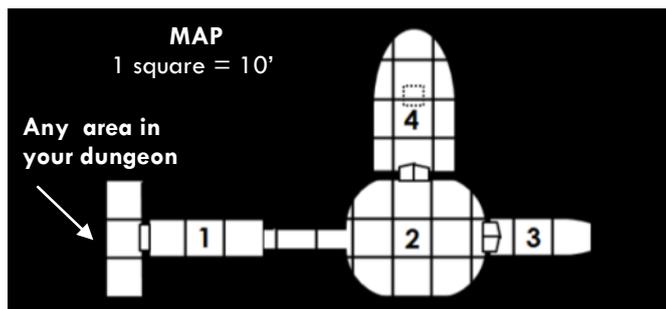
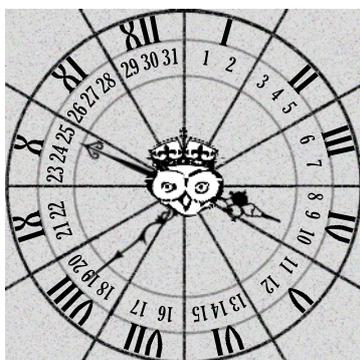


GRIPPED IN THE HANDS OF TIME by Roger SG Sorolla



1. HOROLOGE LOCK. A thick iron door seals this room. It is divided in 12 radial sections, with a 3' wide clock in the middle, likewise divided (below). The clock has month, day, and hour hands, with concentric dials, centered on an embossed crowned owl's head. The top of the door has the motto "*QUIS NON POTEST EXPEDITIONEM SIGNIFICANTEM HABERE, SI MONUMENTA STRICTA TEMPORIS NON RETINENTUR.*" The mechanism ticks loudly each hour, inside the door, tamper-proof.

When the month and day hands align exactly, and the hour hand is in that sector, the owl's head pops out. If it is pressed, each section slides into the wall; the owl goes with the sector the hands are in. The door closes when the hour hand leaves its sector. Several long, thick iron bars can prop it open, but this stops the hour hand, throwing off the clock.



Clock shown in position for April 25, 7:00 (AM)

Schedule of the Horologe Lock's Alignments:		
Jan. 1, 12 AM;	Feb. 3, 1 PM;	Mar. 6, 2 AM;
Apr. 8, 3 PM;	May 11, 4 PM;	June 14, 5 PM;
July 17, 6 AM;	Aug. 19, 7 PM;	Sep. 22, 8 PM;
Oct. 25, 9 PM;	Nov. 28, 10AM;	Dec. 31, 11 PM.

If "strict time records are not kept" the next alignment will arrive in d20-1 days.

Beyond the door, the entrance foyer has an arched ceiling that shows the condition of the sky outside, without clouds, at dawn today. It floods the room with sunlight.

2. CLOCK HORRORS. The ceiling is domed, and shines as in 1, but with the state of today's sky at noon. Double doors bound in bronze lead out, each pair slightly ajar.

Three brass and iron clockwork automata wait here, treated as *hook horrors*, mindless and non-living. They attack if anyone enters the other two rooms. Edged weapons and lightning do half damage; blunt and acid, full; piercing, fire, and cold, none. An arrow or spear doing maximum damage jams the machinery of one arm, or of the wheels.

HOUR is 6' tall and stout, MINUTE is 7' tall, and SECOND is 8' tall and slender. Their hands are pointed arrows: clock hands. If both hit the same target, it goes out of time, reappearing after the named interval. Disappearing for a second is disorienting, giving a penalty on one's next attack.

3. SHRINE OF BARI-RITU.

The arched ceiling glows with the sunset sky. A granite bench faces an ancient sandstone bas-relief (right) that takes up the whole far wall. The woman's torso is mounted with a crystalline hourglass, enormous, fitted in bronze. This is the goddess-demon Bari-Ritu, Keeper of the Eighteenth Hour, Holder of the Keys of Dusk.



Other demons feed on sentient lives, but Bari-Ritu devours sacrifices of time. To those who do and think nothing in her presence, she grants boons. During sacrifice, black sand flows upwards in the glass, measuring up to 12 hours.

Time sacrifice is hard for the active mind. The average person passes each test 50%, those of high will 75%, and exceptional, 90%. High intellect actually gives a penalty. Monks and mystics used to meditation may reroll each failure once. Failing a test means starting all over again.

- 1 minute** (1 test): She echoes in your mind, tasting your time, opening great promises.
- 3 minutes** (2 tests): She moves the hours, opening or closing the Horologe Door.
- 10 minutes** (4 tests): She grips in *stasis* a person before her, freed on command. This can also deactivate one Horror.
- 1 hour** (8 tests): She grants 1 casting of *haste*.
- 3 hours** (16 tests): She grants 1 casting of *time stop*.
- 12 hours** (24 tests, the last 8 at double failure chance): She brings the time machine to room 4, with future-Tamas inside.

4. LAUNCH PAD FOR A DEPARTED TIME MACHINE. The ceiling here is last night's sky, lit by moon or stars. The time machine's take-off to the future left coils of excess time behind: a 10' radius zone centered on the low platform, in which things move 3 times slower. Entering is hard. Pulling out too quickly has consequences; two fingertip bones are on the floor just inside. A cistern with a month's water, and crates with 2 weeks' rations, are by the door.

On the other side of the platform is the leather-bound diary of the builder of these rooms: Tamas Nalantzy-Kartavian, born 150 years ago. It tells of his fascination with time, how he found the bas-relief and spoke to Bari-ritu. His tedious sacrifices of time brought back the future-era chrononaut Xecra Gand, whom he imprisoned and tortured elsewhere.

Xecra's machine can travel in time but not space. Tamas first took it to the present day. There, guarded by the Hour horror (2), he may be found outside these rooms. He is a very experienced fighter with the best quality light armor, sword and poniard. (The diary will change, or disappear, to reflect the outcome of any meeting with the party.)

Then he went to a time just before Xecra's era, using her knowledge for wealth and power. If Bari-ritu brings him back it will be, so he thinks, of his own will, fleeing assassination. He has by then gotten an energy sword, a force field belt rivaling the hardest armor, and a mask that allows him to escape the effects of his five sleep gas grenades.

All illustrations altered from public domain sources. Thanks to James Maliszewski for help with the Latin.