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THE DARK CRYSTAL™

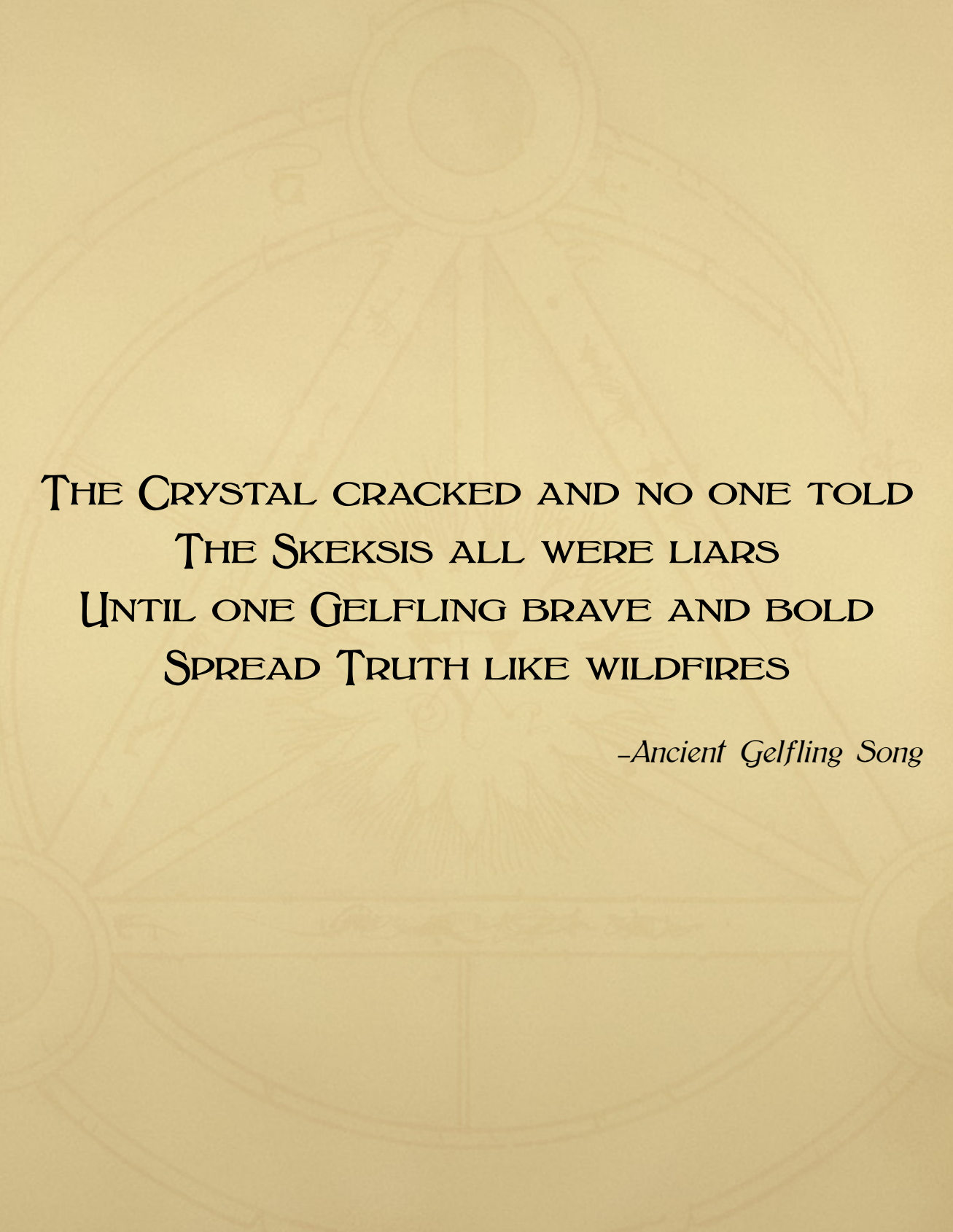


AUTHOR QUEST:
THE GELFLING GATHERING

Jim Henson
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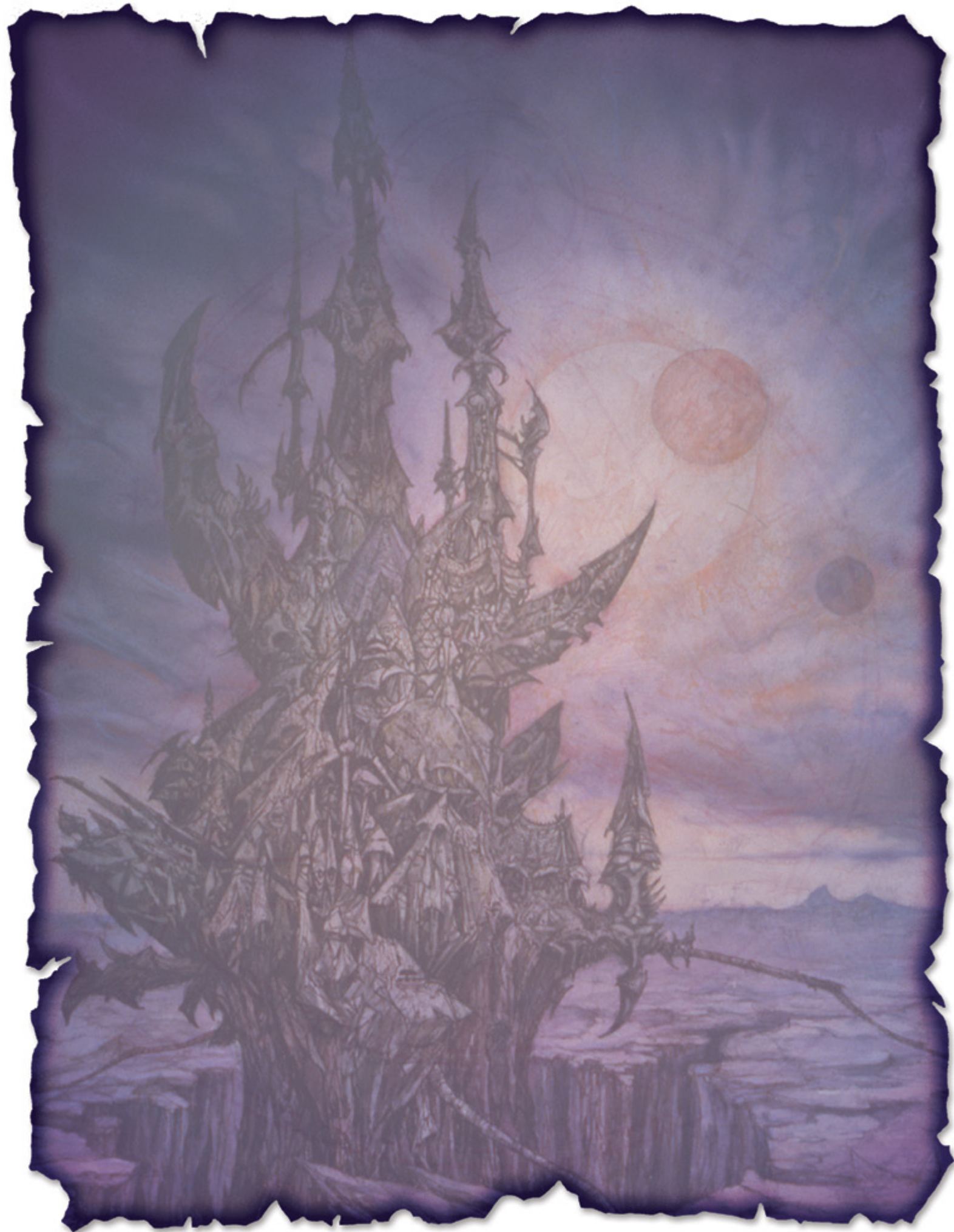
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THE CRYSTAL CRACKED AND NO ONE TOLD
THE SKEKSIS ALL WERE LIARS
UNTIL ONE GELFLING BRAVE AND BOLD
SPREAD TRUTH LIKE WILDFIRES

-Ancient Gelfling Song



A WARNING

From SKEKOK THE SCROLL-KEEPER

STOP! Read no further!
LIES! The Gelfling wish to tell you LIES!

Only I, SKEKOK THE SCROLL-KEEPER, may unveil the real truth. Yes . . . the OFFICIAL truth as approved by His Regal and Most Pleasant Smelling Highness: GRAND EMPEROR SKEKSO.

The Gelfling and their allies will attempt to dazzle your feeble mind with outrageous falsehoods. Tales of a brave Gelfling hero who learned the "truth" and embarked on a dangerous quest to warn their people of our evil nature.

UNTRUE! A complete fabrication.

They wish to tell of grand adventures in the distant past – just one hundred years after the Great Crystal cracked. When the world was still green and good. When the gentle urRu, also known as MYSTICS, were still vital and quick. When many GELFLING lived in seven clans. When we SKEKSIS were still young, strong, and threatening. *Oh, those were the days* – er, I mean – LIES! DECEPTION!

In the name of the Emperor, I COMMAND you to ignore!

These things never happened. Skeksis are good. Yes. Skeksis are friends. All of this is clearly stated in the Emperor's *official* truth.

And be you warned: to disagree with the official truth is a *crime* – punishable by the draining of one's ESSENCE . . .

Read on at your own risk.

A MEDITATION

*Transcribed from the Words of
URSU THE MASTER*

Breathe . . . listen . . . open the eye of your mind and see long ago as if it is now. It is an Age of Harmony. There are many clans of Gelfling. All at peace. All of good cheer. And why not?

The Great Crystal, it seems, is safe in its castle, nurturing and protecting the world with its ethereal powers. The Skeksis, it seems, have come as benevolent masters, dedicated to helping all Gelfling kind. But the Skeksis are not what they seem. SkekTek the Scientist spent years studying the Dark Crystal and is an expert in crystalline technology, having invented the horrible process of essence extraction. SkekTek is physically the weakest of his kind, though still stronger than most Gelfling. But his wicked intellect makes him a formidable foe and his sick experiments make him an abomination.

Turn your eye forward in time now . . . It is a day of the Rose Sun.

A Gelfling guard named Rian finds himself in skekTek's laboratory, the private sanctuary which Gelfling are forbidden to enter. He discovers a vial of glowing blue liquid. Magical stuff. And for reasons he does not know, the sight of it chills his very soul.

Through investigation, he discovers that the Great Crystal has cracked. That it was a Skeksis who cracked it, a Skeksis who made it dark. He learns that the noble urRu slowly made their way to a nearby valley to contemplate their fate. Rian unveils a great secret - the Skeksis are evil creatures who bend the Dark Crystal's power to serve their wicked aims. Their plan is not to assist the Gelfling, but to enslave them. He learns that the liquid in the vial is essence. The aging Skeksis drink it to keep themselves young. And last, he unearths the very source of the essence . . .

Rian uncovers a vast secret workshop, where numerous crystal shards are configured, the beams trained on the source of the essence: countless innocent Gelfling. The sinister beams turn the poor Gelfling into mindless walking dead, their glowing life essence is drained away and stored in vials for the Skeksis to drink.

Turn your eye forward now . . . far into the future . . . to see that only by uniting the Gelfling clans, can they defeat the Skeksis and heal their divided world.

THE EVIL SKEKSIS

Excerpted from a Gelfling journal

Entry Date: Rosunday, 14th Moon, 96 Years A.G.C.

No one believes me. Not even my own father. The Skeksis lies are easier to believe, I suppose. Yet I know what I have seen. I can feel the truth of it. I have glimpsed horrors. But not just horrors, I have *learned* as well. Valuable information that I here record. May it someday serve my people in their inevitable fight.

THE SKEKSIS EMPIRE now sprawls across the entire known world. It consists of numerous Skeksis, ruled as a whole by their devious Emperor. I inscribe what I know of them so far.

SKEKSO THE EMPEROR

The largest, strongest, and most wicked of his kind. The Emperor demands obedience from his followers, and deals viciously with his enemies. (Lucky me.) He holds court in the Castle of the Crystal.

SKEKTEK THE SCIENTIST

A master of technology, skekTek's twisted thirst for knowledge makes him one of the most frightening and dangerous of all Skeksis. Expert of crystalline technology. Inventor of essence extraction.

SKEKMAL THE HUNTER

Although he considers himself a "sportsman," skekMal is nothing more than a brutal hunter. The wildest of the Skeksis, he frightens even his own kind. He uses all manner of traps and bears a scar across his face. Lightning fast, he can actually dodge arrows and disappear into the trees in front of him. And whatever he catches . . . he generally eats. Although most Gelfling clans do not know skekMal, they know the legend of "the Hunter" and they know that no one has ever escaped alive. SkekMal uses a 'spirit-like' mask to conceal his true identity.

SKEKSIL THE CHAMBERLAIN

A simpering, sycophant who flatters the Emperor to his face – and plots behind his back. The Chamberlain is a master of "diplomacy," covering the Emperor's evil deeds by crafting just the right lie for every situation.

SKEKVAR THE GENERAL

And when skekSil's lies do not work, the Emperor turns to his General for a more *forceful* solution. A master of martial skill and strategy, skekVar is perhaps the most honest of his dishonest brethren, but not above using dirty tricks.

SKEKNA THE SLAVE-MASTER

Of all of his lying breed, skekNa is the most skilled in the art of deception. With blackmail and bribery, he recruits spies. And with help from the Ritual-Master, he can take on many forms – allowing him to walk among his enemies undetected.

SKEKZOK THE RITUAL-MASTER

Drawing on the sinister force that flows from the Dark Crystal, the RITUAL-MASTER can create false apparitions. He has the ear of the Emperor and provides prophecies to the Skeksis Empire.

Of the other known Skeksis, I only have a few names: **SKEKOK THE SCROLL-KEEPER, SKEKSHOD THE TREASURER, SKEKEKT THE ORNAMENTALIST.** I have no doubt that, in time, I shall meet them all.

There is one more thing. Not information, exactly, but a *feeling* I have had for some time.

There is a *link* between the Skeksis and the Mystics. A **HIDDEN BOND** that ties them together. But for all my sifting of thoughts . . . I do not know what it is.



SECRET REPORT CONCERNING THE GELFLINGS

From SKEKNA THE SLAVE MASTER

O Great and Mighty Emperor whose Plumage is Unquestionably Bright and Free of Insects:

As you know, we cannot risk open war with the Gelfling. Though we are strong, the sheer numbers of Gelfling clans make warfare an unacceptable risk.

Yet, to publicly pursue the traitors further would only prove that their claims about us are true – winning Gelfling after Gelfling to their cause. Hence, we must now use more *secretive* methods to hunt and destroy them.

To that end (and in the interest of general preparedness for all relevant contingencies), I have begun gathering information on the Gelfling clans through my network of spies. Please accept this detailed report (*and this enclosed box of sweetsap-coated screechrats – Your Highness' favorite*) with my compliments.

THE GELFLING CLANS

Seven Gelfling clans exist, each ruled by a matriarchal leader. A single queen is known as arbitrator and ritual guardian of all Gelfling clans. The Gelfling fiercely protect their Queen, and we do not yet know her whereabouts.

THE WOODLAND CLAN

This clan is a proud and ancient people who dwell on the fertile lands near Dark Wood. Many Woodland clan Gelfling are valuable guards at the Castle of the Crystal. They are farmers and cobblers and makers of tools. Inventive, but pastoral. Peaceful, but fierce when threatened.

THE SPRITON CLAN

Age-old rivals of the Woodland clan, the Spritons are a warrior race. Hostile in peacetime, ferocious in combat and perpetually armed to the teeth. Drinking their essence is said to provide not just youth, but additional strength.

THE DRENCHEN CLAN

A race of amphibious Gelfling who wallow in the putrid Swamps of Sog. Good at catching lizards, bad at personal hygiene. Fatter and hairier than the rest of their race, the Drenchen are powerful in combat, but generally prefer to avoid exerting the effort.

THE VAPRA CLAN

A beautiful race with white hair, fair skin, and gossamer-winged women. Experts at camouflage, the Vapra can virtually disappear into their surroundings. Their essence is prized above all others for its restorative effects, making the Vapra an important resource which we must protect.

THE GROTTAN CLAN

A mysterious, secretive breed who dwell in perpetual darkness in the Cave of Obscurity. Generations in the shadows have left them with an extreme sensitivity to light – and solid black eyes that can see in the dark. Our Scientist reports that drinking their essence may improve vision.

THE SIFA CLAN

Found in coastal villages along the Silver Sea, the Sifa are skilled fisherman and sailors, but very superstitious. Explorers by nature, the Sifa are competent in battle – but they truly excel at survival. (A trait they attribute to the magic charms they carry with them at all times.) It is said that one could drop a lone Sifa on a deserted rock in the middle of the ocean, and return a year later to find that he had not only survived, but built a home and started a family. The essence of the Sifa is known to aid in longevity.

THE DOUSAN CLAN

Difficult to find, the Dousan clan live in an enormous desert made of tiny crystals (instead of sand) called the Crystal Sea. This clan makes their settlements on sandships – amazing constructs of bone and crystal that navigate the sea like ocean vessels. The Gelfling that make a life there are shrouded and unsettlingly quiet, supplementing whispered words with complex gestures. Talk wastes moisture so they've learned other ways of speaking. They're rarely seen by other Gelfling – their crystalweave cloaks allow them to vanish into the sparkling currents.

Doubtless, your Highness, that we must learn more about the Gelfling clans. As my spies provide more information, I shall dutifully report to you on the nature of this intelligence – and how it may be used to serve us.

ON THE WHEREABOUTS OF THE LOST MYSTICS

*Prepared for his Most Honored Highness
By SKEKSIL THE CHAMBERLAIN*

The Mystics, my Emperor. A troublesome threat now. Indeed. We have seen little of them since the Crystal cracked. *Mmmm*. My lies are to thank for that. Spread among the Gelfling were my tales of the Mystics. "Cruel wizards" said I! "Soul stealers" who gobble up Gelfling children. HA! Perfect deception, my Emperor. For many years, my stories have kept the world fearful of even the *sight* of a Mystic. And none dared to seek them out.

But no matter how much it might please, WE CANNOT DESTROY THEM. Two halves of one being are we.

**One Skeksis for every Mystic.
To eradicate one is to destroy the other.**

A tricky problem, my Emperor. Fortunately, you have *me* to solve it. Yes . . .

Prison is the answer. Lock them up! Each of the Mystics we must capture before the Gelflings make contact. Thus, I have compiled a list of Mystics whose names are known. I suggest we begin the hunt immediately.

URSU THE MASTER

The wisest and most powerful of his kind. And of course, your Highness the Emperor's opposite. Although urSu will prove the most difficult Mystic to capture, he must be captured first.

URVA THE ARCHER

Noted for his expertise in archery. Quick of foot. Quick of wit. Of all the Mystics, urVa is the most adept at their powerful four-armed martial arts. If he could be turned to serve us, he would be a powerful tool.

URZAH THE RITUAL GUARDIAN

The most powerful magician among the Mystics. Capable of feats equal to (and perhaps exceeding) his opposite, skekZok the Ritual-Master. He is known to create the sand paintings of prophecy and speak in riddles. He is difficult to befriend and slow to trust.

URSOL THE CHANTER

He can speak a deep song which will calm thunder itself and make waterfalls still. He is known to sing one note that will make all the stone of Thra tremble at once. If we can gain control over this skill, we can gain control over the world itself.

URTIH THE ALCHEMIST

The Alchemist is very powerful indeed and has become lost in his experimentations. He seeks to change the forms of solids into liquids and liquids into solids. Who knows what could be possible if we could harness his power. . .

URUTT THE WEAVER

UrUtt created all of the Mystics' coats, which are said to include a record of its wearer's thoughts and fate, including our past lives. If we can get a hold of these coats, we may be able to learn the Mystics' many secrets and take control of our own future.

URIM THE HEALER

Skilled in the ways of healing, urIm can cure almost any injury or affliction. His amulets and baths restore balance. He is even rumored to know how to restore and reduce the fires of the soul! And it is said that he is the only one to know the art of the death trance.

URNOL THE HERBALIST

Years of botanical study have given the Herbalist a profound understanding of plants. With his special seeds and elixirs, urNol can quickly grow whatever is needed. Stalks hard enough to serve as armor. Reeds with fire-itching spines. Flowers with enchanted spores that confuse the mind.

In addition to these, other Mystics remain to be located. Among them, we know of **URAC THE SCRIBE** and **URSEN THE MONK**.

Believe me, my Most Royal and Taller-Than-Average Emperor: every effort is being made to locate them. And I will not rest until all are found.

THE ESSENCE OF THE CRYSTAL

AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

By SKEKTEK THE SCIENTIST

The urSkeks, the creatures that split and spawned the Skeksis and the urRu, were drawn to this world by the power of its GREAT CRYSTAL. For many years, the Great Crystal was a source of knowledge and protection. But since the Crystal was cracked (*and we all thank our Emperor that it did!*), fascinating new possibilities arise.

THE DARK CRYSTAL

The Great Cracking has not diminished the Crystal's power. On the contrary! For our purposes, this *Dark Crystal* is even more powerful than it was before. Changes in the crystalline structure have awakened dark energies that were trapped before. Strong energies that can drive our machines and power our spells. Violent energies that can guide us in our quest for domination. In fact, though it is a terribly unscientific thing to say, I sometimes feel as if the Dark Crystal is . . . alive.

THE POWER OF SHARDS

My experiments suggest that every fragment of a gem of power, no matter how small, still retains some capabilities of the original stone. Thus, crystalline shards are of tremendous interest and utility. Crystalline shards of various sources provide the power for many of my inventions. Their refractive properties have enabled me to beam light from the Dark Crystal. And of course, these beams are essential to our plans for large-scale extraction of . . .

THE ESSENCE

In technical terms, "essence" is the pure energy of life (in liquid form, of course.) As we Skeksis have begun to age, our own essence has slowly drained away – requiring that we replenish it by whatever means necessary. The Podlings and Gelfling are the most readily available source of this fluid (though I believe it could be extracted from almost any living creature.) Some among us have noted that the different sub-species of Gelfling provide different types of essence with different properties.

While this anecdotal evidence is of interest, my fascination lies in the area of *applications*. In addition to keeping us young and strong, what *other* uses might this marvelous fluid have? Could it power our machines? Or be used as a weapon? Might it be mixed with other ingredients to create empowering elixirs? And what might happen if a Gelfling was forced to drink the essence of his own kind? This last is more a question for my personal amusement than for scientific gains. But in time, I shall conduct experiments to satisfy my every curiosity.

THE WORLD OF THRA

The listing below describes the world of the crystal as known by the Woodland clan. Doubtless, many other terrains and territories await discovery in the outlying areas. But they shall only be revealed by further study.

SKARITH

For thousands of years, the land of this expansive plain has been green and good. But now, for reasons unknown, it seems to be slowly dying. The Realm of Skarith is the seat of the Skeksis Empire, ruled directly by skekSo the Emperor himself. And in the heart of Skarith lies . . .

THE CASTLE OF THE CRYSTAL

The beautiful and palatial royal residence of the Emperor and the metaphorical center of the known world. The castle glows with the radiant power of the Crystal, though some say it is not as bright as it once was. And strange creatures have begun to dwell in the moat.

DARK WOOD

A vast, untamed thicket located near the Castle of the Crystal. Considered dangerous, the forest is claimed by the Woodland clan. Though it is said that this claim might be disputed by the numerous ill-tempered Spriton Gelfling living deep within the wood.

THE PODLING VILLAGE

The warm, rustic home of the Podlings: a simple folk whose knowledge of the world does not extend far beyond the borders of their town. If it doesn't concern the growing or eating of turblaroots, the Pod People generally don't care to hear of it.

THE VALLEY OF MYSTICS

The deepest valley in the known world; a mysterious valley beyond the reach of the darkening land. The Mystics (urRu) make their homes in the natural caves and tunnels that are formed in the valley's walls, shaped by transmutative powers and powerful chants.

THE CRYSTAL SEA

Made of tiny crystals instead of sand, the Crystal Sea is actually a harsh and brutal desert and home of the Dousan clan. It glitters and shifts with strange currents and sudden storms under the scorching sun.

CAVE OF OBSCURITY

A massive network of caves, dimly lit by the dull glow of crystal shards. The dwelling place of the Grottan clan.

BLACK RIVER

A broad, lazily flowing river, its most striking feature is that it's as black as a crow's wing. Giant beetles are found in the area and upon their deaths their large shells are used by Podlings as makeshift boats. On either side of the river are various other forms of marsh life: insects, lizards and wading birds.

CLAW MOUNTAIN

A mountainous chain northwest of the Castle of the Crystal, so named because of its hook-like outcroppings. To climb it is a great feat and some who journey there have never returned.

GNARLED STONETREE

The oldest tree in the known world, it spans some 300 faths in diameter and reaches skyward. Strangely easy to overlook on first sight, it is rumored to offer clues leading to the Valley of Mystics, but you are advised *not* to go looking.

SWAMP OF SOG

More than 600 yorgs of vile putrid muck, shaded by a thick canopy of vines and weedtrees. Arguably the *least* pleasant place in our entire world, but the Gelfling of the Drenchen clan seem to like it.

THE SILVER SEA

This immeasurable sea forms the border of the known world, although islands are said to lurk just beyond the horizon. The Gelfling Sifa clan live along the coastline.

THE HIGH HILL

A craggy mass of rocks with shrubs and thickly growing grasses, few dare to journey there. Vine-like creepers abundantly grow on the steep spur of rock that arises into a dome. It is rumored to be haunted.

FROM THE WRITINGS OF AUGHRA

Before the Darkness, when I placed my hand on the carved rocks, the rocks sang to me and I shared their song with the Gelfling. I watched the Gelfling as they traveled through their lives; I made dwellings in the rocks for their empty bodies, and the rocks will care for them as long as the World remains. But then the Skeksis stole the Gelfling with force and fear.

For from the castle and the darkened Crystal within it there spread out evil like a cloud, power that no longer led to Harmony. The light of the Suns lost its brilliance, the song of the Crystal was deadened. And as one standing in a mist on a mountainside forgets the sunlight, forgets the path and the world and all outside the shifting grayness, so in all creatures that cloud of evil led their hearts to confusion.



A FINAL THREAT

From SKEKOK THE SCROLL-KEEPER

So... have you ignored my warnings and read this flimsy tissue of Gelfling lies?

FOOL! You shall PAY for your DISOBEDIENCE!
The Emperor himself shall drink your essence!

But until we exact our revenge, *know this*:

1. It is FORBIDDEN to tell anyone what you have read.
2. Do not DARE to turn these vicious lies into an entertaining fantasy book filled with strange creatures, mystical places, and exciting young heroes.

YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED!

