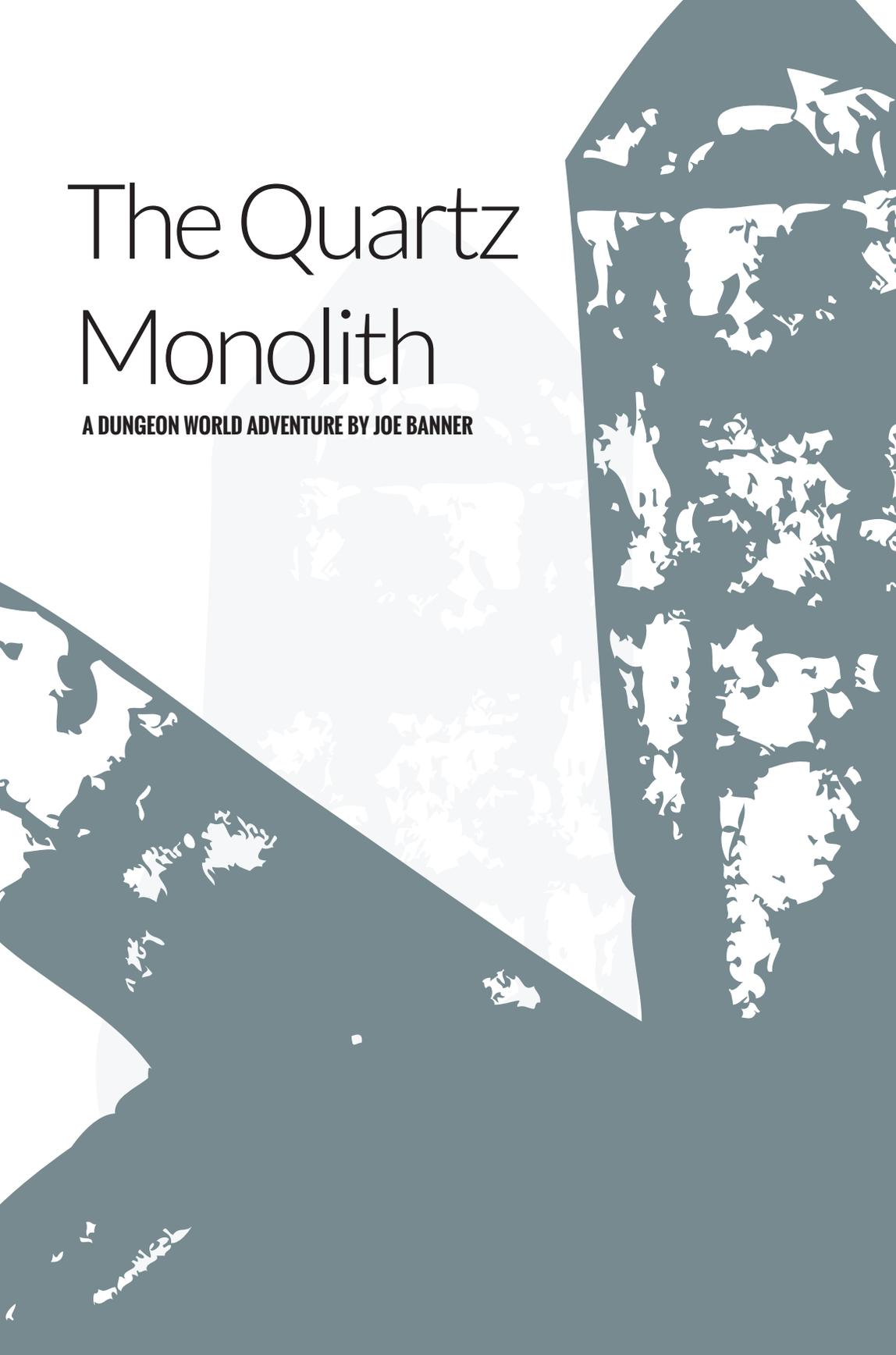


The Quartz Monolith

A DUNGEON WORLD ADVENTURE BY JOE BANNER



Getting Started

If you want a more traditional start to your adventure, read the **traditional intro** to the players and start the party in Quartzcamp, late afternoon. If you want to kick off the adventure in the middle of the action, read the **in medias res intro** aloud and start the party within the monolith.

TRADITIONAL INTRODUCTION

Rising a hundred feet over the western shore of Chalcedon, the quartz monolith stands in stark contrast to the rolling hills and fields around it. No-one knows where it came from, though the dwarves and crystal-kin are often blamed.

A team of archeologists and philosophers have arrived from the city to study the monolith and discover whether it's secrets are a threat or an asset to the Chalcedon empire. Their studies have revealed two things so far: the quartz holds some kind of magical power and is incredibly - some would say impossibly - old.

The academics have blasted a tunnel into the monolith itself, revealing a honeycomb of corridors inside. Of the forty surveyors sent to investigate, only one returned. Whatever she saw in there left here almost catatonic with fear.

After many days journey, you have arrived in Quartzcamp and stand in front of Magnus Nielsen, grand theologist of Chalcedon city. He is telling you how happy he is you answered his summons and is keen to discussing the terms of your exploration with you. In one hand he holds a bunch of contracts and non-disclosure agreements to be signed; in the other, a sample of your reward: a quartz dagger, sharp enough to cut steel like paper.

What do you do?

IN MEDIAS RES INTRODUCTION

You've been exploring these glassy, mirrored corridors for hours or days, you've lost count. **What are you trying to find or prevent?**

Who is your navigator? Roll+WIS. On a 10+, you have a good idea of your position within the monolith and the time of day. On a 7-9, you're not sure where you are but remember the way out. On a miss, you lost your way a while ago but haven't told the others yet.

With nothing to show for your efforts so far, you've taken a short break in a mirrored intersection. **Who's on watch right now?** It's hard to tell, but you're certain you caught a glimpse of a large, shadowy reflection at the end of the corridor around the corner.

You could alert the others, or quietly try to find out more about the individual first.

What do you do?

Impressions

OUTSIDE

- ▶ A perfectly-cut cuboid of quartz reaching to the clouds, lodged in the mountains since the world was young
- ▶ The monolith's great shadow, plunging anything under it into twilight
- ▶ The edges, still sharp enough to cut steel after millenia
- ▶ The smooth surface, polished to a mirror sheen and cool to the touch
- ▶ The lightning storms that are attracted to the quartz at night

THE CAMP

- ▶ Magnus Nielsen, grand theologist of the cult of Quartz
- ▶ Quartz equipment, brittle but sharp
- ▶ The stair to glory, the only entrance into the monolith, thirty feet off the ground
- ▶ Frida Larsen, the only person to leave the monolith alive

INSIDE THE MONOLITH

- ▶ Polished halls, like a hall of mirrors
- ▶ A corridor, slick from a curtain of water
- ▶ A distant echo, like indistinct chanting
- ▶ An inner light reflecting down from somewhere above, getting brighter the higher you go
- ▶ The remains of a previous adventurer, his bones partially fossilised into quartz
- ▶ The Quartz titan, a sleeping god poised on a crystal throne

OTHER QUESTIONS

- ❓ (For the bard or ranger) Who were you intending to meet at the campsite, but never turned up?
- ❓ (For the wizard or cleric) Why were you denied entry into the Chalcedon academic society?
- ❓ (For the thief) Who could fence old relics like these for you discreetly?
- ❓ (For the fighter or paladin) How would the quartz fare as a weapon? Would the sharpness make a good weapon, or is it too brittle?
- ❓ (For the druid) How have the land's spirits taken to the quartz intrusion?
- ❓ (For a spiritual character) What songs do you hear from within the crystal? Why do they fill you with dread?

Adventure Fronts & Dangers

THE CULT OF QUARTZ

It was Magnus Nielsen's dreams of ultimate power that brought him to the monolith, but after studying too many murals man was not meant to see, he has been turned into an unwitting thrall of the monolith's keeper.

He and his acolytes have crafted themselves magical quartz weapons. When activated with the right rituals - mostly involving blood sacrifice - the weapons will activate. Every death invests the titan with more power, bringing him closer to his full strength.

Grim Portents

- ▶ The theologist's weapons are complete
- ▶ The acolytes sacrifice themselves
- ▶ The empowered weapons reap many deaths in the camp
- ▶ The titan's power is magnified

Doom: The camp is massacred and the titan empowered

Stakes

- ▶ Will anyone discover the acolytes' intentions?
- ▶ Will the theologist regain/retain his humanity?
- ▶ What will happen to the weapons when their work is done?

THE TITAN SLEEPS TONIGHT

At the pinnacle of the monolith stands a glittering throne room, shaped or grown from the stone with unerring clarity. Seated upon the throne is the crystal titan, a warlord of a bygone age who was imprisoned within for crimes so heinous they threatened entire civilisations.

If the academics or adventurers strike too deep, they risk breaking the seals that they never realised kept their empire of steam and steel so safe.

Grim Portents

- ▶ The academics breach the sanctums
- ▶ The ancient shaper is killed
- ▶ The song of quartz is sung aloud
- ▶ The titan's slumber is disturbed
- ▶ The titan awakes

Doom: The titan awakes, threatening the land once again

Stakes

- ▶ Who will disturb the titan's slumber?
- ▶ Will the shaper be able give it's warning?

Steading: Quartzcamp

By default, Quartzcamp is *poor, steady, militia, resource (quartz) and religion (the cult of quartz)*. In addition, when the party arrives in Quartzcamp pick at least one of the following:

The recent lunar eclipse seemed to have a mutating effect on the wildlife in the monolith's shadow: +blight (quartzfiends)

A cadre of crystal nomads have come to the monolith after years of aimless wandering, but their intentions do not align with that of the academics. +faction (crystal folk), lawless, +defences

The dwarves are bankrolling the academic's operation, keen to prove the monolith has nothing to do with them. +dwarven, +resource (ale).

When you parley with the grand theologist, you don't need leverage ('I will always hear the requests of my children') but roll+CHA. On a hit, he understands your concerns but is not necessarily sympathetic to them. On a 10+, you avoid revealing your own intentions. On a miss, the theologist (mis?)interprets your request as a threat or insult to his cause.

THE STAIR TO GLORY

A crudely blasted corridor at the foot of the monolith, leading about thirty feet upwards into a pristinely-cut corridor.

- ▶ The edges of the corridor appear to be shrinking - almost as if the breach is healing itself.
- ▶ The demo-packs of the academics pack quite a punch! You don't want to be nearby when one goes off.

QUARTZFIENDS

Group, Intelligent, Organised

6 HP 2 Armour

Shred (d8+2 damage) close, 2-piercing

Instinct: to become one with the monolith

- ▶ Tear through solid metal
- ▶ Move as fast as light
- ▶ Overrun them

ENSORCELLED QUARTZ BLADE

Group, Magical, Construct

6 HP 1 Armour

Slice (d8+2 damage) close, ignores armour

These weapons were constructed in secret by the theologists from scraps collected from the monolith entrance. When covered by the blood of a suitably ensorcelled host - the theologists themselves, for example - the weapons come alive and seek to fulfil their destiny.

Special quality: floating weapon

Instinct: to return to their true master

The Monolith Interior

THE WINDING CORRIDORS

The mirrored halls within the monolith twist and turn seemingly at random. Between the lack of natural light, the constant reflections and irregular design, it's very hard to keep your bearings.

When you shatter the walls of a crystal corridor, roll+STR. On a hit, you do it precisely. On a 10+, you avoid scratching yourself on the sharp edges (d6 damage, 2-piercing.) On a miss, you either don't break through or the shattering continues further than you wished, GM's choice.

INSANE ACADEMICS

Horde, Organised

3 HP 0 Armour

Ruined scraps (d6 damage) close

Instinct: to escape the shadows

- ▶ Have a moment of clarity
- ▶ Wander blindly into trouble

THE SHAPER

Solitary, intelligent, organised, construct, cautious, large

16 HP 2 Armour

D8 damage (Crystal staff) 2-piercing close

He appears to be some kind of caretaker. He probably knows all the secrets of the monolith, but he doesn't speak common and his people skills leave much to be desired. Good luck!

Instinct: to maintain the titan's prison

- ▶ Reshape or repair the quartz
- ▶ Travel through solid walls

THE THRONE ROOM

The quartz quarters of the titan itself, hidden behind polished walls. The mirrored floor imperfectly reflects those stood upon it, yielding twisted, disorienting reflections. On closer inspection, the throne seems more akin to the stocks; something designed for restraint, not comfort.

When the eyes of the crystal titan open, start a countdown (6 boxes). **When his eyes are upon you**, roll+DEX. On a 10+, you avert your gaze before attracting his attention. On a 7-9, mark a box. On a miss, a fragment of his great dream escapes into the world and mark a box. When all the boxes are marked, the titan awakes.



THE TITAN

Solitary, intelligent, organised, construct, divine, huge

24 HP 3 Armour

Crystal gaze (2D8 damage) 2-piercing near

Instinct: to wake from eternal slumber

- ▶ Call a quartz weapon to his side
- ▶ Plan world domination
- ▶ Shatter the monolith

POOL OF SILVER

A pool of cool water, dripping down from a crack far above and coalescing here. Other than the steady stream tumbling down from above, the waters seem supernaturally placid.

When you bathe in the stream of shimmering silver, roll+CON. On a hit, anything touched by the water is cleansed - wounds are cleared of infection and food is washed free of spoilage. On a 10+, any debilities are also washed away. On a miss, you and your belongings are cleansed but the waters are left murky and muddied after you exit.

SAMITE MURALS

A series of effigies and designs on one section of wall appear to tell more of a story of this place. In some places it looks like a much cruder hand has carved their own interpretation of events over the original murals.

When you study the murals of brightest samite, roll+INT. On a hit the murals reveal a hidden truth about this place. On a 10+, you recognise yourself in the murals; the GM will tell you a way that your destiny is linked to the monolith.

MIRRORED AMPHITHEATRE

Located in one of the higher tiers of the monolith, this wide bowl-like area catches the light and focuses it in the centre like a spotlight. If you stop and listen, the echoes and chimes of the quartz around sounds almost like the distant cheers of spectators.

GLIMMER-FAIRIES

Horde, Tiny, Magical, Organised, Terrifying
3 HP 0 Armour
Sting (d4+2 damage) hand

Instinct: to consume non-crystal

- ▶ Strip someone to the bone
- ▶ Swarm over them

When you bellow a challenge in the light of the amphitheatre, roll+CHA. On a 10+, you hear the ghostly audience calling your name - while you stand in the light, take +1 ongoing to defeating your foes in honourable combat. On a 7-9, if your opponent refuses your challenge or flees, their mind will be bombarded with the audience's jeers. On a miss, the audience takes your challenge as mockery instead.

Useful Tables

ITEMS

When you discover something in a partially fossilised knapsack or pile of sharp dust... (choose one, or roll D6+WIS)

- <1 You spot a would-be ambushers' reflection in the wall behind you!
- 1. A half-complete map of the monolith's interior, with a secret passage marked
- 2. An archeologist's supply satchel (d3 uses of adventuring gear)
- 3. A worn chisel with a diamond-hard edge (touch, ignores armour, 1 weight)
- 4. A crude, but useful message etched into the wall
- 5. A copy of *Liber Minerali*, vol IV (as bag of books, 1 use)
- 6. A beautiful and likely expensive chunk of rough-cut gemstone (2 weight)
- 7. A bag of silver dust, a potent reagent and consecrator
- 8. A red crystal that sings in the presence of crystal-folk (1 weight)
- 9. An academic's demo-pack, with the fuses still intact (near, 1 use, dangerous, awkward, forceful, +d6 damage, 2 weight)

DUNGEON MOVES

When the players roll a miss or look to you for answers...

- ▶ The shaper is threatened or weakened by the titan
- ▶ The titan's awareness manifests
- ▶ The mirrored walls lead you astray
- ▶ A panicked academic gets in the way
- ▶ An academic's demo-pack misfires

ARCHEOLOGISTS

Gauteron, Rolft, Malcolm, Issac, Elisa, Melisa, Claris

THEOLOGISTS

Pluvius, Terachore, Alger of Niede, Marie, Solanus, Daniel Chaminade, Pieter Folli, Elmer of lyx

INSTINCTS FOR ACADEMICS

1. To make a lot of money
2. To get back to the university
3. To earn personal prestige
4. To get back at a rival
5. To uncover a true mystery
6. To serve a higher purpose
7. To gain personal power
8. To pay off a debt to a colleague
9. To discover something beautiful
10. To learn

CRYSTAL FOLK

Archaetrix, Diamo, Ferrous, Cordite, Imperma, Krox, Proz, Britta

INSTINCTS FOR CRYSTAL FOLK

1. To protect the throne
2. To destroy the throne
3. To understand humanity
4. To revive the under-empire
5. To act as envoy
6. To deliver a message
7. To uncover a great truth
8. To undo the mistakes of the past
9. To make amends
10. To craft items of beauty

Advice for new GMs

HOW SHOULD I RUN A GAME OF DW?

If you're coming from D&D or another roleplaying game, it's worth saying this now: in spite of the similar setting, Dungeon World will feel very different. For example, **there's little stopping a first level ranger from killing a dragon.**

In Dungeon World, the best thing a GM can do is **keep asking questions and build off the answers.** This keeps the game focused on the fiction - which is where most games "powered by the Apocalypse" excel - instead of mechanics.

In terms of prep, everything I've provided here should act as a guide. Use the opening scenes to get the players started; as they explore the area, use the impressions, custom moves and monsters to react to what they do.

SO I JUST "ASK QUESTIONS?"

Avoid telling players outright everything about a situation. Ask them what their character might know - if they aren't sure, they can spout lore or discern realities. The more questions they answer, the more they will become invested in the world you're creating together.

When they approach a situation, aim to ask leading questions so the players will need to make moves to find out more. The more moves they make, the more they will fail - and the more trouble you can throw at them!

SHOULD I HAVE A STORY PREPARED?

Short answer? No. If you're pressed for time, go with what's in this adventure and improvise the rest.

Long answer? If you have ideas after reading this adventure or an adventure idea of your own, think more about how the events and NPCs will operate and how that will cause trouble for the players. (This is basically what a *front* is.) Keep asking questions. When the players fail their rolls or waste time, move events forward and narrate what happens next.

Credits

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