intelligence.

If the party posts someone to watch, allow them a surprise roll at a -2. Success means they spot the great white saru coming down from the trees.

A growl comes from overhead. Looking up, you see that the saru was indeed a young one, if this is a normal adult. Standing eight feet at the shoulder, the white saru above you growls menacingly, then he spots the body. A cry of alarm comes from him, and he jumps down to rush to the young one.

Find out what the heroes are doing. If they do not move away from the body, the white saru tosses them aside like they were nothing. They take 1-2 points of damage, he doesn't want to hurt them. He does not fight except in defense, at least not yet.

As long as they give him clearance, the white saru cradles the body, crooning some words in an unknown language. Those who can understand saru can pick up a few words, notably the words for 'son' and 'light'. A *comprehend languages* or *tongues* lets the hero hear *"My son, my son. Where is the light in your eyes? Who did this to you?"*

After a few minutes of grieving, the ape stands and looks at the heroes challengingly. He wants some answers, and if the party can't communicate it's going to be to bad for them.

Haniyya, Great white saru; ; Int very (14); AL NG; AC 6; MV 12; HD 7; hp 46; #AT 3 or 3/2; THAC0 11; Dmg 1-6+7/1-6+7/1-4 (claw/claw/bite) or 2-16+7 (long spear); SA rending for 2-16 damage if both claws hit;

SD nil; MR nil; SZ L (8' tall); ML 19 (fanatical); Strength 19.

Haniyya (literally, the happy one, or even Smiley) is bereft with grief over his son, and wants someone to blame. If the party has anyone who is capable of making such wounds (lizardmen, tiger katanga in tiger or biped form, saru), he points a finger at them accusingly, asking if they did it. He speaks only his own language, so only magic will allow the heroes to understand. If someone speaks saru they can pick up the gist of it, but not enough to communicate intelligently. Sign language can work here. It's pretty obvious what he's thinking.

The heroes have a potential ally here, or a potent enemy. Don't let a lack of communications break things down here. It should just make things a little tougher. The heroes must convince Haniyya that they had nothing to do with this. If they cannot speak to him, then a gesture like putting down weapons and approaching might indicate that their intentions are peaceful.

If the party has no one with any kind of claws, Haniyya is not threatening, but he is demanding. He wants to know what happened to his son.

Let the party convince him they had nothing to do with it. If they just protest hard enough, he'll eventually believe them, merely because if they had, they'd probably also have attacked him. He then asks the heroes to accompany him. First, he wants to send his son to the sky spirits.

A Funeral

Haniyya has the heroes help him get dry wood and build a funeral pyre. This alone should convince the heroes that this is no ordinary saru. Especially when he pulls out a rather complicated looking fire-starter and lights the pyre. He then indicates that the heroes should leave him alone while he sends his son to the sky. The heroes should draw back far enough to be unobtrusive, but they can still watch.

While his son's body burns, he sings a dirge of the freedom his son will have in the skies and the trees.

After the fire has burnt down, Haniyya thinks of vengeance. He begins to scout the area, in a thorough methodical fashion. He finds something high in the trees. Any adept climber (rogues, monkey or tiger katanga, saru, and so on) is called up to look at what he found.

He has found scratches in the trees, similar to those he would make, or a saru. But for anyone with a strong sense of smell, the traces left make it clear that it was neither type of saru, white or dark. It is nothing any of them have ever smelled before.

Further investigation (tracking or wisdom at 1/2) can reveal a trail through the branches, at a height of

almost 50' from the ground. Let the heroes find it if they can, otherwise Haniyya eventually finds it. One of the signs is a small tuft of hair, a very dark green, almost black.

The trail is cumbersome. Those without climbing or brachiation skills will have to follow along the ground. But it is clear that the trail does not head in roughly the same direction the heroes were going, it goes in exactly the direction the heroes were going.

This should make the heroes feel a little bit like they are in a race. Tease them on, have them make occasional rolls (tracking at a +4 bonus, or wisdom rolls) to tell that they are gaining. The trail is at first several hours old, then an hour, then half, then a few minutes.

Communication

A few minutes from catching up to their foes, Haniyya stops and looks excited. He then climbs down to pick a dozen or more strange red leaves from a plant vining around a tree. He chews one, and indicates that the heroes should as well. If any of them do, they find they can understand each other, and Haniyya. He explains that the leaves are from a rare variety of the shatha plant. They will be able to understand each other for a day. This includes plantmen and lacerials, those who could normally only speak to their own race, or in sign language.

However, now that they can talk to him, all Haniyya says is that they must hurry, they will soon find the foul killers of his son.

He has enough leaves to last the party for the next three days. In that time, anyone who speaks saru can pick up enough to carry on a crude conversation with him without magical aid.

Encounter Six: Ambush

It should happen any minute now. The trail has lead through the jungle and the trees. Now you cross a small stream and there in the mud is a clear footprint, dirt still crumbling into it. It has three clawed toes, and is bigger than anyone in the party except for Haniyya's.

A sudden snarl to your left draws your attention. Ten feet away, in a spot where you could have sworn there were only lizards before, there are now three black leopards snarling and facing you.

Give the heroes a surprise roll. On a roll of 8 or better, the hero actually saw the lizards changing into black leopards. On a roll of a 10, the hero has seen something move up in the trees, but it is swiftly gone.

The kretch have struck their first blow, attempting to *polymorph object* on four lizards. One of them dies

through a failed system shock roll. Two of them also failed the special intelligence roll, and now think they are leopards. The other one just sits and flicks his tongue out at them.

The leopards aren't terribly hungry, and they are a little frightened. Roll for initiative, with the heroes receiving a -4 bonus to the roll. If they win, and attack, the leopards fight back. If not, the leopards just bound away.

Leopards (3): Int Semi (3); AC 6; MV 15; HD 3+2; hp 23; THAC0 17; #Att 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-6; SA rake with rear claws for 1-4 each if both front claws hit; SD surprised only on a 1; MR nil; SZ M; ML 6 (spooked).

Only two of the leopards defend themselves, the other one does things a small lizard would do, attempt to run under a leaf, burrow in the mud, and similar lizard stuff.

The kretch use this opportunity to charge into battle. Only two of the kretch attack at first, dropping out of the trees into the midst of the heroes. The other two watch for spellcasters. If there are casters in the party, the kretch use their *polymorph object* spells on them, attempting to turn them into tree frogs. They try this twice, then leap into battle.

The kretch have no fear, but they don't want to die needlessly. One immediately closes on Haniyya, while the other picks out the most dangerous looking fighter.

Keep all the heroes involved. This is probably the biggest battle of the round. Climbers may try to close with the kretch in the trees, and someone whose character gets *polymorphed* may roll for Haniyya. The kretch fight until one of them is slain and then retreat back up the trees.

Kretch (4 <6 if the party is all high level>): Int High (14); AL LE; MV 12; HD 5 (7 if the party is all high level); hp 32 (42 for high level); #AT 2/1/1; THAC0 13; Dmg 1-6+7x2 (claws), 1-4 (bite), 1-8 (horn); SA *polymorph object 3/day*, mimic any animal sound; SD surprised only on a 1, immune to poison, never sleep; MR nil; SZ L (8'); ML 20 (fearless).

The kretch are the warriors of the Tamara, fierce fighters organized into military units. They are fearless, but are canny enough to avoid death if it has no useful purpose. They resemble the great white saru, but their fur is a distinct green.

Haniyya, Great white saru; Int very (14); AC 6; MV 12; AL NG; HD 7; hp 46; #AT 3 or 3/2; THAC0 11; Dmg 1-6+7/1-6+7/1-4 (claw/claw/bite) or 2-16+7 (long spear); SA rending for 2-16 damage if both claws hit; SD immune to *polymorph*; MR nil; SZ L (8' tall); ML 19 (fanatical); Strength 19.

Don't let Haniyya carry the battle, although he should be able to handle his kretch if the heroes are having trouble with the other one.

If the party is all mid level, or has few spellcasters, you can give them a break by having the two in the trees target both Haniyya and hero shapeshifters for their first *polymorph other* spells. Shapeshifters are affected for only one round.

When the battle is finished, Haniyya collapses and weeps for an hour. Heroes who have been polymorphed find that they return to normal when the kretch are slain.

When Haniyya has finished his grieving, he is willing to talk to the heroes. He wants to know who they are, and where they came from. He has not heard of any of the lands they mention with the exception of the snakemen. The creci (his people) are bitter foes of the yuan-ti. He listens to their mission with understanding, and fills in a few facts about himself.

- He is Haniyya of the Creci, descended from those who first broke away from tiger. His people live near the Lake of Time (their name for Lake Kovo). He does not know why he is white and the kretch are green.
- He has seen nubari before, although none live in this part of the jungle. There are plantmen, but they are seldom seen, and keep to their swamps. But saru, shu, any of the other races are strange to him.
- His son Hanan was his only child. His wife fell to a pack of giant spiders only last year, now he will have no more children. His people mate for life, and produce at most three or four offspring, so every child is precious. He won't reveal the exact numbers of his tribe, but the heroes should get the feeling that it's less than a hundred, total.
- If someone mentions him, he does know Many Branches, and he is impressed by the mention of his name.
- He really doesn't tell them much about his people, except to mention that his people have a legend. When the Return is imminent, a strange group of heroes will come out of the savage jungles to the northwest. The Tamara will oppose them, but the heroes will defeat them and claim the Amaranthus. Only so can the true spirit of the Lion survive to defeat tiger. If the heroes need his help, he'll gladly give it.

If the heroes mention that they need it to save Bengoukee, he looks troubled. This is not the way the legend goes, and he does not know if this is right. But the Amaranthus will know, he says.

Encounter Seven: Lake Kovo

With Haniyya's as a guide, it takes only two more days to reach the shores of Lake Kovo. The island you seek lies about two miles off shore, small and wooded. To cross, you must appease the guardian of the lake. Haniyya warns you that it likes pretty trinkets, but the best way is to be pure of heart and honest in your dealings with it. He then crouches down near the water and slaps the water with his palms, making a rather sharp crack. "The guardian will be here in a few minutes. Prepare yourselves", and he steps back. In a matter of moments, you spy a storm upon the water. A small waterspout, 20' high, is moving purposefully towards the shore.

Water elemental noble: Int high (13); AC 2; MV 6, Sw 18; HD 16; hp 100; #AT 1; THAC0 7; Dmg 5-30; SA swamp boats; SD +2 or better weapons to hit; MR nil; SZ H (16' tall); ML 17 (fanatic). Special guardian abilities: *detect lie, detect evil (both at will).*

The lake guardian is here to protect the flower of immortality, and the entrance to the Dreamlands.

He will eagerly take any pretty items the heroes' offer, preferring gems, of course. But he cannot be bought off without the truth. He asks the heroes why they are here. If they try any kind of lie, he catches them immediately. If they tell the whole truth, he accepts their gifts and allows them passage. If they try a variation of the truth, perhaps repeating the legend that Haniyya told them, he questions them further. He does not believe that the one they save is the spirit of the lion, but then he stops questioning them. He agrees to take them to the island.

If the heroes ask him what he meant, he says that perhaps the heroes tell the truth when they don't know it, and says no more on the subject.

He uses a large log to give all the heroes a place to hang on, and quickly transports them to the island.

Encounter Eight: The Amaranthus

Once on the island, the heroes should search for the flower, as they were instructed in encounter one. Flying or just a serious ground search turns up the clearing with the unusual flower.

At last you have found it, the flower of immortality. Only three feet high, it still stands out from the rest of the jungle like a forest giant. It is white streaked with purple, and radiates a feeling of peace and intelligence. In your minds you hear,

"Come to me, people of good will, and we will speak." You feel an overpowering urge to touch the bloom.

Heroes may resist the call of the plant with no saving throw, they just have a strong inclination to touch the plant. Anyone who does disappears from sight. They are transported to the dreamlands, and anyone who does not touch the flower is out of the rest of the encounter.

The Tests of the Amaranthus

You appear on a cloud. Well, that's what it feels like. A cloud has replaced the island. At the center stands a tower, made of cloud as well. In the tower you can see the representations of many beings, including a great white saru, a river tam'hi, and a lion cub. A little to the right is an opening into the tower, inside you can see stairs. There is no sign of the flower.

The heroes find nothing on their cloud but the tower. If someone actually tries to climb down the cloud, or even jump off or fly away, they return on the other side of the island. Normal movement does not really apply here.

Note on flyers: The tower is too narrow for aarakocra, and for some reason the *fly* spell does not work here. The heroes must climb.

When they enter the tower, they hear a voice in their mind. "Three tests you must pass. You shall be judged not by your strongest, but by your weakest. Will, heart, and honor all will be tested. To fail is to be lost forever in the dreamlands. For now, climb.

The stairs, while soft, are steep and unending. As long as the heroes climb, they see more stairs ahead of them.

Test #1 - Heart

From the standpoint of the test, the weakest character here is the one who jumps last. She is the one who will be tested.

Ahead of you on the stairs, you come to the first landing. You have been climbing for an hour, and can use the rest. Ahead of you is the first obstacle. There is a gap above in the stairs. It looks like a 5' jump, but you must grasp the cloud stair and pull yourself up. Below is not the bottom of the tower, but only a foggy grayness. In your mind you again hear the voice "Only those whose hearts are strong may pass the first test."

Let the first hero who wants to, make the jump. When she does, the stairs seem to dissolve in her hands, and she falls through into the grayness, and is gone. Lost in the dreamlands, you should tell the players. Take the lost hero aside and tell her that she is not lost, instead she is on the next landing. When she fell she heard the voice say "*you are not the one being tested here, be at peace.*" And then she landed safely on the landing. She can see the other characters, but they cannot see or hear her.

The players will probably be trying various things. If it sounds like it could work let it, apparently. You can even have one or two make it, helping others across, when all of them fall and disappear. Make sure and take everyone who falls aside and explain to him or her. Do your best to quickly get it down to one hero.

Tell the last hero that it is up to her to decide if the party is to be lost in the dreamlands until the next adventure. Tell her that there is still a chance she can get everyone back if her heart is just strong enough.

She has to jump, there is really nothing else to do. If she starts down, she still ends up on the same landing, facing the same test. When she does, quickly ask her to recall at least one brave thing she has done in her adventuring career. As long as the hero comes up with something that sounds good (and is true), she passes the test.

Test#2 Will

Since it is assumed that the heroes will share the results of the last test, this one affects the first person to attempt it.

Continuing up the stairs, you come to another landing. From this spot there are no stairs, but rather seven stepping stones, suspended in the air. They lead to the next set of stairs. The voice is back in your heads, saying, "Your will must be like ironwood to pass the next test. Success is only three steps away."

Again, any methods the heroes use for bypassing the stepping stones (jumping, flying, whatever) just bring the hero back to the same landing.

The steps are close together, the hero in the lead can easily step over one or two of them. Make a big deal out of asking which exact steps the hero will step on.

When a hero steps on the first step, tell her that she feels as though she is stepping where she is not supposed to be. The second step makes her feel ill. This feeling increases until she steps on the sixth or seventh step. The sixth step is blue as the sky, the seventh is green as the jungle. Make a big point of asking which step(s) she is stepping on.

At this point inform the hero that she has lost exactly one half of her experience points. If she asks if

she is going to get them back, remind her that there is no such thing as a *restoration* in Malatra.

The rest of the party can then cross, feeling no ill effects at any point. Of course, none of this is the real test. That comes after everyone has crossed.

Tell them that the stairs have gotten steeper, and ask everyone for a Dexterity check. Failures result in slides down with a d6 abrasion damage. Give the hero who has lost ½ of her XP a few minutes to adjust her character. Make it seem like this is real. If the hero gripes and moans and wants to turn back, they have failed the test. If she just wants to continue on, and get this over with, they pass.

Note: If someone is REALLY depressed by the level loss, whining and moaning about it, don't drag this out. Simply have the voice say "Your will is like mud, this test you have failed", and give them back their XP. (It was all a dream anyway). Only do this if the player is making a big deal of it, a little good natured complaining shouldn't cause them to fail.

Test #3 – Honor

You have continued up the stairs, with your much-weakened companion by your side. The last test stands before you. It is not steps, but a basin on the next landing. The basin is blue stone, standing three feet high by two feet across. In the basin bubbles the freshest clearest water you have ever seen. It even has a fragrance of health. The voice resounds in your mind. "The test of honor is simple. The one you seek to aid has no strength. By drinking, you can transfer strength to him. Will one or more of you do so?"

Make sure to tell the heroes that unlike the other tests, they have a strong feeling that anyone who drinks will lose a point from either constitution or their prime requisite, permanently. Make a big deal about how you don't want someone to be surprised by this, so you're warning him or her now.

The key to the test is in the roleplaying. At least two people need to offer to sacrifice their ability points to save Bengoukee. If only one does, the voice resounds again, saying; "Your friend needs more help, will another try?"

Once they drink, have them subtract a point where it hurts the most. If a fighter with an 18(00) strength drinks, his strength drops to a 17. If someone with 15+ con drinks, their constitution drops, costing them hit points. If no one else will drink, the first person may drink again, but the test is failed.

This is also the time the heroes can make up for previous failures. Everyone above two that offers to drink negates a failed test. So if at least four heroes volunteer immediately, they have passed all of the tests.

Note: This may be the rare instance when any or even all of the heroes may deserve a hero point. If the entire party enthusiastically volunteers without being chided by anyone else, they may deserve a hero point.

When the last test is complete, the heroes find themselves in a spacious pavilion.

In a blink of an eye, you find yourselves in a spacious pavilion, laced with precious gems and pearls. At the center of the pavilion, waiting to greet you, is a tam'hi female of great beauty. She gestures to you to approach. "Welcome, my friends. The time of the Vizurathu, the spirit of the lion, is at hand."

If the heroes have passed the majority of the tests, one way or another, she continues:

You have proven your hearts are pure, your will is like ironwood, and your honor is without peer. Gladly will I accompany you.

If they failed all of the tests, she is disappointed.

"I cannot go with you, for my way lies down a different path. I will see you again, but for now, our time together is done."

Questions about the Vizerathu are answered with:

"The Vizerathu is the spirit of the lion. A lion he is, and yet he is not. He will come to the jungle weak, but when my essence is mingled with his, he will be strong enough to drive out tiger and his minions, all on his own. Come, time is pressing, we must go."

As soon as the heroes agree, they find themselves holding the flower (a small bundle of earth attached to the roots), standing back on the island. Haniyya is waiting for them.

"My, you were gone a long time. It's been six weeks if it's been a day." To you, it seems as though it has been but an hour or two. Such is the peril of entering the dreamlands. But you have been gone from the village for over two months, and hundreds of miles still lie ahead of you. What will you do now?

Any and all effects from the dreamlands are canceled when they reappear. Abilities and XP are returned, and they feel no hunger or thirst from their long absence.

If they ask about the permanent losses of ability points or XP, tell them that in the dreamlands, should they return, the changes might well be permanent. But they are not effective in the real world.

As long as the heroes don't give up, the Amaranthus takes heart. They may begin making plans for speedy travel, say by having the fastest one or two PCs go on ahead. They can even say they'll have to do the best they can and set out immediately. When they reach the shore of the island, the lake guardian is waiting for them.

Again Haniyya makes the distinctive slap on the water, and the guardian appears before you. He swoops over you, and you feel yourselves sucked into the lake, water in your eyes and lungs. When you can again push your face above the water, the scenery has changed. No longer are you in a lake; instead you are on a riverbank. There stands the hut of Abu the trader. You are less than two miles from the village of Bagoomba.

Encounter Eight: Bengoukee or the Vizarathu?

The heroes return to find Bengoukee still hanging on. Broken Branches takes the plant and enters Bengoukee's hut. In a few minutes he emerges, and he and Trueblood summon the heroes into the hut.

"It seems that we have a dilemma. The Amaranthus was meant to bolster the spirit of the lion, which will be weak when it comes to Malatra. But if we use it to save Bengoukee, it won't have enough strength left to help the Vizerathu. It seems that you have impressed the spirit of the flower, for she has chosen to let you make the choice. Save Bengoukee now, if we are to have any hope of defeating tiger, or wait and hope that the Vizerathu is born in time to repel tiger. What say you?"

Bengoukee lies on a mat in the hut, looking as though he had aged another three hundred years. It is clear he won't survive for much longer without aid.

Give the heroes a few minutes to make their decision. They may make a decision, they may suggest a compromise, and they may wonder what Bengoukee would decide. At some point, Bengoukee rouses himself. If they decide for Bengoukee, Trueblood says "So be it." And asks them to place Bengoukee's hand on the bloom of the flower.

If they decide otherwise, Bengoukee rouses himself, he asks to speak with the spirit of the flower. His hand must be placed on the bloom; he cannot lift it himself. When it does so, he goes deep in thought, and then the heroes hear him say, "It must be done. So it will be done."

It is as though you can see life returning to Bengoukee. He does not lose the ravages that the tamara have visited on his face, deep lines still cut his rather ugly face. But strength is returning to his frame. At the same time, the flower is changing. It shrinks, and finally coalesces into a small white stone, on a necklace around his neck. Deep within the stone you can still see the image of the flower. For the first time in two moons, Bengoukee stands.

The heroes are offered a choice of rewards. Each and every hero is offered membership in one of the leading tribes of the jungle. Each membership carries with it a reward. If the hero already belongs to a different tribe, they still must pick a tribe for an 'honorary' membership to get a reward.

If they decide for the Vizerathu, or if they failed to pass the tests of the dreamlands.

The Amaranthus is turned over to Many Branches, he will guard it until the time when it is needed. The heroes have one more chance to save Bengoukee.

Trueblood speaks, in the artificial voice that magic gives him; *"The quest for the flower has (not) been successful, and so we have only one hope for Bengoukee. We may all lend him a bit of our life force, that he may go on long enough to help us defeat tiger. Who will volunteer to help save the old witch doctor?"*

All of the members of the council of elders volunteer, it is up to the heroes whether they do or not. If any of them do, they will lose exactly ½ of a level (any 1st level heroes lose ½ of the XP for the next adventure). If none of them do, then enough life force is drained that Many Branches is killed, and Trueblood must watch the Amaranthus. Repeat the ending above, substituting a draining effect instead of the flower changing.

You emerge from the hut to the loud cheers of hundreds of people. Bengoukee holds up his hand, and the crowd falls silent. "Thanks to these brave heroes, I will live." The crowd again breaks into loud cheers, so that no one but you hears the rest of that line. "Yes, I will live, but not long enough."

Here Ends Dark Village

Experience Point Summary

Encounter One:

Plan for a swift journey – 100 xp

Encounter Two:

Defeat the one-horns – 100 xp
OR
Avoid any combat with the one-horns – 200 xp

Encounter Three:

Defeat the little tyrant lizards (per lizard) – 300 xp
(max 600 xp).
Break the truce – 0 xp
Avoid combat with yuan-ti – 100 xp

Encounter Four:

Aid in the Hanan's funeral – 200 xp
Discover kretch tracks – 100 xp

Encounter Five:

Defeat the kretch – 1000 xp
2000 xp if fought at high level

Encounter Six:

Appease the guardian – 300 xp

Encounter Seven:

Each test passed – 400 xp
(max 1,200 xp)

Encounter Eight:

Come to a reasoned decision on Bengoukee's fate – 200 xp

Discretionary roleplaying award 0-500 xp
Consider consistent character portrayal as the primary condition on how many points to award. You can award different amounts to different PCs.

Total Possible Experience: mid-level: 4,500 xp
high-level: 5,500 xp

Treasure Summary

Tribal Membership: For your work in saving the life of Bengoukee, the leading witch doctor of Malatra, you were granted the following membership and rewards.

Membership type ___ Full ___ Honorary (hero's choice)

Tribes Reward (Choose only one)

Bagoomba ___ weighted spear, +2 to damage, OR
___ healing brew (3-18+3)

Rudra ___ fine pottery (3) – waterproof, OR
___ pottery proficiency - free

Koshiva _____ garuda bone canoe - +1 to boating, OR
_____ swimming proficiency - free
Lacerial _____ sign language proficiency – free, OR
_____ bladeback flail, +1 to hit.
Simbuki _____ well crafted blowgun - +1 to hit
Wise Ones _____ exquisite thatch and garuda scale
armor (AC5), OR
_____ weaving proficiency – free
Simbara _____ bronze medallion of the lion - +1 to
saves vs. fear.

Note: All of the rewards are non-magical, all of them
are the best craftsmanship the respective tribes can
offer.

DM – Initial the tribe chosen, circle the reward chosen.