

Under the Red Sky

Written by and used with permission by “Mephisto”



Introduction: This is an adventure suitable for a small group of 2-4 players of any experience level. It is recommended to have at least one Parapsychologist that can help explain to the group what, possibly, is happening in the adventure if it gets too confusing.

Setting

This is an adventure that can occur anywhere, at any time. Because of the nature of the event unfolding, it is appropriate in most any environment; although not near any ley lines (they must be at least 20 miles (30 km) from a ley line). It can also occur during an existing adventure because of the nature of the event. If used in an S.D.C. Setting like Heroes Unlimited or Ninjas and Superspies it can remind the players that they are not immune to the very effects that that the planet may hold.

Background

*“Like a red morn that ever yet betokened,
Wreck to the seaman, tempest to the field,
Sorrow to the shepherds, woe unto the birds,
Gusts and foul flaws to herdmen and to herds.”*

Venus and Adonis (1593) by William Shakespeare

There exists in the world rare, strange events that defy explanation. What the Red Sky is, 99.9% of the time, is a naturally occurring phenomenon that is entirely natural, and based on astrological movements. However, it can also be the result of another rare situation, one that is an atmospheric result of something much more profound. For you see, the Red Sky is simply the visual association of something much more remarkable, a specialized Rip of Magic.

These Rips of Magic occur in places with very no prior ley line activity or transitional places of power. And since the red sky itself is identical to a natural weather event, most of these go unnoticed. Which is very dangerous, because the Red Sky, and the associated Rip of Magic, can have some very dangerous consequences.

Geologically, these Rips of Magic are sometimes called Quagmire Pits, or Pits of Xorns, based on reported results from eyewitnesses. Typically words like “muck creatures”, “miasma mists”, and “red blights” are associated with these events. Because of the nature of the event, even a skilled parapsychologist or Genius will have trouble verifying the authenticity without a first hand encounter. The following tables will determine exactly what is happening during the Quagmire Pits and the associated Red Sky.

Important Note: If a character rolls successfully under Lore: Geomancy, then he or she will be aware that a Quagmire Pit is present during the Red Sky, and will be looking for it, as that is the source of the Red Sky itself. Other characters may stumble upon the Quagmire Pit, but will be unaware of the association, and some may simply think that the Red Sky itself is causing it. Psychics will immediately sense the psychic energy of the area as being very strong and *threatening* as well, and gives the bonus of a x4 multiplier while under the light of the Red Sky.

Red Sky Results Table: Roll Percentile. The results will last as long as the Quagmire Pit is active (2D4 hours). Note that the effects may not be consistent through the Red Sky; there is a 01-30% chance of a new result happening every hour, and a roll of 01-05% means that TWO effects are simultaneously present. A very rare result indeed but possible.

01-10%: Strobe Effect: The red light seems to pulse unnaturally at random intervals of 1D6 minutes with rapid flashes for 10 flashes per second for 1D4 seconds. Keeping ones eyes closed is a sure fire way to avoid the strobe effect, but might not be practical. Its entirely possible for someone to suffer disorientation from the strobe effect, but a saving throw of 15 + P.E. is allowed.

11-20%: Hard Light: During a Hard Light effect, movement is very dangerous. That is because if the character moves faster than a speed of 10 he or she will bump into something physical but invisible. Note that this is not only affecting the player characters; Muck Dwellers and Xorns are also plagued by the Hard Light. Mindolars, Sowki, Goquas and other intelligent creatures will avoid Hard Light as being exposed to the effects breaks their control of their victims. Being struck by Hard Light results in 1D6 S.D.C. Damage with a 40% chance of being knocked to the ground. Knockdown increases by

10% per each 10 Spd. past Spd of 10

21-30% Red Eyes: The light seems to almost burn the characters eyes, to the point where everything looks like it's being viewed through a red lens. This is very disorienting and painful and requires wearing special sunglasses that protect against glare, or risk being blinded. Being blinded results in -3 on Initiative and -2 on all combat moves but no loss of melee attacks or saving throws. Knowledgeable characters will see the Red Sky glow brightly beforehand as a warning and can turn away from the light, because being caught with Red Eyes also results in 2D6 S.D.C. Damage. Getting indoors immediately is a very wise decision.

31-40%: Miasma: A strange breeze flows through the Red Sky, with dangerous consequences. Being exposed to the Red Sky Miasma means making a save vs non-lethal poison. A successful save means the character feels like throwing up, but is otherwise fine. A failed save results in a fever, a bone chill and terrible sweating, with vomiting occurring every 1D10 minutes. The victim also feels physically drained and disoriented; -1 attack per melee, no initiative and -20% on all skills for the duration of the Miasma. Supernatural creatures suffer far worse as the effects are doubled and vampires take 1D6 S.D.C. Damage per minute from the Miasma.

41-50% Stagnant Air: The air just hangs under the Red Sky, ominous and threatening. There is no movement, no wind, just a crisp nothingness. The advantage is that sound is readily amplified so that any creature that is invisible or intangible makes perfect sound. But the stagnant air is also stifling for humans, so any exertion like lifting or combat requires a save vs fatigue of 14+ with P.E. Bonuses. A failed save means a temporary loss of one P.E. for the next save while a successful save means no loss.

51-60% Wisps of the Red: Characters can catch brief glimpses of flickering in the sky. Unknown to most, the Wisps in the Red are not there to harm the player characters but are defenders against the Muck Dwellers and the Xorns. See below for stats. They understand that humans are confused by their existence and will defend themselves, but will not actively attack humans.

61-70% Odd Weather: Not that it ever rains during a Red Sky, but there are the occasional flashes of blue lightning. This odd atmospheric effect is quite dangerous, as the blue lightning targets metal and metallic items. The lightning does 4D6 damage with a strike roll of 1D20+5. The lightning will strike twice per melee round.

71-80% Unhealthy Tan: Exposed skin is very dangerous to have during this event. The characters skin becomes reddish in hue, and painful welts start to appear with two minutes of exposure. The welts don't cause physical damage, but makes the character sensitive to physical trauma with a pain penalty of -3 to save. The tan lasts for 1D4 hours after the Red Sky has dissipated but lasts the entire duration of the Red Sky.

81-90% No Shade: The Red Sky completely illuminates everything, so that no shade is present. This should be an impossible event because everything has a shadow, but for the duration of this event, it is as if everything under the Red Sky is in the noon day sun.

91-00% Sanctimony: A very dangerous effect, because anyone caught in this effect will have a mind altering experience (nega-psychics are immune, and P.C.C.'s get a save vs psionics. Everyone else gets no save). This experience results in feeling empowered by the Red Sky, to the point that they are its master, and are all knowing. Thus, they are not bound by the rules of others and instead believe that under the Red Sky, they are in control. They will be rude and condescending to "lesser" beings around them and will be impossible to deal with. The best method for dealing with this effect is either a Group Mind Block, Empathy, or Hypnotic Suggestion. If a character doesn't have those abilities, then "acting" under the thumb of the character will be the best situation. The Sanctimony effect lasts 1D4 hours under the Red Sky before the character snaps back to reality.

Quagmire Pit Results Table: Roll Percentile. Effects at the Quagmire Pit are more random, so roll on *each* of the following for an effect. A roll should be made every 1D6x20 minutes on each of the following possibilities. The Quagmire Pit always resembles an ominous sinkhole with a surrounding, brackish muddy pool.

01-65%: Toxic Cloud: The most common effect of a Quagmire Pit is a toxic cloud. The toxic cloud expands 1 foot square around the Quagmire Pit every minute, to a maximum cube of 1D6x10 in each direction to a ceiling of 50 feet. The effects of being in the toxic cloud vary. A successful save vs lethal poison results in a painful choking feeling, 1D6 damage per minute while in the toxic cloud, and -2 attacks per melee round. A failed save vs lethal poison however, is much more threatening. The results are 2D6 damage per melee round, -2 attacks per melee round, no initiative, and -4 on all combat moves and saving throws. In addition, the choking feeling is much more prevalent; a save vs pain must be made each melee round. A failed save has a 20% chance of rendering the character unconscious,

01-55%: Plague of Blight: This is a dangerous, disease ridden plague. It is carried by a million, nasty ugly brown biting flies. The flies carry the plague and upon being bitten by a group of 1000 or more, requires a save vs disease. A successful save means a queasy stomach but no other penalties. A failed save means a painful bowel dysfunction, 2D6 S.D.C. damage and a lurid cold sweat. On three or more successive failed saves result in the following effects, roll randomly for results every minute:

01-20%: Additional damage; the character takes 1D6 S.D.C. Damage

21-40%: Painful internal bleeding resulting in -3 to save vs pain for 1D4 hours. Only one S.D.C. Damage is done to the character but the external pain of the character is very apparent.

41-60%: Welts develop on the skin, lowering P.B. By 5. The welts blister as well, and are red and painful to the touch.

61-80%: The character develops jaundice (yellow eyes), that makes vision painful and blurry. No initiative and -5 on all combat moves. These effects remain for 1D4 hours until the body recovers. Jaundice under the Red Sky however is even worse; it's total blindness for the duration of the Red Sky!

81-00%: Allergic Reaction: The character immediately vomits and is wracked with pain; a save vs pain of 14 or better is required to avoid collapsing. A success results in standing upright but feeling like the intestines are tying into a knot; a failed save results in the character falling to the ground, twitching and convulsing and feeling completely nauseated. The allergic reaction lasts 2D6 minutes during which time the character is completely helpless; no combat or skills or movement!

01-40%: Swirling Mist: The pit becomes surrounded by a bizarre, swirling mist. It's direction is completely random every melee round; roll 1D4: 1 is South, 2 is East, 3 is West and 4 is North. The physical description of the swirling mist is a multi-colored swirling light show with cascading shadows inside the lights. Unlike most effects of the Quagmire Pit, this is actually a portion of the dimension that actively fights against the Xorns and their minions, and the powers there, as witnessed by the Wisps of the Red. The swirling mist poses no danger to humans, but are confusing and possibly frightening as they don't fit the rest of the results of the Quagmire Pit. However, for the Xorns and Muck Dwellers, the Swirling Mists are powerful as they drain 2D6 P.P.E. from them per melee round and lower their combat bonuses by -2 for 3D6 melees, before the mist dissipates.

01-35%: Swallowing Pit: The pit becomes a gravity well for 1D4 minutes, and anything close by will be sucked into its depths. Being sucked into the Quagmire Pit is a nightmare experience, as the individual will be overwhelmed with mud, being unable to move, see, and barely breathe. Flight powers will enable a character to escape the pit, but otherwise it requires some ingenuity to escape. Surviving the duration can be difficult as it keeps pulling material, mostly mud, into the pit, potentially burying characters alive! Characters with the Climbing skill can attempt to crawl out with a penalty of -40%, with no second chance grab; the character just slides back into the nasty pit. Other options

include a grappling line, a winch, or someone on the outside throwing them a rope to grab to pull themselves out.

01-30%: Beware the Muck Dweller: Rising from the Quagmire Pit is some “thing” that resembles a ball of muck with a muddy serpentine body, no arms and a large mucky head with no eyes and a large maw. See below for full details on the Muck Dweller. Note that Muck Dwellers will never attack a Xorn, and are subservient to them.

01-25%: Liquefaction: The entire ground around the Quagmire Pit, from a distance of 1D6 meters (or 2D8 feet) will turn into a boggy liquid. This will limit movement and speed to 25% normal and -4 on all combat rolls. And falling into the boggy liquid will feel nasty and slimy, and will smell horrid.

01-20%: Earth Wave: The area around the Quagmire Pit erupts with a powerful earth wave, rippling 1D4 feet up to a distance of 40 feet. It does considerable damage; 2D4x10 to stationary targets like buildings, vehicles, and fences, but a measly 1D6 damage to living targets that can be completely negated by a successful Roll with Punch/Fall/Impact. The bigger danger than the earth wave though, is to those that are caught inside a building when it occurs; as damage in the 60+ range has a 35% chance of destabilizing a building, causing it to begin to collapse! Loud creaks and groans in the building can be heard, and characters have 2D6 minutes to escape before the building comes crashing to the ground.

01-10%: Enter the Xorn: Powerful beings that are completely evil, Xorn are bad news. A Xorn appearance means that it will attempt to subjugate everyone and everything it comes in contact with, and with a lust for control, will attempt to turn everything it comes in contact with to reflect its home realm, the Corrupted Enclave. See below for more details on the Xorn.

Wisps in the Red

One of the few beings able to mount a resistance against the Xorn, these Wisps resemble a flickering energy kaleidoscope with transparent white wings and neon blue eyes. They have bodies that emit neon red light that glows prominently, making them obvious on the desolate realm of the Corrupted Enclave. Although at times they may not be unified in the strategy to defeat the Xorn, they never attack each other and never betray each other. Much to the chagrin of the Xorn, this has worked out well for the Wisps although they wonder if their actions are only delaying the inevitable. Still, they persevere because they realize that if the Xorn take over, they will become extinct. In the Corrupted Enclave, they have one central location that is protected from the Xorn, the Living Talisman, and make raids against the Xorn from that location.

Alignment: Any Good or Unprincipled.

Attributes: I.Q. 3D6, M.E. 2D6+8, M.A. 2D6+10, P.S. 1D6+4, P.P. 3D6+14, P.E. 3D6, P.B. 4D6+4, Spd. 5D6+44 (flying only).

Height: 1D4 feet tall, **Weight:** 2D4x10 pounds,

Hit Points: 3D6+22 plus the P.E. Attribute, plus 2D6 per level of experience. Depleting these Hit Points will kill the Wisp in the Red.

S.D.C.: 1D6+12.

P.P.E.: 2D6. Most of the P.P.E. has been spent in the development of psionic abilities.

I.S.P.: 2D6x5+60 plus the M.E. attribute, plus 15 per level of experience.

Level of Experience: 1D4+5

Horror/Awe Factor: 13.

Natural Abilities: Natural flight (cannot land, having no legs), can see in ultraviolet and infrared spectrums of light, and have enhanced healing abilities: can heal 1D6 S.D.C. every ten minutes. They feed on particulate in the air and thus have no reason to venture to the ground of the Corrupted Enclave,

and sleep in a hovering state. As well, they have a blue eye energy blast, that does 4D6 damage to a single enemy at a range of 120 feet (40 m). Can be performed once a melee round in addition to other attacks.

Psionic Abilities: Considered a Psychic Sensitive. Choose five powers from Sensitive, three from Healing and one from either Physical or Firewalker. At levels 4, 7, 10 and 13 select one power from Sensitive or Healing, and at levels 5 and 12 select a power from Physical or Firewalker. New powers are equal in ability to the characters level of experience.

Vulnerabilities: Weapons and items of iron and copper do double damage to the Wisps in the Red, and inhibit their ability to use psionic abilities; I.S.P. Costs are +25% for 1D4 minutes after being struck by either iron or copper.

Attacks Per Melee: Four plus the Blue Eye Energy Blast.

Combat Skills: Limited natural abilities. Initiative, Dodge, Multiple Dodge*, Roll with Punch/Fall/Impact, Body Block/Tackle (1D4).

Combat Bonuses: +2 Initiative, +6 Dodge, +2 Multiple Dodge*, +5 Roll with Punch/Fall/Impact, +4 Strike with Blue Eye Energy Blast, in addition to attribute bonuses.

Other Bonuses: None.

Weapons and Equipment: None

Skills of Note: Three Lore skills of choice at 90%, Land Navigation 88%, Detect Ambush 60%.

*For those that don't have Ninjas and Superspies, a Multiple Dodge is a Dodge roll that is made at the beginning of a melee round, and any strike roll that falls under the Multiple Dodge roll is automatically dodged without costing a melee attack. However, if the Multiple Dodge roll is bad, then the Wisp in the Red can attempt a regular Dodge that costs an attack per melee with the higher Dodge roll. P.P. Bonuses do not apply to the Multiple Dodge.

Muck Dweller

Muck Dwellers are simply a minion for the Xorn, and are mindless predators meant to follow the will of the Xorn. They travel like a snake on land, slithering from side to side, and like an eel, twisting and moving quickly in mud, swamp or water. Physically they are lumps of mud held together in a serpentine body. Muck Dwellers do not see or hear, they notice prey by sonar and sensing vibrations in the ground.

In combat, Muck Dwellers prefer to surprise their prey, grabbing them in their large maws, and dragging them where they are easier to handle. Submerging most foes is the preferred method, and head butting to stun opponents as well. Once an enemy is defenseless, then he or she is eaten alive by the predatory creature.

Alignment: Miscreant or Diabolic.

Attributes: I.Q. 1D6 (animal intelligence), M.E. 2D6, M.A. 1D6, P.S. 2D6+6, P.P. 2D6+7, P.E. 2D6, P.B. 1D6, Spd. 4D6 on the ground, triple in mud and water.

Hit Points: 1D6+38 plus the P.E. Attribute, plus 1D6 per level of experience. Depleting these Hit Points will kill the Muck Dweller.

S.D.C.: 3D6+26.

Discorporation: Turns into a regular pile of mud, with no magical value whatsoever.

Threat Level: x4: Supernatural Predator

P.P.E.: 2D4x3, varies widely. Limited natural Magic abilities.

I.S.P.: None

Level of Experience: 1D6+2

Horror Factor: 11.

Size: 4+1D6 feet long. While the body is only 3D8 inches tall, its head is huge (3+1D4 feet in a rough circular shape)

Weight: 150+4D6x20 pounds

Natural Abilities: Do not need to breathe or eat, exist on nutrients absorbed through the skin while in a mud bog. Impervious to toxins, drugs, poisons and gases. Bio-Regenerates 1D6 S.D.C. Per minute while in mud or swamps.

Psionic Abilities: None

Vulnerabilities: Sound attacks do double damage, and has no saving throws against psionic abilities. Is also unable to move in hard rock (such as transmutation or elemental powers or spells).

Magic Abilities: Possesses 1D4 natural spells from levels 1-4.

Attacks Per Melee: 3, +1 in a swamp, mud or underwater.

Combat Skills: Limited combat abilities. Initiative, Strike (Bite) 3D6, Grab, Dodge, Head Butt (2D6), and Knockout/Stun 19-20. Typically attacks with a Grab to submerge an opponent, a Head Butt to cause damage and bite to finish off the opponent.

Combat Bonuses: +3 to Initiative, +2 to Strike, +4 to Dodge, in addition to attribute bonuses. All bonuses are double in a swamp, mud, or underwater.

Other Bonuses: +1 vs. Magic

Weapons and Equipment: None

Skills of Note: Prowl 60%, Swim 84%.

The Xorn

Xorn have a tubular shaped body, three legs, three arms, and three eyes all circling the body, with a large maw on the top. They prefer to attack enemies from below, or alternatively have Muck Dwellers do their fighting while they feed on the victims.

Xorn have innate abilities that attract attention, and thus have some natural enemies. True Elementals see them as abominations (which they are) and will attack them on sight. Lesser supernatural beings will be unlikely to attack Xorn but will give them a wide berth, while more powerful beings like Mindolars, Werewolves, and Goqua recognize them as the dangers they are and, if they don't attack them directly will arrange for others to get the job done.

Xorn have no allies, only minions. They feel no other beings are worthy of respect; either accept the Xorn as your leader or be destroyed. There is no alternative, and no compromises. Xorn have accepted their destiny and that is to make every landscape uninhabitable, and they enjoy that reality.



Alignment: Diabolic Only.

Attributes: I.Q. 4D6, M.E. 3D6+10, M.A. 2D6+12, P.S. 3D6+20 (Supernatural), P.P. 2D6+11, P.E. 3D6+4, P.B. 1D6, Spd. 4D6+20 (on land, burrowing in land or in water).

Hit Points: 5D6+40. Depleting these Hit Points will kill the Xorn.

S.D.C.: 4D6+60.

Discorporation: Body crumbles, releasing a mist that causes the Xorn to implode, spreading a green rain all over the ground. It causes the ground to burn and dissolve everything within a 3 foot (1 m) radius.

Threat Level: x6; Greater Demon

P.P.E.: 2D6x10+35. Innate Earth Elemental abilities.

I.S.P.: None

Level of Experience: 1D6+6

Horror Factor: 15.

Size: 7 feet plus 2D6 inches

Weight: 500 + 3D6x20 pounds

Natural Abilities: Impervious to Mind Control, Poisons, Toxins, Drugs and Diseases. Regenerates 1D6 Hit Points and S.D.C. Per melee round. The three eyes enable the Xorn to see 360 degrees and cannot be attacked from behind or surprised. Xorn are master diggers and tunnelers, but never leave a tunnel behind. They also have the powerful abilities of Despoiling Earth and Withering Soil.

Despoiling Earth: The Xorn unleashes a toxin into the earth, that does damage to any earthen device such as a building, fence, piping, etc. The toxin makes the land corrosive, so that all metal, biological, and earthen materials take 1D6 damage per minute until it's destroyed, from a range of 1D6 metres or 3D6 feet around the Xorn. The Despoiled Earth lasts for 1D6 months after the Xorn has left, and nothing can survive in the soil that the Xorn has been physically directly exposed to.

Withering Soil: A Xorn on the surface is just as damaging. Vegetation, vehicles, equipment and anything on the surface is at risk. On the surface, they can radiate their blight effect, up to 1D6x10 metres, or 3D6x10 feet, damaging the same as above, causing machines to rust, plants wither and die and living beings get sick. As long as a character doesn't get in close physical contact with a Xorn, he or she is fine. But being thrown to the ground or coming into physical contact with the withered soil results in a save vs non-lethal poison. A successful save results in no damage just a mild sweat, while a failed save results in severe cramping and 1D6 damage to hit points, and -2 on Initiative for 1D4 melee rounds.

Psionic Abilities: None

Magic Abilities: Two Options: If the GM has the PFRPG, select a total of six Earth Warlock spells from levels 1-4 (not per level), and one additional each level of the Xorns level of experience. The other option is if the GM has Heroes Unlimited, the Xorn starts with the following spells: Cloud of Smoke, See the Invisible, Fear, Repel Animals, and Life Drain, plus a total of 1D4 spells from levels 1-7. No healing or energy spells are allowed. Every level of experience the Xorn is allowed to gain one spell from levels 1 to 11 except no rituals with the same restrictions as before.

Vulnerabilities: Telekinesis and Mental Bolts have 25% more effect against a Xorn, thus they do their best to target psychics first. Dessication Touch is particularly damaging as it cannot be regenerated for an additional 2D6 hours. Firewalkers however get no additional effects from their abilities. Night Hunter weapons do double damage to a Xorn, and are the first opponents targeted by the foul beings.

Attacks Per Melee: 4.

Combat Skills: Natural Combat skills. Initiative, Strike, Parry, Automatic Parry, Dodge, Maintain Balance, Roll with Punch/Fall/Impact, Bite (5D6), Hammer Fist (2D6), Kick Attack (2D6), Body Flip/Throw (1D6), Body Block/Tackle (2D6), Critical Strike 18/19/20, Attack from Behind 19/20

(underground only).

Combat Bonuses: +4 Initiative, +3 Automatic Parry, +4 Maintain Balance, +6 Roll with Punch/Fall/Impact, +2 to Strike, +2 Dodge.

Other Bonuses: +2 vs Magic

Weapons and Equipment: None.

Skills of Note: All Lore skills at 77%, Detect Ambush 70%, Navigation 80%, Identify Fruits and Plants 80%, Prowl 70%, Swim 77%.

Stopping the Quagmire Pit

Ultimately stopping the Quagmire Pit is very difficult. A Close Rift spell is the easiest (well relatively) way of stopping it, but otherwise the use of psionic abilities presents the most effective weapons against the Xorn. Trying to play supernatural creatures against each other is another alternative, but a very dangerous game to play for any humans to attempt.