

Trials on Ti-Pujara

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Background

This campaign arc was made for Dungeons and Dragons 5th edition and was run for a level 12 party.

Length: 3 session (2 stages per session, stages were run in reverse chronological order)

Content Warnings: Memory Loss & Manipulation, Suicide, Death of a Child, Body Horror, Traumatic Brain Injury, Mass Death

Backstory

A century ago, the false prophet En Nila came to Ti-Pujara. She was a planar traveller who had sought to unravel the mysteries of reality. Her travels brought her face to face with Entropy, a force of chaos bent on the eventual unravelling of all things, leading to a cold, dead reality in which it could finally rest. Entropy gave En Nila all of the knowledge she sought, and in exchange, En Nila would take the words of the Pale Logic, a mind virus that could unmake a being's very will to live, and spread them throughout the planes of reality.

So she came to Ti-Pujara and set to work fashioning herself a prophet, giving the gift of truth and insight. She used a dragon's stolen fire to craft a forge for making Atamiir rings. Rings that could be used to destroy the souls of those who die, thus preventing them from ever being resurrected. It was not long before her poisonous words took hold in the minds of the tiefling population of Ti-Pujara. The Pale Logic spread through the cities first. An unlucky listener would bring themselves to an untimely end within hours of hearing its vile truth. As En Nila spread what she promised was salvation, her amassed cultists would come along behind her, placing Atamiir rings on the fingers of the dead, delivering to them a final death by destroying their souls, thus preventing resurrection.

Alois, the matriarch and healer of an outer clan which had not yet been visited by the prophet, heard of the calamity in the cities and resolved to do something. With the help of the wise women of her clan, she crafted the Tangled Sphere. An artifact that could be used to remove memories from a person, thus leaving them cured of the words of the Pale Logic. But the

Tangled Sphere was flawed. Given time, even one use of the Tangled Sphere would eventually lead to the erasure of all the memories a person had made, rendering them a husk of their former self. Alois and her creation were decried by her clan as blasphemy, and she was stripped of the title of matriarch and was cast out of the clan. They branded her Alois the lair, and the clan elders placed a curse upon the Tangled Sphere. If any should use its power, they must pay the price with their life.

Within weeks, the Pale Logic and En Nila began spreading to the smaller towns, eventually making their way ever closer to the outer clan. Alois the Lair was determined to put an end to En Nila's plot to destroy Ti-Pujara. Seeing no other choice, she infiltrated her clan and stole back the Tangled Sphere. Alone, she climbed Mount Cereb. At its summit, she communed with the forces of the infernal realm and contacted the infernal being Mashasura. In desperation, Alois made a deal with Mashasura. Mashasura would give Alois the power to use the Tangled Sphere upon every tiefling on Ti-Pujara at once, and Mashasura would come to Ti-Pujara and kill En Nila. In exchange, Alois would build Mashasura a gateway that would allow her free passage to Ti-Pujara whenever she wanted.

The bargain was struck, and construction of the gateway began. By the time Alois finished, the vast majority of the tiefling population was already dead, and even as Mashasura came through the portal and gave Alois the power to use the Tangled Sphere, her former clan heard the words of the Pale Logic. With time running out, she cast her spell and used the artifact to remove the memories of every tiefling still alive, her own life being forfeit in the process. Fewer than a hundred tieflings survived; those she saved now reside in the derelict village of Thelem. Mashasura then took En Nila to the summit of Mount Cereb and forced her to use the Tangled Sphere to cast a ritual that would slowly siphon the memories of any mortal on Ti-Pujara. The curse placed upon the Tangled Sphere by the clan elders killed En Nila, fulfilling Mashasura's contract.

The ritual Mashasura made En Nila perform would continuously siphon away the memories and, therefore, the souls of the remaining tieflings. The slow siphoning of a few souls allowed Mashasura to amass sufficient memories to build new souls for her children. She would use the gateway constructed by Alois to bring her spawn from the infernal plane to Ti-Pujara. There she built a temple from their slumbering bodies and waited for the ritual to complete. In time, she could gift her own children with the souls built from the twisted memories of the tieflings. An army of infernal beings that could be resurrected as easily as any mortal should they fall in battle.

For close to a century, she watched over the ritual of the Tangles Sphere, continuously removing the memories of the surviving tieflings. Now that her ritual is coming to a close, she needs one last element to complete her plans. Mashasura plans to kidnap Wren, the last tiefling matriarch, and force her to use the Tangled Sphere to give the newly constructed souls to her children. The elders' curse would kill Wren, and all whose souls have been drained for a century would die as the last of their minds and souls are finally ripped from them.

Story Chronology

The story events are laid out below in chronological order in the events section. However, the campaign can be run in either forward or reverse chronological order from end to beginning, except for the final stage. A reverse chronological run of this arc would be:

- Stage 5
- Stage 4
- Stage 3
- Stage 2
- Stage 1
- Final Stage

This structure preserves the suspense longer and immerses the party in the realities of memory loss since they truly won't know what came before a given stage, since it hasn't been played yet. This is a little tricky to pull off and requires a good relationship and understanding of your players. To increase the sense of time running back, you can discuss the possibility of unleveling player characters during the course of the arc. However, so long as stages are treated fairly independently and players are willing to agree to end stages in specific locations, it can work out remarkably well and create a truly unforgettable campaign arc.

Party Setup

The party is made up of a group of extra-planar explorers visiting the different planes of existence to seek out adventure and challenge. Recently, in their home world, a portal to a long-forgotten plane of existence has been rediscovered by the party. They pack their bags, sharpen their weapons, tune their spell focuses, and plunge headfirst to see what new adventure awaits them on Ti-Pujara.

Characters

Mashasura

- A powerful Dagamora and child of Itayam. She is the mother of the Ti-Saadhak. She wishes to use the Tangled Sphere to steal the memories of the Tieflings who live on Ti-Pujara and use them to construct souls for her children. She is at the top of Mount

Cereb in the Temple of Mashasura. The temple is made from the sleeping bodies of her children.

Nun of Mashasura

- Children of Mashasura who are awoken to serve her. They do her bidding without question in the hopes they shall be the first to gain souls.

En Nila, deceased

- A dark prophet sent from Entropy to deliver the Pale Logic to Ti-Pujara. Her action resulted in the downfall of the tieflings
- She was killed when Mashasura made her use the cursed Tangled Sphere.

Amyloid

- Amyloid is a smith who works at the Anatomad (Dragonforge), making Atamiir rings.
- He does not know how long he has been doing this, but he knows nothing else. His life consists of eating, sleeping, and forging rings. The party can convince him to stop for a time, but before long, he is back at work making rings no one wears or uses.
- A pile of Atamiir rings has piled up outside the forge.

Apoptos

- A Tiefling miner who had sustained significant brain injury during a mining accident.
- Due to his injury, they are no longer affected by the tangled sphere and hear whispers of the Pale Logic. They cannot hear its full song, but know that the prophet Ninai foretold the death of all tieflings, and Apoptos views it as his mission to destroy the souls of his kin using the Atamiir rings.

Wren

- Matriarch who got lost in the caves while looking for medical cave fruit.
- Longest memory and the leader of Ti-Pujara.

Memam

- A healer who tends to and cares for Tieflings whose time is near.
- Her husband Demyen is very sick and ailing.

Alois the Liar, deceased

- A former Matriarch who created the Tangled Sphere as a means of distorting the memories of the tieflings to keep them safe from the words of the Pale Logic.

Axons

- A young tiefling child whose memory is unaffected by the tangled sphere, but is also too young to have heard the Pale Logic.
- Axos is the only tiefling child in the village and is the daughter of Glial.
- She is a kind child eager to help her amnesiac kin.

Demyen

- A sick rambler being tended to by his wife, Meman.
- Final stages of memory loss.
- Had a brother named Trigem that no one remembers, though he sometimes cries out his name.

Glial

- Mother of Axons.
- Personality changes more than most.
- Found burying her child after she passed away in the night.

Olig

- A friendly watchman who gives the player most of their quests.
- Fairly stable but prone to terrible headaches.
- He has a bad back and uses crutches.

Locations

The Plains of Cerelus

- The Plains of Cerelus stretch across the entirety of Ti-Pujara. They are a wasteland of ash, dust, and tar, blood rivers. The plane of Ti-Pujara is, in fact, the severed and dead brain of an elder god. Tar blood is the rancid blood of this ancient god.

The Plains of Cerelus Complication Table (D6):

- 1 Roving Tyrannosaurs
- 2 Roving Pack of Velociraptors
- 3 Dust Storm
- 4 Tar River Crossing
- 5 Off Course
- 6 No Event (Survival check must immediately be rerolled)

Roving Tyrannosaurus

The party comes across a single Tyrannosaurus crossing the plains. A DC 19 stealth check from every party member allows the party to slip by the dinosaur without conflict.

Roving Pack of Velociraptors

The party encounters a roving pack of 1D6 hostile velociraptors.

Dust Storm

High winds create a dust storm where the party is travelling. The party can choose to hunker down and wait out the dust storm, resulting in the effects of an Off Course roll, or they can push on through the dust storm. If the party pushes forward, they must make a DC 18 survival check or lose their way, resulting in a reroll of the Complication Table (reroll back-to-back dust storms).

Tar Blood River Crossing

The party has encountered a tar river 35 feet wide. The tar deals 2D12 poison damage for every 5 feet a creature moves through the tar. There is no explicit solution for this problem. The creativity of the party will determine its success or failure. The party can choose to abandon this course and choose a different path, resulting in the effects of an Off Course roll.

Off Course

The party finds they are off course and need to try a new route. The total number of successes they need to reach the end of the cave increases by one to a max of 5.

No Event

No event occurs, but the party must immediately make a new DC15 Survival check.

The Village of Thelem

- The Village of Thelem is built in the ruins of the ancient city of Thelem. The present-day size of the inhabited village makes up only a few square blocks of the ancient city.
- It represents the last bastion of tiefling civilization on Ti-Pujara.
- The inhabitants are having their memories taken each day by the Tangled Sphere.

Cereb Caves

- A network of caves inside Mount Cereb. They lead to a subterranean entrance to Mashasura's temple.

Cereb Caves Complication Table (D4):

1 Cave Fisher Ambush

2 Piercer Ambush

3 Ti-Saadhak Nuns

4 Wrong Turn

Cave Fisher Ambush

The party is attacked by 1D4 cave fishers.

Piercer Ambush

The party is attacked by 1D6 piercers. The party can make a DC 20 perception check to notice the cave piercers and prevent the piercers from gaining a surprise round.

Ti-Saadhak Nuns

The party encounters 1D4 nuns. A DC 18 persuasion or deception check is required to avoid a conflict with the nuns.

Wrong Turn

The party finds they have made a wrong turn and need to try a new route. The total number of successes they need to reach the end of the cave increases by one to a max of 5.

Mount Cereb

- Mount Cereb is the central mountain of Ti-Pujara. It is also the tallest mountain on the planet.
- Its summit was where Alois contacted Mashasura and made her deal to use the tangled sphere on the population of Ti-Pujara.
- The summit now serves as the location of Mashasura's temple.

- Carved within the mountain is a giant arch that bridges the western half of the plane with the eastern half. Two great cities used to lie on either side and would conduct trade using the bridge that ran between them through the heart of Mount Cereb.

The Temple of Mashasura

- Located near the summit of Mount Cereb.
- Mashasura's temple is composed of the living bodies of her children, the Ti-Saadhak.
- They are waiting for Mashasura's ritual to complete so that they might gain souls.

Bridge of Callosumal

- The bridge runs through a vast arch carved straight into Mount Cereb.
- The City of Thala is on the eastern side.
- The City of Thelem is on the western side.

The Mountains of Sulci

- These mountains surround the land of Pujara and protect it from the encroaching void.
- As time has marched on, these mountains have crumbled more and more, and Pujara has continued to shrink.

The Ventric Lakes

- The Ventric Lakes were once freshwater lakes poisoned by tar blood flowing from Mount Cereb.
- In ancient times, these lakes were Ti-Pujara's primary source of fresh water, but now the Tiefling rely on fruit from the desert plant to get fresh water. Though these fruits are poisonous, they can be processed to make the water from them potable.
 - **Lake Ek:** The largest and northernmost lake
 - **Lake Do:** Westernmost lake
 - **Lake Tiin:** Easternmost lake
 - **Lake Chaar:** Central southern lake

The City of Thala

- A ruined city of sandstone on the eastern half of Ti-Pujara
- Inhabited mostly by roaming dinosaurs
- The party can meet Meman in the ruins.

Anatomad (Dragonforge)

- The forge was created by the prophet En Nila to forge Atamiir rings to destroy souls.
- Anyone wearing an Atamiir ring when they die will have their soul destroyed.
- Used to create cursed and abhorrent artifacts meant to undermine the gods.
- A large furnace where the fires harvested from a dragon still burn bright.

The Seahorse Swamp

- One of three mass burial sites on Ti-Pujara where those who had succumbed to the Pale Logic were buried.
- This is where Apoptos lives and where he takes his victims.
- He gets his rings from Amyloid at the Anatomad.

Key Terms

Anatomad

- Dragonforge in Infernal.
- A large forge powered by stolen dragonfire, used to create Atamiir rings.

Atamiir Rings

- Rings of Soul Destroying.
- Black glass rings that, when placed on the finger of a corpse, will destroy the soul of that corpse, preventing it from ever being resurrected. The ring is broken in this process.

Ti-Saadhak

- Children of Mashasura
- Demonic creature vaguely resembling a tiefling, but with pale chalky white skin and black soulless eyes.

Tangled Sphere

- An object of twisting yellow glass in the rough shape of a sphere.
- Created by Alois the Lair as a means of removing the memories of her tiefling kin in order to free them from the grip of the Pale Logic.

- It is currently being used by Mashasura to steal the memories of the tieflings on Ti-Pujara.
- Mashasura uses these memories to construct souls for her children. If her ritual is allowed to complete, it will strip the tieflings of their souls, killing all the tieflings affected.
- The Tangled Sphere cannot affect those with developing or severely damaged minds.
 - Children and those who have sustained severe traumatic brain injuries.
- Every day, the Tangled Sphere lets out a melodious sound and forces every sentient creature on Ti-Pujara into slumber. During this slumber, the Tangled Sphere removes one memory starting with the previous day, but slowly extending to a person's whole life.

The Pale Logic

- The Pale Logic is a mind virus created by Entropy to hasten the end of all things. Those who hear its words seek their own demise. All who hear the words find themselves unable or unwilling to refute them.
- In the case of the tieflings of Ti-Pujara, if they are made to remember the words at the end of the arc, they will get a save against succumbing to the Pale Logic because long years have dulled the potency of the words in their memory. Yet even after a century of mental atrophy, the words are still present enough to potentially deal a devastating blow to the remaining tieflings on Ti-Pujara.

Tieflings

- In this setting, Tieflings can live for centuries, and births among their population are very rare. Thus, the majority of the tiefling population alive today was alive when En Nila arrived on Ti-Pujara.

The Lurker

- An agent of Mashasura that exists to cause chaos for the party and to keep things consistent between loops. If any information is written down or an item is gained whose presence would change future / past events, the Lurker can be used to steal those items from the party while they sleep.

Events

Stage 1: The Beginning

Arrival on Ti-Pujara

The party arrives on Ti-Pujara by means of a repaired extra-planar portal. Ti-Pujara has not been in contact with the other planes for a century, so the party's expedition to Ti-Pujara represents a sort of first contact for many of the inhabitants.

Ti-Pujara is a hostile land of basalt pillars and ash-covered fields. The desert-like terrain flows with rivers of black tar like blood that come down from the central peak of Mount Cereb. Spiny toxic plants are able to collect this blood and refine it into water, the only reliable source of water on the plains. Dinosaurs and demonic creatures are the only fauna that stalk the plains and make for a perilous crossing in the best of times.

As the party beholds this sight, they spot the ruins of a city on the western foot of the mountain. The rising smoke of campfires and other signs of civilization can be spotted among the ruins. On the journey across the plains, under the relentless beating of a motionless sun, the crossing is slow and difficult. Two successful DC 15 survival checks are required to navigate a straight course to the village of Thelem (These two checks need to be made any time the party attempts to traverse the plains). A straight course to Thelem takes the party through a bracken swamp, which holds its own encounter. If the party wishes to avoid the swamp, they may choose to go around it; they need to succeed on an additional Survival DC 15 survival check to make it across the plains. If a survival check is failed while on the plain, roll on The Plains of Cerelus Complication Table.

The Bracken Swamp

If the party chooses to enter the Bracken Swamp, they encounter dinosaur bodies impaled on sharpened spikes of wood throughout the swamp. In the heart of the swamp, the players encounter the lair of a bone devil (Hooked Polearm Variant). Surrounding the lair are many such impaling spikes. A successful DC 14 stealth check from all party members is required to avoid a confrontation with the bone devil.

If a confrontation arises, the bone devil emerges from its lair and attacks the physically weakest party member first. If the bone Devil grapples a target with its hooked polearm, it can use its next action to impale the target on a wooden spike, dealing 4D8 piercing damage and 5D6 poison damage. The party can either defeat the bone devil or attempt to flee. If the party flees, they must make it to the edge of the swamp before the bone devil stops pursuing them. The edge of the swamp is 600 feet away from the bone devil's lair.

If the party defeats the bone devil, they can find the following in its lair.

- Dinosaur bones
- 25 black coins
- +1 short sword

Arrival in Thelem

Once the party has crossed the plains, they can arrive in the village of Thelem. Thelem was once a grand city built at the foot of Mount Cereb. Its grand sandstone buildings have since been reduced to little more than rubble. The exception to this is the small patch that has been inhabited and now makes up the Thelem. The rubble has been cleared, and fresh stones have been stacked to build one-story buildings which are home to a small, aging community of tieflings. Carved into the sandstone in the infernal are a myriad of words and phrases. Some denote buildings as homes and others as communal buildings. Most of the text seems to be written to inform a reader of the layout of the tower and where to go if they are confused.

As the party enters the village, a tiefling elder by the name of Olig greets them. He is a hunched figure using pieces of old wood as crutches. Olig is an outgoing fellow and takes the party to his small one-room home, offering them food, drink, and aid. If lightly prompted, he tells the party about Ti-Pujara and life in Thelem. He tells the party that whenever the mountain sings, the people of Thelem fall to slumber and awake without memory of the day before. He tells them that after each slumber, they must check the reminders they wrote the day before to pick up where they left off before the slumber. Their own names are carved onto their chests, and a map of the town is carved into their hands.

As the meal and the conversation come to an end, Olig asks the party if they are fighters, pointing out the weapons they carry. Olig tells them that a killer has been terrorizing the village for some time. This killer has been kidnapping and killing tieflings. New births are very rare in the village, and the population is slowly dwindling due to the acts of this killer. He impresses upon them the terror of waking to learn that someone you know you should love but can't remember is no longer in the village, and the constant dread of relearning every day what is happening. He offers them anything they desire in the town if they help stop this killer.

If the party is open, Olig directs them toward the Seahorse swamp, a place they have written down as a potential location of the killer. He will warn the party that the killer has access to strange rings that make resurrecting the dead impossible.

On the Road to the Seahorse Swamp

The Seahorse swamp in the southeastern corner of Ti-Pujara requires the party to traverse around Mount Cereb to the south and cross the southern plains. Survival checks are required to cross the plain, but after the first successful survival check, a sweet, melodious sound begins to pour from the top of Mount Cereb. Any attempt to block the sound is found to be unsuccessful as the party's lids grow heavy and one by one they drop off to sleep in the middle of the plains.

Stage 2: Something is Wrong

Between Chaar and Tiin

As the party comes to consciousness, they find themselves on the plains of Ti-Pujara, south of Mount Cereb. A small tiefling-like creature in rags can be spotted running away from the party. Its bare footprint is easily followable in the soft sandy ground. As it runs, it can be seen to be clutching some papers and trinkets. The party finds that some of their travel bags have been opened.

Pursuing the creature brings them to a narrow burrow, too narrow for a medium or larger creature to enter. If the party has a member that is small or tiny, they may enter the burrow. After a short crawl, the burrow opens up into a small interior space which cannot be seen from the outside. The creature, noticing it has been cornered, quickly twists a ring on its finger and teleports away, counter spell not preventing this teleportation. In the creature's haste, it dropped one of the pages it was clutching.

The page is from the diary of a tiefling child and speaks of a holy savior named En Nila and how wonderful it is that she has brought the words of the Pale Logic to save them all.

The party members still above ground see a swamp ahead with what looks like the firelight of a campfire. Smoke drifts lazily in the sky from within the swamp. The sweltering heat of the plains begins to grow oppressive, and the cool shade of the swamp appears to offer some relief.

The Seahorse Swamp

Entering the swamp, the shade of twisting trees cloaks the sun and gives them some respite. Carved upon the wind-bent trees can be seen the following phrases.

Remember her promise

Remember her sacrifice

Remember her gift

Remember her

Toward the center of the swamp they party can see a rickety cottage made of decaying wooden logs. The structure of the cottage is partially sunk into the moist ground. Approaching closer the party can see a single tiefling sitting on the slanted porch of the cottage, sharpening a knife on a whetstone. He greeted the party from afar and offered to share his breakfast with them.

Meeting Apoptos

As the party approaches, they can begin to see that the tiefling on the porch is surrounded by the mutilated corpses of several tieflings. His hands, clothes, and hair are stained with drying blood. Occasionally, the party steps on something that bursts with a sickening crunch. Looking down, they find that the ground around the cabin seems to be some kind of mass grave, with hundreds of half-sunk tiefling skulls and bones littering the soft ground.

If the party continues to approach the tiefling on the porch, he introduces himself as Apoptos. The party can see that he seems to be missing a decent portion of the left half of his skull. He chats up the party and gives off an unthreatening aura, as a friendly neighbor invites the party over for breakfast. The breakfast he serves is a simple watery porridge.

If asked what he is doing, he responds that he is a gravekeeper DC 8 Insight check to detect the deception. The party can also simply choose not to believe him. If pressed, he changes his story to say that he is a priest purifying the dead on behalf of the prophet En Nila. He laments that he has run out of Atamiir rings and must make the trek to the Anatomad to speak with Amyloid to get more. He asks the party if they could get the rings for him and tell them the location of the Anatomad, saying it is a great forge and can no doubt make them many useful weapons.

A Deal with Apoptos

The party can agree to help Apoptos get more Atamiir rings from Amyloid. He thanks them and offers them some dried meat for their journey. The party meets little resistance, leaving the Seahorse swamp, and needs only to make one DC 15 survival check to reach the Anatomad.

The Death of Apoptos

At any time, the party can choose to attack Apoptos. He proves a clever foe and uses various magical traps set around his cabin to throw the party off balance. The magic triggers are hidden in the mud, and whenever the party moves during the fight, there is a chance they trigger a trap. For each tile a party member moves, they must roll a D4. If a four is rolled, a trap triggers. Mark the tiles that characters move through safely, as no roll needs to be made on those tiles again. Once a trap has triggered, it can trigger again each time a character moves onto that tile. Known traps can be disarmed using skill checks.

When a character triggers a trap, roll a D6. The result rolled is the type of trap triggered.

List of Traps

Pit Trap (1):

Disarm: Arcana or Dispel Magic

Effect: Fall into water, ground magically closes above the target. The water tries to force its way into your lungs. At the start of a creature's turn, it must make a Constitution save, DC 22. 3 failures result in the creature's downfall. The trapped creature can make a DC 23 Strength save to try to break out. A creature above must make a DC 17 Strength save to release a trapped creature.

Poison Dart Trap (2):

Disarm DC 15 Slight of Hand

Effect: A creature that triggers this trap must make a DC 17 Dex save or take 6D8 piercing, half as much on a success. If the creature takes any piercing damage, it must

make a DC 20 Constitution save or take 4D6 poison damage and be paralyzed for 1 minute.

Bear Trap (3):

Disarm DC 12 Survival

Effect: bear trap makes an attack +12 to hit, dealing 4D6 piercing damage and grappling the target. Attacks have an advantage on targets stuck in a bear trap. A DC 17 Strength save is required to break free.

Fire Blast Trap (4):

Disarm DC 17 Arcana or Dispel Magic

Effect: Casts 3rd-level fireball centered on the trap (8D6) 20ft radius sphere

Sleep Trap (5):

Disarm DC 12 Arcana or Dispel Magic

Effect: Casts high-level sleep centered on the trap (20D8) 20ft radius sphere

Death Trap (6):

Disarm DC 17 Arcana or Dispel Magic

Effect: Casts Life Transfer with the one who activated the trap as the target, dealing 3D8 necrotic damage. Apoptos regains health equal to double the damage dealt.

Final Check Information

With the death of Apoptos, the party will remove a source of fear from the lives of the tieflings. This counts as one positive action if the tiefling village needs to make a saving throw against the Pale Logic.

If Apoptos is not killed, this source of fear remains and counts as one negative action if the tiefling village needs to make a saving throw against the Pale Logic.

Journey to the Anatomad

Regardless of the player's choice to work with, ignore, or kill Apoptos, they can choose to travel to the Anatomad. Travelling across the plains from the Seahorse swamp to the Anatomad requires only one successful DC 15 survival check. This survival check can be avoided altogether by travelling through the ruined city of Thala.

The Ruins of Thala

Unlike Thelem, its western twin, these eastern ruins hold no permanent inhabitants and are home to little more than roving packs of dinosaurs. A DC 15 stealth check is required to avoid the notice of a pack of 4 velociraptors. If the party is spotted, a successful DC 16 animal handling check can be made to scare some of the dinosaurs off. If the check is successful, roll a D4. The number rolled indicates the number of dinosaurs that flee rather than fight. If the party fights the dinosaurs, a dinosaur chooses to flee on its turn if it is reduced to half health.

The Dragonforge

The Anatomad (The Dragonforge in Infernal) is a large obsidian forge made for a work force of dozens. The majority of the forge has been abandoned, save for a single smelter and an anvil. As the party arrives at the Anatomad, this single anvil can be heard ringing with hammer blows. A single tiefling named Amyloid works the forge alone, smithing black obsidian rings. Near where he works is a pile of black rings 3 feet high. The blacksmith does not register the party as they enter. With sufficient effort, he eventually notices them, but he does not stop working.

If asked, he doesn't seem to know what he is doing nor why, only that he must keep doing it. He tells them that some of the rings work and many don't, gesturing to the pile of rings. He gives the party some working Atamiir rings.

The party has the choice to let him go about his work or try to stop him. The party can stop him from making rings, either by killing him, maiming him, or convincing him to leave the forge. The forge itself is indestructible. A DC 20 persuasion check is required to get him to leave the forge. Once he has left the forge, he returns to it as the party leaves, unless the party takes him with them for a time.

Final Check Information

If the party brings Amyloid back to the village, this counts as one positive action if the tiefling village needs to make a saving throw against the Pale Logic.

Wandering Across Ti-Pujara

As the party wanders off into the plains again, they need to make two DC 15 survival checks. Once these checks have been made, they encounter a wandering tiefling who introduces herself as Meman. She is a healer from Thelem and is looking to collect some dinosaur brains to use as healing ingredients for a sick tiefling in her village. Noticing the fighting shape of the party, she asks for their help hunting some dinosaurs in the ruins of Thala. If the party already fought the dinosaurs in Thala, then this is an easier fight, as some may already be injured.

After collecting the dinosaur brains, Meman begins preparing camp, informing the party that they should do the same unless they want to wake up face down in the sand. She carved words

into her skin telling her to take the party back to camp. As the party finishes making camp, the melodious sound calls from the tops of Mount Cereb, and one by one, the party drifts to sleep.

Stage 3: Words in Flesh

Meman's Camp

The party awakens in the ruins of an ancient city, the sandstone foundation of once towering buildings surrounding them. They find that they do not remember the names of their fellow party members, nor how they all met. Nearby, cooking a dinosaur eye breakfast is a person who introduces herself as Meman. Meman does not know who the party is, but assumes they were allies by the presence of the dinosaur corpses nearby. Once breakfast is eaten, she asks the party to follow her back to her village on the other side of the mountains because fleshly carved words on her skin tell her to take the party back to camp.

Dinosaur's In Disguise

Meman leads them toward the mountain and informs the party that, according to her flesh map, there is a tunnel through the mountains that connects with her village on the other side. As the party approaches the base of the mountain, they can see a vast cavern like a yawning mouth on the side of the mountain. As they near the cavern, they are attacked by 3 tyrannosauruses, each with a silver pendant around their necks. If the party removes a necklace during the fight, that tyrannosaurus unpolymorphs back into a tiefling. Killing a tyrannosaurus likewise transforms it into a tiefling corpse. If any of the tieflings disguised as tyrannosaurus are killed, the remainder are free in either tiefling or dinosaur form. If all of them are spared, they beg the party's forgiveness and explain they had been in that form so long they forgot themselves.

If the party spares them, they thank them and ask to join their group as they head back to the village.

Final Check Information

If the party takes the unpolymorphed tieflings back to the village, this will raise morale and counts as one positive action if the tiefling village needs to make a saving throw against the Pale Logic.

If the tieflings are instead killed or abandoned, the village will not get this moral boost, and this counts as one negative action if the tiefling village needs to make a saving throw against the Pale Logic.

The Callosumal Bridge

As the party reaches a cavern carved into the side of Mount Celeb, they see the Callosumal Bridge spanning through the cavern from one side of Mount Celeb, straight through it to the other. This colossal structure is in a state of decay, but it is still very recognizable as the labor of mortals.

During their trek across the Callosumal Bridge, they spot 3 shadow figures dragging a body bag ,coming from the opposite direction on the bridge. As soon as the figures notice the party, they slip down a side passage and seal a heavy stone door behind them.

Unable to do anything about the strange figures, Meman implores the party to continue on to her village. Several hours of travelling along the bridge pass before the party emerges on the other side and gets a view of the village of Thelem from above.

The Village of Thelem

As Meman, the party, and potentially the three unpolymorphed tieflings near the outer edge of the village, they pass through a graveyard where a Tiefling named Glial is digging a grave for a small wooden coffin. Her movements are shaky, and tears well in her eyes. If the party stops beside her, she laments that this is the second young one to go in the past few months. If the party inquires, she tells them that this was her daughter Axoins, who passed away last night.

If the party is able they can offer to cast a resurrection (raise dead) (revivify work since the mother cast gentle repose after her child passed) spell upon the child, bringing her back to life and delighting Glial, who pledge her life to the party as she hugs and cries over Axon, who, in confusion, tries to comfort her mother.

Final Check Information

If the party can resurrect Axons, she will provide those suffering with the Pale Logic a beacon of hope. This counts as one positive action if the tiefling village needs to make a saving throw against the Pale Logic.

If Axons remains dead, the village will still be in mourning for the loss of a child. This counts as two negative actions if the tiefling village needs to make a saving throw against the Pale Logic.

Meman's House

Regardless of whether or not the party saves the child, they take up lodging in Meman's house as they eat dinner with her. Her husband Demyen joins them for dinner, where Meman attempts to feed him the dinosaur brains. The mixture she creates for him seems to have little effect. His ailments include poor eyesight and stabbing pain on the side of his face that makes

him cry out at the dinner table on more than one occasion. He sometimes cries out the name Trigem, but Meman admits she has no idea who that is.

Once dinner is finished and Demyen is put to bed, Meman laments to the party about the struggle of caring for someone you know you are supposed to love, but day to day, you wake each morning not remembering who they even are.

Olig's Woe

As the party is preparing to pass another sleep in Ti-Pujara, a Tiefling named Olig comes pounding on Meman's door asking for the party. Olig seems to recognize the party, though they have never met. Olig tells Meman that Wren, the village matriarch, has gone missing. He explained that he found a record of her leaving the village to collect cave fruit yesterday. Since a day has passed, that means Wren has forgotten all she didn't carve in her flesh and may very well be completely lost. He begs the party to find her and to leave before the time for forgetting comes.

He says that records indicate that she went to the cave near the foot of Mount Celeb.

The Caves of Mount Celeb

The party has little trouble finding the caves outside of the village and even finds clear signs that a tiefling came this way. As they follow Wren's trail into the cave, they are ambushed by three cave fishers who push rocks from a ledge above the entrance to the cave to block the entrance. The cave fishers then attack the party, targeting the weakest-looking party member first. Once the cave fishers are killed, a melodious sound can be heard as the party is forced to drift to sleep.

Stage 4: The Forgetting

Strangers in a Strange Cave

The party awakens to find 3 cave fisher corpses nearby, their own weapons sticky with cave fisher blood. One by one, each member of the party realizes that they don't remember the people around them, and they can barely remember details of their own life. With only one path to progress, the party must push deeper into the cave.

Cavern Travels

As the party travels through the twisting cave, they must succeed on three DC 15 survival checks. If they fail a check, they encounter a setback. Roll on the Cereb Caves Complication Table. After successfully navigating through the natural cave, they find themselves entering a large cavern 300 feet across with the facade of a temple carved at one end, standing roughly 120 feet tall. The entrance to the temple is guarded by two stone basilisks that come to life once the party gets within 60 feet of them. The door to the temple is locked, but a DC 18 sleight of hand check using thieves' tools can unlock the door. Alternatively, the two basilisks each have

half a key hidden behind their right eye. If a party member failed the Constitution save on Petrifying Gaze and succeeded a DC 8 perception check, they would see the key fragment in the basilisk's eye.

The Lower Temple

Once inside the temple, the path turns sharply upward with immense winding stairs. At the top of the stairs, some 450 feet up from where they can enter a room of mirrors. There is a heavy stone door with infernal scripture on the opposite side, along with a stone level beside it. When the stone level is pulled, a shaft opens from the ceiling and a beam of light shines into the room on a mirror that allows the beam to bounce around the room. The party must position free-standing mirrors in the middle of the room to direct the beam to strike the door. The mirrors only rotate 90 degrees at a time. Once the door is illuminated, it becomes immaterial and allows physical things to pass through it unimpeded.

The Upper Temple

Crossing the threshold of the door, the party steps onto a soft, giving surface that makes it difficult to balance. From here to the end of the dungeon, the ground is always difficult terrain for players unless specifically otherwise. This new section of the temple is completely dark. If the characters have a way to see (dark vision, torch, magical light), they see that the walls, ceiling, and floors of the temple are composed of living bodies interlocked to form solid surfaces. These creatures are the slumbering Ti-Saadhak. If 5 or more damage is dealt to one of the bodies, it wakes up and attacks the party. Enemies of the party do not deliberately attack the Ti-Saadhak since they are the very people that the denizens of this temple are tasked with protecting.

The party wanders for several hours amid liminal, nondescript rooms. No objects are on the floor or ceiling, just endless halls and offshoot rooms of no apparent use. After wandering for several hours, the party finally sees a door of stone at the end of a long hallway of bodies. As they approach, a melodious sound reaches them that causes them to fall into slumber even as they approach the door.

Stage 5: The Forgotten

The Temple of Mashasura

The party awakens in the middle of a long hallway. The walls, ceiling, and floors of the hallway are composed of living bodies interlocked to form solid surfaces. These creatures are the slumbering Ti-Saadhak. If 5 or more damage is dealt to one of the bodies, it wakes up and attacks the party. The characters at the party have no memory of each other and have no memory of anything before this moment. Characters won't even remember their own names.

At one of the hallways is a heavy stone door that takes all of the party pushing together to open. The room beyond is a pentagonal room with a mechanical lift embedded in the center. A beam

of sunlight pours down the elevator shaft, hitting a mirror suspended above the elevator, shining its light on the stone door to the hallway. On each of the four other walls of the room is embedded a silver mirror. The silver mirrors can be removed or broken to reveal 4 stone slabs with riddles on each.

Left most stone from the hallway:

*Through days of lord and king
I make the mountains sing
A time of chosen might
I set the sky alight
Your dynasty was long
The cloud wept its bitter song
For in time, you passed away
And cracked the ground of clay
-Rain or Reign*

Left center stone from the hallway:

*In the morn of yesteryear
I was soft and clear
In the hour of creation
I had chosen your formation
Through the days of youth
I changed my truth
Through nights of summer's garden
Your form did harden
For a life lived long
I sang my creaking song
Time has worn me a little
For now, I am quite brittle
What am I
- Your Bones*

Right center stone from the hallway:

I am the fire

I am the ice

I am the poison

I am the vice

To have me is life

To see me is death

To consume me is growth

To feel me is breath

-Blood

Right most stone from the hallway:

Look to me to see the day

Look to my children to find the way

The road is long, you have time to play

I will drive your fears away

Many times, you see my mirror

Many times you see my clearer

Ever distant, never nearer

My mother calls, do you hear her

As your world nears its end

I am the one whom you will all depend

For it is my purpose to defend

To protect the world for you to mend

-The Sun (Sunlight)

At the center of the room atop the elevator mechanism is a statue of a Ti-Saadhak kneeling with its mouth open toward the sky and its hands cupped, palm upturned as though begging or offering. At the base of the statue, around its feet, are the following carved words

Life denies itself nothing that makes it grow

Deny not your sister and seed you will sow

To take for your flesh, you must give of your flesh

If you have not, take from the creche

Solution:

The party must clean the statue with water. They must give some of their blood and a piece of their bone to the beggar. They can either place it in her mouth or her hands. If a limb is placed in the beggar's mouth, it snaps shut. A DC 21 Dexterity save is required to avoid losing that limb. The mouth opens after the limb is removed. Once cleaned and fed, the party must use the mirrors in the room to direct the light onto the beggar. Once this is done, the lift begins to rise. If all of the mirrors are broken, the party needs to find some way to repair them to reflect enough light to engulf the entire statue.

The Guardian Tree

The party ascended aboard the elevator for over 1000 feet, eventually rising through the center of a grand balcony atop Mount Cereb. Around them, far below, are the plains of Ti-Pujara. Black rivulets cut through basalt rock and dust plain. Before them is an immense gate blocking the way to the summit. Every bit of architecture is composed of unlocking bodies. A tree-like structure at the center of the courtyard like a balcony, writhes with life; it is made of grafted bodies forming a trunk and branches.

As soon as the platform finishes rising, the tree attacks the party. Despite its form, it is mobile and moves around the battlefield for tactical advantage. If it grapples a creature and is within 10 feet of the edge of the balcony, it can use its next action to throw the creature over the edge. If it is more than 10 feet away from the edge, it instead attempts to consume the creature.

Once the tree has been defeated, a key can be found in its stomach. Anyone who was swallowed has the chance to notice the key. They can use the key to unlock the balcony gate so that the party may ascend toward the summit.

The Summit of Mount Cereb

Once they pass through the gate, they are once again on solid ground. Ascending toward the summit, they see a demonic creature forcing Wren to hold a pale, twisting orb above her head. Before the party can get too close, two Ti-Saadhak nuns rise and confront and attack the party.

Once the bodyguards are slain, in anger, Mashasura stops the ritual she is performing through Wren to face the party. As soon as this happens, the story cycles back to the previous stage or forward to the next one, depending on which way the story is being played.

Stage 6: Ends and Beginnings

Facing Mashasura

As the party regains control and the darkness fades, they have all of their memories back. The fog rolls back from their minds. Mashasura stands before them expectantly. She gives them a simple choice. Leave now and allow the completion of her ritual in peace. The party is allowed to leave Ti-Pujara and continue on with their lives.

The End of Mashasura

If the party decides to fight Mashasura, they do battle at the summit of Mount Cereb. The party can choose to kill Wren, thus stopping Mashasura from completing the ritual, even if the party loses the fight, but this is a desperate tactic and has dire consequences for the resolution.

Once Mashasura is defeated, the party gains control of the tangled sphere. Wren regains consciousness with the death of Mashasura and begs the party to destroy the tangled sphere and free her people's memory.

Departing Ti-Pujara

If the party decides not to fight Mashasura, they are allowed to leave the summit. As they descend to the ground, Mashasura's ritual is completed. As the party returns and walks through the village of Thelem, they find that all of the tieflings there have died a sudden and painful-looking death. Various characters the party had met are found through the village, twisted and misshapen, with looks of horror and pain upon their faces. Axons is alive and asks to join the party since there is nothing left for her to do.

As the party returns to the portal where they first entered Ti-Pujara, they find Mashasura there. She explains she needs the portal to allow her children, who are now all bare souls, to leave Ti-Pujara and spread across the plane. Though she allows the party to go first before sending all of her children behind them.

Horror Remembered

If the party chooses to destroy the tangled sphere, the tieflings of Ti-Pujara, all at once, have the memories of their life come flooding back to them. The good, the bad, and the words of the Pale Logic. After the first sudden shock of memory, Wren cries out in pain before the party. After a moment to compose herself, her eyes grow suddenly empty as her face slackens. As she remembers those haunting words, she must make a DC 13 straight roll save. On a success, she is able to withstand and block out the words and regain herself.

On a failure, she thanks the party for all they have done and walks toward the nearest cliff with the intent to walk off. The party can stop her and attempt to help her. Spells like lesser restoration, remove curse, friends, command, and other enchantment or restorative adjuration spells allow Wren to remake the save.

On a success, she snaps out of her stupor, and a look of horror replaces it on her face. She once again cries out, this time in despair. She urges the party to take her to her village as fast as possible. Along the way, she tells them the cause of her despair.

Wren's Tale

Wren tells them of a time before the arrival of Mashasura, when Ti-Pujara was a grand place, home to thousands of tieflings. A time when the twin cities of Thelem and Thala stood proud beside Mount Cereb. She tells a tale of the coming of En Nila, a tiefling prophet infected with the Pale Logic. She explains that all those who hear the cursed words desire their own end above all else. En Nila presented it like some kind of holy cure to the world, and with the help of her followers, it spread like wildfire. The words tore through the land, killing like a virus. Some could resist the words for a time, but the longer they pounded at the mind, the more the mind would succumb. Alois, a tiefling witch, healer, and matriarch of one of the outer clans, created a palliative in an attempt to save her people. She created the tangled sphere. An object that could remove the memories of a person and spare them the words they had heard. But the tangled sphere was flawed. It removed all of the memories a person had at the time the sphere was used, in effect killing and resetting a person's very soul. Alois's "solution" was decried, and she was stripped of the role of matriarch and cast out. From then on, she was branded Alois the Lair. But the Pale Logic spread, and Alois, even in exile, would not stand idle and watch. She climbed to the top of Mount Cereb and made a bargain with the demon Mashasura. Mashasura would give her the power to use her tangled sphere on every tiefling on Ti-Pujara, and in exchange, Alois would craft an extra-planar portal, allowing Mashasura to enter Ti-Pujara along with her children, the Ti-Saadhak.

Mashasura clearly went on to steal the tangled sphere and attempted to use it to steal the souls of the tieflings by stealing their memories and giving those souls to her children.

Now that the tangled sphere was destroyed, her people would remember the words of the Pale Logic.

Back in Thelem

As the party leaves Mount Cereb and approaches the village of Thelem. The village attempts a save against the Pale Logic. Since a century has passed since they heard the original words, there exists a chance they can block out and forget the words and survive. This will depend on their mental fortitude, which may have been helped or hindered by the party's actions. This roll should be made out in the open. The roll is made with advantage and a +3 modifier if the party has done 3 or more positive things to help the tieflings of Thelem. The roll is made at disadvantage and a -3 modifier if the party has done 3 or more negative things to the tieflings of Thelem. The DC on the roll is 10.

Life with Remembrance

If the village as a collective succeeds, then the inhabitants of the village have the strength and motivation to band together to drown out the Pale words and free themselves from its grip. When the party returns, they are hailed as heroes for rescuing Wren. The villagers have their memories back and are able to use them. Life seems to improve rapidly, as now the tiefling can make actual progress from day to day. They thank the party and bid them a fond farewell as the party departs through the portal onto their next adventure.

Tears of Dispair

If the village fails, they all succumb to the words of the Pale Logic. All except Axon and her mother if Axon was saved.

Ti-Pujara in Ruin

If Axon was not saved, Wren is overcome with despair at the sight of what has happened to her village. She begs the party to kill her. The party can either fulfill her wish or leave her to her misery.

Departing a Land of Sorrow

If Axon and her mother are alive, the three of them agree to go through the portal with the party and leave Ti-Pujara forever.

Life Without Remembrance

If the party does not destroy the tangled sphere and instead takes Wren back to the village, they find a people who can now form new memories but have no grasp on the past. Life in Ti-Pujara goes on, very much as it has. But things certainly seem better off, as now the village can make progress day to day. But it takes them a long time to learn all of the lessons that people without a history must learn.