



CHAOS SCAR: A CHANCE ENCOUNTER

HEROIC

1-10

A Chaos Scar Adventure

By Robert J. Schwalb

Illustrations by Jorge Lacera

Cartography by Jason A. Engle

“A Chance Encounter” is a single combat encounter for a group of five 1st-level characters set in the Chaos Scar. The adventurers find a wagon sinking into a hole despite the best efforts by the struggling horse pulling it. Yellow-robed attendants fight to pull the wagon free, but the wagon’s slide and the horse’s screams suggest their efforts are futile. Should the PCs lend a hand, however, they find their good intentions met with cold steel, bitter curses, and a wild three-way fight.

If you’re not playing a Chaos Scar campaign, you can still use this adventure by integrating it into any existing campaign on a road through a remote wilderness area.

For details on the Chaos Scar and its environs, read the [Chaos Scar introduction](#) and check out the map of the entire valley.

BACKGROUND

In a village not far from the Chaos Scar, a simple trader named Pung made a poor investment. A curious glass box came into his possession by way of a grubby adventurer. It was curious, but a crude piece compared to the jewels and other items the seller offered. With the adventurer a few gold pieces richer, Pung went about his business, the box nearly forgotten. But that night, unsettling images plagued his dreams, and they continued each night thereafter, growing more disturbing, until his fraying sanity unraveled altogether. Each dream was unique, but each featured one common element: the strange glass box he'd purchased.

A god was speaking to him, Pung was certain. And it was speaking to him through the cube. So Pung shut the doors to his general store, sold all of his possessions except for the glass box and a few yellow robes, and set out to make a new life for himself as a prognosticator—there was no doubt the visions portended the future. His predictions grew stranger and more sinister until his fellow visitors urged him to find some other home—at the point of pitchfork and with flames from their torches licking the back of his wagon.

Pung and the few unstable fellows who saw something special in him abandoned civilization for the wonders of the Chaos Scar, for the prophet was convince the god in his dreams slumbered somewhere in the valley. A tragic development, however, has derailed his plans, for his wagon has fallen afoul of a pit. If he and his fellows don't act quickly, his wagon, his horse, his possessions, and his dreams will disappear.

THE GLASS CUBE

The glass cube is behind Pung's madness, for it imprisons an otherworldly entity known as a fell taint. The creature wants to be freed and has been working on its prison for years until now; the slightest jostle will break it. Once a resident in the Chaos Scar, lurking with several others of its kind (see "The Tainted Spiral" in *Dungeon* #173), the fell taint was captured by a curious mage passing nearby, imprisoned, and studied. The mage learned all he could, however, and sold the box as a curio as a (admittedly cruel) joke. The monster was able to exert some influence from its prison, however, and has gradually passed through many hands, each urging the bearer to bring the box back to the Chaos Scar. Now, nearly free from its prison, it is almost home.

GETTING THE CHARACTERS INVOLVED

You can use this encounter at any point while the adventurers explore the lands just outside the valley proper. The heroes might stumble on the wagon while heading to a dungeon or on their way out, returning from a successful mission. You can use the following text to draw the PCs into the encounter.

A horse's shrill scream splits the air, followed by panicked shouting and the sound of splintering wood. You think it came from just behind the trees ahead.

TREASURE PREPARATION

"A Chance Encounter" rewards a party with parcel 8 (see "Treasure Parcels" in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). Since the 120 gp worth of treasure is composed of a riding horse, wagon, and sack filled with silver, the

PCs might leave some or all of the loot behind. Should this be the case, add the missing value to the treasure they find when they next gain a parcel.

CONCLUSION

Once Pung and the other creatures are defeated, the PCs are free to go about their business. However, you might expand this encounter into a full adventure. The ant tunnels might lead to the hive, wherein the PCs can fight giant ants to their hearts' content. Or, they might access one of the many dungeons littering the valley.

There's also the matter of the glass cube. Who sold the cube to Pung and why? Where did it come from? Is there some conspiracy behind its sale or is it just some strange trinket recovered from the Scar?

SINKING FORTUNES

Encounter Level 1 (600 XP)

SETUP

Pung (P)

4 Pung's believers (B)

1 hive soldier (S)

5 hive workers (A)

1 fell taint lasher (F)

Pung led his companions off the trail and into an open field. He didn't have the prophetic ability to note the ant tunnels riddling the earth beneath the grassy terrain. When his wagon rolled overtop a tunnel, the rear wheels dropped through the thin earth into the tunnel just below.

Pung stands on top of the wagon. His believers work to pull the wagon free from the hole. Don't place the giant ants or the fell taint yet (see Tactics, below).

When the PCs come upon the scene, read:

Through the trees, you spot a wagon sinking into the ground. The horse tied to the wagon screams and thrashes as it is pulled back to the hole. Several men and women dressed in yellow robes and matching round, brimless hats run about in panic. Climbing on top of the wagon and helping the situation not at all is a wild-eyed lunatic wielding a length of chain with a chunk of stone at the end. He looks around, spots you, and screams, "I have foreseen this! A trap! Kill them! Kill them all!"

Pung (P)	Level 2 Artillery (Leader)	
Medium natural humanoid, human		XP 125
Initiative +1	Senses Perception +0	
Ecstatic Fury aura 3; any ally that starts its turn in the aura slides 1 square and gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls until the start of its next turn.		
HP 31; Bloodied 15; see also <i>wild swing</i>	AC 13; Fortitude 14, Reflex 13, Will 16	
Speed 6		
⚔ Flail (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon +7 vs. AC; 1d10 + 1 damage.		
☹ Bitter Epithets (standard; at-will) ♦ Fear, Psychic Ranged 10; +7 vs. Will; 1d6 + 3 psychic damage, and the target takes 3 extra psychic damage if it ends its next turn closer to the mad prophet than where he began.		
⚔ Perilous Order (standard; at-will) Ranged 5; targets one ally; the target makes a charge attack and deals 3 extra damage.		
⚔ Incite Bloodlust (standard; encounter) Close burst 5; targets allies; the target makes a melee basic attack and deals 3 extra damage on hit (6 extra damage against prone targets).		
⚔ Wild Swing (standard; requires flail; recharges when first bloodied) ♦ Weapon Close burst 1; targets 1d4 random creatures in the burst; +5 vs. AC; 1d10 + 1 damage, and the target is knocked prone.		
⚔ Rise Fool! (minor; recharge ☹☹☹) ♦ Healing Targets one dead ally; the target regains 1 hit point and stands up as a free action.		
Alignment Unaligned	Languages Common	
Skills Endurance +7, Intimidate +9		
Str 12 (+2)	Dex 10 (+1)	Wis 8 (+0)
Con 13 (+2)	Int 8 (+0)	Cha 16 (+4)
Equipment robes, flail		

4 Pung's Believers (B)	Level 1 Minion Brute	
Medium natural humanoid, human		XP 25 each
Initiative +1	Senses Perception -1	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.		
AC 13; Fortitude 15, Reflex 13, Will 12		
Speed 6		
⚔ Kukri (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon +4 vs. AC; 5 damage.		
⚔ Pung! (when a Pung's believer drops to 0 hit points) Close burst 5; target's Pung; Pung shifts 1 square toward the minion and rolls to recharge <i>rise fool!</i>		
Alignment Unaligned	Languages Common	
Str 16 (+3)	Dex 12 (+1)	Wis 8 (-1)
Con 14 (+2)	Int 8 (-1)	Cha 10 (+0)
Equipment yellow robes, kukri		

Hive Soldier (S)	Level 3 Soldier	
Medium natural beast		XP 150
Initiative +6	Senses Perception +0; low-light vision, tremorsense 10	
HP 46; Bloodied 23; see also <i>death convulsion</i>		
AC 18; Fortitude 16, Reflex 15, Will 12		
Speed 6, climb 6		
⚔ Grasping Mandibles (standard; usable only while the hive soldier does not have a creature grabbed; at-will) +10 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage, and the target is grabbed.		
⚔ Acid Sting (standard; at-will) ♦ Acid Targets a creature grabbed by the hive soldier; +10 vs. AC; 1d6 + 3 acid damage, and ongoing 5 acid damage (save ends).		
⚔ Death Convulsions (when the hive soldier drops to 0 hit points) Close burst 1; targets enemies; +8 vs. Reflex; the target is knocked prone.		
Hive Soldier Frenzy (when any giant ant within 10 squares of the hive soldier drops to 0 hit points; at-will) The soldier gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls until the end of its next turn.		
Alignment Unaligned	Languages	
Str 17 (+4)	Dex 15 (+3)	Wis 9 (+0)
Con 14 (+3)	Int 2 (-3)	Cha 4 (-2)

Fell Taint Lasher (F)		Level 1 Soldier	
Small aberrant magical beast		XP 100	
Initiative +3	Senses Perception +8		
HP 20; Bloodied 10			
AC 15; Fortitude 12, Reflex 12, Will 14			
Resist insubstantial; Vulnerable 5 psychic			
Speed 1, fly 6 (hover)			
⊕ Tendril Caress (standard; at-will) ◆ Psychic			
+5 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 4 psychic damage.			
⊕ Tendrils of Stasis (standard; at-will) ◆ Psychic			
+5 vs. Will; 1d4 + 4 psychic damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of the fell taint lasher's next turn.			
Fell Taint Feeding (standard; at-will) ◆ Healing			
Targets a helpless or unconscious creature; the fell taint lasher loses insubstantial and its fly speed until the end of its next turn, and it makes a coup de grace against the target. If the lasher kills the target, it regains all of its hit points.			
Flowing Tendrils (free, when the fell taint lasher makes an opportunity attack; at-will)			
The lasher shifts 1 square.			
Alignment Unaligned		Languages	
Str 11 (+0)	Dex 12 (+1)	Wis 16 (+3)	
Con 13 (+1)	Int 4 (-3)	Cha 10 (+0)	

TACTICS

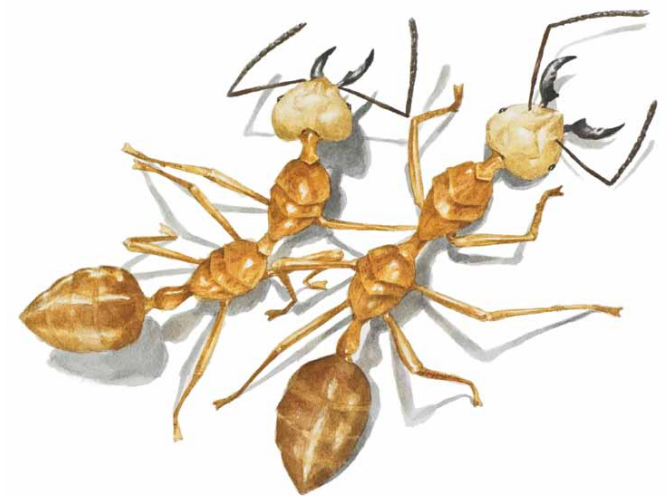
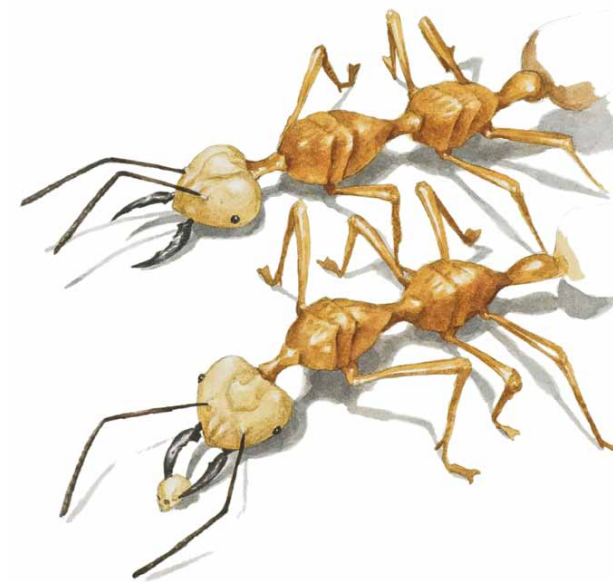
The encounter is composed of three groups of enemies: Pung and his believers, the giant ants, and the fell taint. Each group regards the other as an enemy.

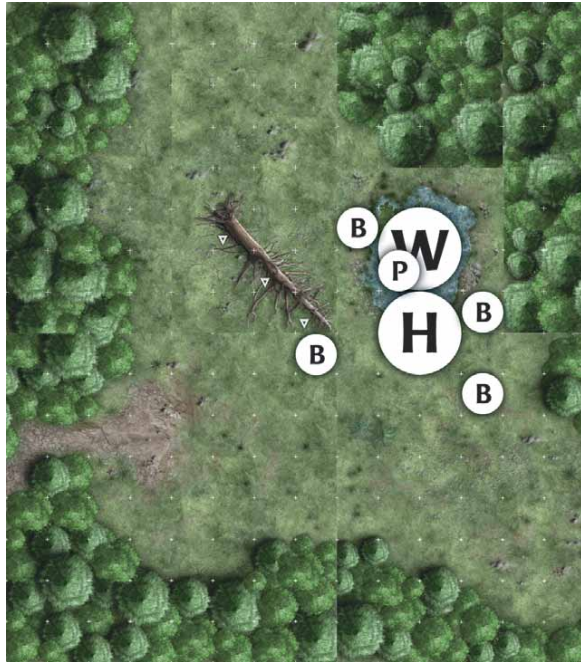
Pung's Group: Pung holds his position atop the wagon until he falls off (see Wagon, below). He uses *perilous order* to hurl his allies against the PCs, while peppering the adventurers with *bitter epithets*. Once his minions are engaged, Pung uses *incite bloodlust*. Pung can restore dead minions to life with *rise fool!* When a believer is slain, don't remove its miniature from the battlefield until Pung himself is dead. Pung fights to the death. When he drops, his surviving minions flee.

5 Hive Workers (A)		Level 1 Minion Skirmisher	
Medium natural beast		XP 25 each	
Initiative +0	Senses Perception -1; low-light vision, tremorsense 10		
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.			
AC 15; Fortitude 13, Reflex 13, Will 10			
Speed 6, climb 6, burrow 2 (tunneling)			
⊕ Bite (standard; at-will)			
+6 vs. AC; 4 damage.			
Hive Worker Frenzy (free, when any giant ant within 10 squares of the hive soldier is reduced to 0 hit points; at-will)			
The hive worker shifts 2 squares.			
Alignment Unaligned		Languages	
Str 17 (+3)	Dex 15 (+2)	Wis 9 (-1)	
Con 14 (+2)	Int 2 (-4)	Cha 4 (-3)	

Giant Ants: The hive soldier and hive workers join the fight starting at the beginning of round 2. The hive soldier comes out first, entering an unoccupied square adjacent to the wagon. Each round thereafter, add one hive worker until you account for all five of them. The hive soldier uses *grasping mandibles* against the closest creature it can reach, targeting a PC before a believer or Pung. The soldier focuses its attacks against a single target at a time using *acid sting* when possible. The hive workers attack the closest enemy they can reach. Whenever a hive worker starts its turn adjacent to a dead or unconscious creature, it uses a minor action to pick up the creature and then moves to the hole with its meal in tow. All ants fight to the death.

Fell Taint: The fell taint only joins the combat when the glass cube shatters or when the wagon falls in the hole (thus shattering the cube). It appears in an unoccupied square adjacent to wherever it was released. The fell taint attacks the closest creature, giving preference to Pung. It never attacks the ants. Start with *tendrils of stasis* to keep an opponent pinned down and then follow up with *tendril caress* until it can use its *fell taint feeding* power.





FEATURES OF THE AREA

Panicked Horse (H): On the fourth round during initiative count 10, the horse slips and falls, pulled after the wagon into the hole. It and the wagon take 20 damage.

Adjacent characters can prevent this by succeeding on three checks using the Acrobatics, Diplomacy, Insight, or Nature skills (DC 10). Each time a character fails a check, the horse makes a kick attack as an opportunity action: +4 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage. If the characters make three successful checks before the start of the fourth round, the horse is loosed from the wagon, which falls into the pit alone, automatically killing any hive workers still in the tunnel below. Once freed, the horse runs off to the battlefield's edge.

Wagon (W): The wagon is a Large vehicle with an enclosed bed. It has AC 3, Fortitude 10, Reflex 3,

and 100 hit points. Entering the wagon's space costs 2 extra squares of movement. Each square in the wagon's space counts as difficult terrain.

A creature can climb inside the wagon's enclosed interior by entering the wagon's space and succeeding on a DC 5 Acrobatics check. Each round after the first, the DC increases by 5.

At the end of each round, the wagon shifts in the hole, forcing each creature on the wagon to make a DC 10 Acrobatics check. A failure means the creature falls prone in the wagon's square, while a failure by 5 or more means the creature falls prone in an unoccupied square adjacent to the wagon.

Ant Tunnel: Below the wagon is a 2-square wide tunnel that extends away from the hole in the direction of the Chaos Scar, and also a short way off to the east. The tunnel is tall enough to allow a Medium creature to stand. Climbing out from the tunnel requires a DC 10 Athletics check (DC 5 if the wagon has fallen).

Treasure: The characters can calm and claim the horse with a DC 5 Nature check. It is a riding horse worth 75 gp. The wagon is worth another 20 gp. Inside the wagon is a modest leather sack containing 250 sp. A DC 20 Arcana check made on the remains of the glass cube reveal it is the product of a Binding ritual. Success by 5 or more also reveals that when broken, the creature it contained was freed.

About the Author

Robert J. Schwalb is an award-winning game designer whose more recent work can be found in *Martial Power*™ 2, *Draconomicon*™: *Metallic Dragons*, and *Primal Power*™. Robert lives in Tennessee.