



DEPTHS OF THE CROAKING GROTTO

Fantasy Renaissance Adventure Module TG1
For use with Savage Worlds

An Adventure for Seasoned Characters

Written by "Weird Dave" Coulson

MEMORIES OF THE TOAD GOD #1

*On the borders of the uncivilized Great Jungle lies the outpost of Kraden's Hill. Brave adventurers are needed to lead expeditions into the perilous jungle, facing cannibal monsters, dangerous flora, and worse, all in search of wealth and power hidden deep inside the jungle. Find this and more in the **LOST TEMPLE OF IBHOLTHERG!***

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LOST TEMPLE OF IBHOLTNEG

Far to the south, on the borders of the Great Jungle, brave caravans of merchants, traders, and settlers have begun to colonize the frontier. For several years now they've cut into the harsh wilderness, but stand on the brink of destruction from unknown, terrible forces. Just as rumors of a lost temple have surfaced, those same forces seem to be on the move.

TG1 Lost Temple of Ibholtneg is the first adventure in the Fantasy Renaissance Adventure Module series **MEMORIES OF THE TOAD GOD**. It is designed for a party of four to six Novice *Savage Worlds* characters. A copy of the *Fantasy Companion* book is required for play. The GM should read the module thoroughly before playing to become familiar with the overall plot of the adventure.

WEIRD DAVE'S NOTEBOOK: THE FRONTIER

THE MEMORIES OF THE TOAD GOD SERIES TAKES PLACE IN A FRONTIER TOWN ON THE BORDERS OF AN INHOSPITABLE AND DANGEROUS JUNGLE. DETAILS ARE GIVEN BELOW FOR THIS SPECK OF CIVILIZATION KNOWN AS KRADEN'S HILL, BUT LITTLE IS DETERMINED AS TO WHOM THE TOWNMASTER ANSWERS. FIND A PLACE IN YOUR CAMPAIGN FOR KRADEN'S HILL TO HELP ROOT THE CHARACTERS IN YOUR SETTING. YOU WON'T REGRET IT.

Adventure Background

The Great Jungle is a vast wilderness filled with equal parts terrible monsters and tales about them. Expeditions returning home from treks into the jungle tell stories about tribes of cannibal orcs, white-furred gorillas using tools for war, man-eating plants as big as a horse, and insects large enough to suck a traveler dry of blood in an instant. Some expeditions simply don't return at all.

But an abundance of natural resources in the Great Jungle and an overflowing population hungry for expansion has forced the rulers of the land to make a push to settle the area. Some years ago, a brave band of merchants representing Grimden House – owners of a large caravan network across the land – saw a profit in the venture and set forth to conquer the Great Jungle. They brought with them a sizable army of mercenaries, and before long they reached the edge of the jungle.

They fought for every inch of land, paying for it with the blood of the settlers and traders. Eventually they won a slice of land from the wilderness. Kraden's Hill was founded, named in honor of their leader, Kraden Grimden, who fell in battle against a horde of screaming black-skinned cannibal orcs. Even as their leader was lost, the brave settlers routed the orcish horde. The spot was perfect, located just a short

distance from a tranquil freshwater lake. The orcs fought hard and with unflinching desperation to repel the traders and mercenaries. They saw the lake as a holy site, but were forced to relent after that fateful battle.

Now, three years later, Kraden's Hill is seeing an explosion of new growth. A steady supply of rare plants and animals sent along the rough trade route linking Kraden's Hill to civilization has kept the meager colony alive, but now farmers and settlers have been making the journey southward as well. Eager to escape work under the control of greedy lords in high castles, many have come to see Kraden's Hill as a fresh start.

But that's not all. Many have been lured to Kraden's Hill; scholars, adventurers, thieves, and thrill-seekers have seen ample reasons to visit. Rumors of a great temple made of gold hidden deep within the jungle have spread by regular trade with several of the orc tribes who have ancient legends of the site. They speak of the place in hushed whispers and claim that it is a holy place, sacred to a toad god who once ruled over all of the jungle.

Kraden's Hill has now become home to several merchant companies looking to find this temple of the toad god and claim it as their own. Grimden House controls the majority of trade in the frontier town, but two others have begun to make inroads as well – the dwarves of Clan Ironstar and the humans of Noviorium House. These three companies seek brave heroes to venture forth into the dangerous jungle and find the golden temple before their rivals do.

It is a place ripe for plunder, and not just in terms of hidden treasures in the jungle.

Module Synopsis

The characters come to Kraden's Hill intent on finding their fortune within the great golden temple hidden somewhere in the jungle. They arrived with an independent merchant who was traveling south with a larger Grimden House contingent. They have an opportunity to search the frontier town and get a feel for the place. The Thirsty Serpent is the best tavern and inn in Kraden's Hill, although they cater to Grimden House interests almost exclusively.

The party's arrival marks them as potential employees, and they soon find that the three merchant companies are all interested in an audience with them. Grimden House is straightforward; offering a decent upfront payment but little compensation upon discovery. The dwarves of Clan Ironstar are shrewd negotiators but have little to offer now – instead they promise to make

sure the characters are well taken care of should they find the temple. The sorcerers of Novirtum House offer to share in the mystical secrets the temple contains.

Ultimately their decision to sign on with a merchant company or go on their own into the jungle is up to the characters. Finding the temple is going to be a bit more difficult, and involves first tracking down a tribe of black-skinned orcs that live nearby. These orcs, of the Goyega Zaa Tribe, have been trading peacefully with Kraden's Hill for several years, and the characters find that they are arriving at the advent of the Feast of First Fruits. Social occurrences outside the characters' experience are bound to occur, but if they can keep their wits about them, they can learn that they must seek out the hut of a blind orc shaman named Bula Goyega.

Bula Goyega tells the characters that they must find the Idol of the Squamous Toad, an unholy relic hidden in the jungle, before they can find the Lost Temple of Ibholtheg. He gives rough directions but the characters must navigate and survive tough encounters in the heart of the jungle to find the idol. There, they face off against degenerate toad-men and mutant frog demons known as cipactli; descendants of Ibholtheg's unholy brood. Upon investigating the idol they find the path before them clear.

The Lost Temple itself is hidden a short distance away, and within that unholy site of fabulous wealth the characters face madness-inducing fog, undead abominations, more cipactli, and more despicable monsters. An aspect of Ibholtheg itself still lingers over the site, but killing it triggers the collapse of the temple. With bravery, skill, and no small amount of luck, the characters will flee the crumbling temple and retreat to the jungle to see the ruins of the Lost Temple of Ibholtheg.

Future Modules

The **MEMORIES OF THE TOAD GOD** series of Fantasy Renaissance Adventure Modules detail the return to power of a squamous evil that once plagued the jungle. Known as Ibholtheg, this being is ancient, malevolent, and lies sleeping within the Pit of Black Gulfs into which it was cast long ago by greater powers. It stirs once more, awakened by the encroachment upon its sacred grounds, and only a brave band of adventurers can stand up and put a stop to it before it oozes over the land once again.

In **TG2 Tongues of the Screaming Toad**, an old sect of Ibholtheg's worshippers takes up residence in the frontier town of Kraden's Hill. People spiral into madness as their tongues blacken and eventually fall off. Researching this curse reveals hidden schemes between the merchants of the town. Eventually the

characters will track down an ancient site in the jungle known as the Swamp of the Screaming Toad. Therein lies the secret to stopping the plague and putting down this newly revived Ibholtheg cult.

The final adventure in the series is **TG3 Shadow Out of Sapphire Lake**. A lurking, living shadow rises from the depths of tranquil Sapphire Lake, wreaking havoc over Kraden's Hill, and it's up to the characters to rise up and put an end to it. They must descend into the depths of Sapphire Lake itself to find the source of the shadow. There they will discover the source is actually a crack in the planar prison known as the Pit of Black Gulfs. Only by passing into the Pit and sealing it from the inside can the characters finally put a stop to Ibholtheg's rise.

Involving the Characters

The adventure starts with the characters arriving in Kraden's Hill with the understanding that there are lucrative employment opportunities for adventurers willing to brave the dangers of the Great Jungle. You can print and cut out the rumors in **Player Handout 1** and give to the characters before they start to give them an idea of what they're after.

Adapting the Module

This module tries to use as many generic location names as possible to make it easy to port to nearly any fantasy campaign setting. Below are the elements of the module that would need to be mapped out to an existing setting along with notes of how they fit within the adventure.

The Great Jungle: A vast expanse of largely unexplored jungle wilderness on the edge (or even just beyond) of settled territories. Occupied by tribes of nomadic wild elves, savage shadow orcs, and native humans who were once part of a large Aztec-like civilization long ago.

Kraden's Hill: A frontier town settled a few years ago by enterprising members of Grimden House.

Grimden House: A powerful merchant family with trade connections across a wide area. Their interests lie in plundering the Great Jungle for valuables to be sold in other markets.

Clan Ironstar: Dwarven merchants with an eye for adventure and gold in the inhospitable jungle.

Novirtum House: A merchant family with ties to mystical powers in faraway lands. Known for using magic to further their ends, with a keen interest in



arcane locations.

Ibholtheg: Squamous bat-toad entity of ancient antiquity. Worshipped by mutant bullywugs, some of which can fly on bat-like wings.

PART ONE: OFFERS IN KRADEN'S HILL

The characters arrive in Kraden's Hill seeking fame and fortune in the wild frontier town. It's likely they've arrived having heard of a golden temple somewhere in the jungle and the merchants willing to pay top coin for its discovery and plunder. Adventure has a way of finding the characters, and they don't have to wait long before offers come pouring in. Who can the characters trust? Who's talking straight and who's playing dirty?

Welcome to Kraden's Hill

The below text assumes the characters came into Kraden's Hill with the latest merchant caravan from somewhere in the north. Adjust the text if the characters are arriving via some other means.

For days now you've seen nothing but tall mountains and craggy hills as you made your trek south with a merchant caravan to the far frontiers of civilization. The going was rough at times, and slow, but now you're on the downward slope of the mountain range. You've caught brief glimpses of the deep emerald expanse known as the Great Jungle but so far all you've experienced is the weather getting hotter and stickier, causing your clothing to cling to you like a hungry leech. Finally, as the morning sun beats down, you see your destination – the frontier town of Kraden's Hill. It sits just south of a tall, barren hilltop that would offer a fantastic view of the surrounding area. Three dozen wooden buildings, separated by rough streets and the hill are enclosed behind a stout wooden wall, reaching twenty feet high. Beyond the wall, the huge green expanse of the Great Jungle waits like a lurking panther. Darkness the morning sun cannot dispel waits beneath the canopy of thick jungle leaves. About a mile east of town, you can see a glittering azure lake with a clear path between it and the town.

The merchant caravan takes the rest of the morning and early afternoon to make the trek to the gates of Kraden's Hill. The caravan master, **Baldred Invershaw**, requests that the characters stay with the caravan wagons until they enter the gates of the town. He

doesn't want any trouble and trusts the party to keep an eye out in case things take a turn for the worse.

WEIRD DAVE'S NOTEBOOK: THE JOURNEY SOUTH

THE CHARACTERS JOURNEY TO KRADEN'S HILL THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS AND FROM THE NORTHERN LANDS CAN BE HAND-WAVED EASILY, BUT IF YOU WANT TO OFFER A LITTLE EXCITEMENT FOR THE JOURNEY YOU CAN USE THE MODULE TGO DEPTHS OF THE CROAKING GROTT. THAT MODULE INTRODUCES THE CHARACTERS TO BALDRED INVERSHAW, AN INDEPENDENT MERCHANT WHO IS BEING PAID TO LEAD THE GRIMDEN HOUSE CARAVAN BUT HAS HIS OWN REASONS FOR COMING TO THE FRONTIER TOWN.

The Frontier Life

The caravan wagons stop a hundred feet from the gates of Kraden's Hill as two armed men step forward from a small guard station. The men are lightly armored considering the heat, but wear tabards bearing the crest of Grimden House. Baldred steps forward and announces that Master Theodric Grimden is expecting their arrival. The two guards look over his offered paperwork for a moment, then announce their arrival and open the gates.

Inside, Kraden's Hill is a bustling frontier town. It is the hub for the entire region, as dozens of settlers have taken up offers to start cultivating the land on the border of the jungle. None of the settlements – small gatherings of farms really – have ventured deep into the Great Jungle and most are within three days ride of Kraden's Hill. They come into town on an irregular basis to trade, catch up on news, and for safety when jungle raiders and predators strike.

Baldred drives the caravan wagons to the center of Kraden's Hill, which sits just shy of the towering hill that gives the town its name. Merchant arrivals are always a big event, so swarms of people come out to see what kind of wares are for sale. Baldred tells the characters to stay at the Thirsty Serpent, which is where he'll be staying as well, before he gets caught in the rush of potential customers.

Purchases in Kraden's Hill

Because of its remoteness, buying gear and goods in Kraden's Hill is expensive. Unless otherwise noted, prices for items that can be found are 4x higher than normal. The merchants in town may be willing to cut a deal once the characters establish themselves somewhat or if they join up with one of the three mercantile powers in town (Grimden House, Clan Ironstar, or Novioirtum House). Availability for items is up to the GM but a good rule of thumb is to assume there is a 75% chance that a given common item is available in town.

NPC Profile: Ereltris and Esysith Evenleaf, Thirsty Serpent Owners

The people of Kraden's Hill view the wild elves of the Great Jungle with great suspicion and distrust. Most of the wandering bands have dealt only with the occasional arrow and have crossed blades with the settlers, but for the most part the elves seem more content to protect the interior of the jungle than the fringes. Ereltris and Esysith were born into a lifestyle of constant moving, hunting and gathering for every meal, and their experience shows in their steely gaze and taut muscles.

But the two share a keen interest in the ways of civilization. They worked as little more than slaves after being captured in a raid on Kraden's Hill, a common fate for captured wild elves. The elves treat the past as a strange thing – except to a few, it is something to learn from but not hold grudges over. Ereltris and Esysith took work at the Thirsty Serpent and gained the trust of the original owner. But after only a few months the owner fell ill from a snake bite and the Evenleaf twins were able to purchase it from precious gems their people had gathered from the mountains (nothing of value to the elves but pretty to look at). The two have run the Thirsty Serpent for over a year now, quietly keeping it running for the merchants and travelers that come to Kraden's Hill.

The Thirsty Serpent

There are two taverns in Kraden's Hill – the Jewel of the Jungle, which caters to higher-end merchants and customers, and the Thirsty Serpent. The Thirsty Serpent also offers the only inn in town for travelers. Baldred stays there along with the other travelling merchants, although many of them dine and relax at the Jewel.

Read or paraphrase the following as the characters approach the Thirsty Serpent.

One of the largest buildings in Kraden's Hill, with at least three stories, the Thirsty Serpent bears a swinging sign depicting a mug of ale being dumped down the open mouth of a snake, its belly full. The doors inside are on swings and don't quite fill the doorway. Pushing through them, you see a wide common room with benches and tables of rough wood. Behind the bar hang dozens of snakes nailed to the wall like trophies. Most of them are exotically patterned and colored, and one of them is so large it is hung in the middle, dropping down ten feet on either side! An elf with bronzed skin stands behind the bar, and you see from the kitchen another elf, female, but otherwise with nearly identical features.