

# Palace of the Toad Lord

The Palace is a large, living-vegetation structure in which the Toad Lord Ssathrokkwa dwells most of the time, a gigantic Swamp Elemental creature, which if not a demi-god, is treated as one by the local Toadfolk. The Palace is set in the western heart of the great Swamp of Toads, and from the outside, appears much like many other regions of denser swamp-jungle vegetation nearby. Those familiar with the area can spot it from a distance by the higher, twin raised vegetation canopies that form the “roofs” of the Throne Room (12) and the Watch Tower (14), the latter being much the higher of the two.

Being composed of living shrubs, trees and other plants, with marshy floors that sometimes include pools and water channels that pass beneath the walls, the structure is not as solid as it may seem, and can change its appearance and form, sometimes quite quickly. Thorns, cuttingly-sharp leaf edges, and dense internal branches act as strong deterrents to those trying to force a way through walls or ceilings. Lord Ssathrokkwa is always aware of such attempts, and all that happens in the Palace by creatures in contact with any part of its structure. The Palace is in essence an extension of his being.

Doorways are shown on the map with browned, thinner segments of foliage on the wall-lines. They do not appear so obvious from within the structure to non-residents. A map toggle in the FCW file can be activated to show markers for all of these, should further clarification be required for GMs, except for the one secret door into area 9, which is always visible for GMs' use, as it is not marked by the normal door foliage. All the doors open like a camera iris, the branches and foliage pulling back to form a rounded opening, at the touch of a living hand or tongue (the latter is the usual method for Toadfolk), something Lord Ssathrokkwa can countermand at will. He can also allow other temporary doorways or hatches to be created similarly.

Inside the Palace, there are patches of bioluminescent mosses and lichens that shed pale light in blues, greens and yellows, and there are hanging skeins of moss and vines in places that can move, seemingly of their own volition, to grasp ineffectually towards passers-by. Flowers and fungi can be found occasionally as well, and swarms of flies, sometimes in annoying numbers (if not for the Toadfolk, who simply snack on them). Unless noted, the internal ceiling canopies close over rooms and passageways completely roughly 20 feet (6 metres) from the floor, although this can be variable thanks to the living vegetable nature of the complex.

Aspects of the Palace, and specific items within it, were randomly chosen, with adaptations, expansions and amendments, from a variety of tables in the main Shadowdark RPG rulebook (SD), the free PDF adventure pack “Shadowdome Thunderdark” (SdTd), both available from The Arcane Library, and the “Curiosities” tables in “Unnatural Selection” (a Shadowdark supplement, published by Dungeon Damsel). Shadowdark stats have been provided for GMs' guidance for the adapted creatures mentioned below, beyond those used as-is from the core Shadowdark rules.

## Toadfolk & Other Palace Inhabitants

For clarity, the SD stats are presented here for the non-standard Palace creatures in the locations noted.

Toadfolk and Toadfolk Knights are adaptations of the Frogfolk and Frogfolk Knights in SdTd.

**Toadfolk.** *Short humanoid toads with thick, warty skins.* **AC** 12, **HP** 5, **ATK** 1 spear (close/near) +1 (1d6) or 1 bite +1 (1d4 + poison), **MV** near (swim), **S** +1, **D** +1, **C** +1, **I** +0, **W** +0, **Ch** +0, **AL** N, **LV** 1. **Poison.** DC 9 CON or 1d4 damage. [Various locations.]

**Toadfolk Knight.** *Short humanoid toads in a tarnished breastplate & shield.* **AC** 17 (plate + shield), **HP** 14, **ATK** 2 bastard sword +3 (1d8) or 1 bite +3 (1d4 + poison), **MV** near (swim), **S** +3, **D** +0, **C** +1, **I** +1, **W** +1, **Ch** +0, **AL** N, **LV** 3. **Poison.** DC 9 CON or 1d4 damage. **Limited Spellcasting.** Once per day, may cast one of either Blind (DC 12 WIS, SD, p. 55) or Silence (DC 12 INT, SD, p. 71) while on duty as Palace guards (see Room 4 description). [Various locations.]

**Toadfolk Knight Commander.** *Short humanoid toads in a tarnished breastplate, shield and crested helmet.* **AC** 17 (plate + shield), **HP** 24, **ATK** 3 bastard sword +4 (1d8) or 1 bite +4 (1d4 + poison), **MV** near (swim), **S** +3, **D** +0, **C** +2, **I** +2, **W** +2, **Ch** +1, **AL** N, **LV** 5. **Poison.** DC 9 CON or 1d4 damage. **Limited Spellcasting.** Once per day, may cast one of either Blind (DC 12 WIS, SD, p. 55) or Silence (DC 12 INT, SD, p. 71) while on duty (see Room 4 description). [Area 20.]

**Kulloop, Toadfolk Palace Major-Domo.** *Short female humanoid toad in robes with a long bone staff.* **AC** 13, **HP** 33, **ATK** 2 Bullach's Blade +5 (1d8) and 2 spells +4, **MV** near (swim), **S** +3, **D** +0, **C** +2, **I** +2, **W** +3, **Ch** +2, **AL** N, **LV** 7. **Bulach's Blade.** A +2 magical, shortsword-sized hand-weapon, formed like a wavy-bladed ceremonial dagger, made from enchanted meteoritic iron. Able to cut through any substance effortlessly (ignore armour when it strikes). **Limited Spellcasting.** Once per day, may cast one of either Blind (DC 12 WIS, SD, p. 55) or Silence (DC 12 INT, SD, p. 71; see Room 4 description). **Anoint (WIS Spell).** DC 12. Close. One weapon or armour becomes a magic +2 version for 10 rounds (from the SD Priest, p. 243).

**Deathtouch (WIS Spell).** DC 12. 2d4 damage to one creature within close (from the SD Cultist, p. 203).  
**Rebuke (WIS Spell).** DC 13. Focus. Chaotic creatures cannot attack Kulloop or come within near range for the duration (from the SD Priest, p. 243). **Snuff (WIS Spell).** DC 12. Extinguish all light sources (even magical) within near (from the SD Drow Priestess, p. 212). [Area 23.]

The Paralyzing Giant Toad is a special Palace variant based on the Huge Frog in SdTd.

**Paralyzing Giant Toad.** *Pony-sized toads with thick, warty skins and a long, sticky tongue, able to emit paralyzing breath.* **AC** 14, **HP** 20, **ATK** 2 bite +3 (1d8) and 1 swallow (near), **MV** near (swim), **S** +3, **D** +1, **C** +2, **I** -2, **W** +1, **Ch** -2, **AL** N, **LV** 4. **Paralyzing Breath.** In place of attacks, the Giant Toad may breath paralyzing gas. All breathing creatures within near, DC 12 CON or paralyzed 1d4 rounds. **Swallow.** One adult human-sized or smaller target in near, DC 12 DEX to dodge tongue. If tongue hits, DC 12 DEX or STR to escape, or swallowed. Swallowed creature takes 1d4 damage per round. [Area 1.]

**Stinkbats** (or Sulphur Stingbats) are variants on the usual Stingbat (SD, p. 254), after SdTd, with these amendments: **AC** 14. **Limited Teleport.** In place of attacks, the Stinkbat may teleport to any place within near, leaving behind an unpleasantly sulphurous stench. [Area 2.]

The Crystalline Giant Beetle is a variant of the Crystalline Giant Crab in SdTd.

**Crystalline Giant Beetle.** *A wagon-sized, armoured beetle of translucent crystal, with a powerful bite.* **AC** 15, **HP** 24, **ATK** 2 bite +4 (1d8 + crush), **MV** near (climb), **S** +3, **D** +0, **C** +2, **I** -3, **W** +0, **Ch** -3, **AL** N, **LV** 5. **Crush.** DC 15 STR or target takes 1d8 damage. **Vulnerable.** Any hit that does maximum damage to the beetle, DC 15 CON or it shatters into fragments. [Area 7.]

Lord Ssathrokkwa's Handmaidens are variants on the oversized Frogfolk from SdTd.

**Lord Ssathrokkwa's Handmaidens.** *Giant-sized, slow-moving, Toadfolk with a deafening, belching croak.* **AC** 12, **HP** 11, **ATK** 1 bite +1 (1d4 + poison), **MV** near (swim), **S** +1, **D** +0, **C** +2, **I** +0, **W** +0, **Ch** +0, **AL** N, **LV** 2. **Poison.** DC 9 CON or 1d4 damage. **Deafening Belch.** In place of attacking, may emit a loud croaking belch. All who can hear within near, DC 12 CON or deafened 1d4 rounds. **Sluggish.** May only attack or move on turn, not both. [Area 12.]

Some aspects of Lord Ssathrokkwa were taken from creatures in SdTd, with variations.

**Lord Ssathrokkwa.** *A cottage-sized, intelligent, amphibious, swamp elemental composed of living, ambulant, plant matter, that often takes on a toad-like form, whose size and shape can be changed at will.* **AC** 15, **HP** 58, **ATK** 4 swamp tendril (double near) +6 (2d8), **MV** near (swim, climb), **S** +5, **D** -1, **C** +4, **I** +1, **W** +1, **Ch** +0, **AL** N, **LV** 12. **Boneless.** Takes half damage from all weapons, and can change form at will. **Impervious.** Only damaged by magical sources. **Swamp Fog.** In place of attacks, may cause dense fog to rise from the swamp, blinding all within double near, and which extinguishes all naked flames in 1d4 rounds. **Toxic Spores.** In place of attacking, may release a toxic spore cloud within near. DC 12 CON or paralyzed 1d4 rounds. **Transfer Form.** Instead of attacking, may instantly move to any part of the Palace complex, taking one round to reform before acting again. [Area 12.]

The **Laser Cube** is like a similar creature in SdTd. Treat as a Gelatinous Cube (SD, p. 217), but it has magical crystal shards within it that it can use to shoot laser-like energy beams. **Energy Beam.** In place of attacks, may shoot at one target within far. DC 12 DEX or target takes 1d8 damage. It can also phase in and out of existence. **Phase.** Once per round, it and all its contents can become corporeal or incorporeal. [Area 13.]

Another SdTd inspiration was the **Mutant Alligator**. Treat as a Crocodile (SD, p. 203) with a shard of crystal in its forehead. Raise INT to +0, and add these abilities. **Telepathic.** Speak mentally with Toadfolk within double near. **Magic Missile.** In place of attacking, may shoot a magic bolt of energy from its crystal shard at one target within far. DC 12 DEX with DISADV, or target takes 1d4 damage. [Area 17.]

## Numbered Locations

**1. Entrance Hall:** Two Toadfolk Knights stand guard outside the Entrance, with a Paralyzing Giant Toad that obeys simple commands given it by the Knights. A third Toadfolk Knight is on guard in the Entrance Hall itself. Outside and within the Entrance Hall are extensive clumps of low-growing, tough, spiny mushrooms. Anyone walking through a patch takes minor damage, and spellcasters become distracted (SD: 1 damage per round passing through a patch of mushrooms, and all spells become DC 15 while doing so). The Toadfolk know how to avoid these easily.

**2. Side Room:** A group of Stinkbats use this Room as a roost. Lights or commotion here, or in the immediately adjoining areas will disturb them into attacking intruders. (SD: 2d6 Stinkbats.)

**3. Short Passageway:** Usually empty, there is a sound of gently running water from the direction of Room 4.

**4. Magic Pool Room:** Much of the floor here is occupied by a sunken water pool, with water-smoothed obsidian walls and floor, about four feet deep (1.2 m). The water level is around a foot (30 centimetres) below the rim of the Pool. A water channel runs through the base of the northeastern wall over a low obsidian waterfall into the Pool, and another, lesser, fall carries the water out into a channel at the base of the southeastern wall. The falls are low and give a pleasing sound of softly running water in the Room. Bathing in the Pool grants the bather one use of either the Blind or Silence spells per day, regardless of whether the person can ordinarily use magic or not (SD, p. 55 for Blind, p. 71 for Silence). The Palace's Toadfolk Knights routinely bathe here before going on duty.

**5. Inner Pool Room:** A shallow, freshwater, if swampy, pool, around a foot deep (30 cm) takes-up much of the western quarter of the floor. A wooden sign stands by its northern side, facing southeast that says in clear letters "NO DROWNING" in the Common script. A Toadfolk attendant stands by the Pool, and invites travellers to wash their feet in the pond before proceeding further into the Palace.

**6. Reception Room:** Ordinarily empty, unless the Toad Lord is hosting a reception for Palace guests here, the vegetation walls are hung with festoons of moulted giant snake skins, carefully fastened to the branches like hanging curtains all around, in a decorative manner. This makes the doorways within much easier to identify than normal for those unfamiliar with the Palace's layout.

**7. Reception Hall:** Similarly decorated with snake skins to the Reception Room (6), the floor in this area is remarkably muddy, soft and slippery, apt to cause slips and falls for non-Toadfolk passing through it (SD: DC 12 DEX or slip and fall, resulting in a sprain = move at half speed for 5 rounds). A Crystalline Giant Beetle acts as a decorative, mobile table here. It commonly stands by the middle of the northwestern wall, as the map indicates. Most of its time is spent dormant and dozing, and even when awakened by attacks or a commotion here, is apt to doze-off again, even during combat.

**8. Long Passage:** As the map shows, there are a great many of the grasping vine tentacles scattered along both side walls of this corridor. They are no more effective at clutching passers-by than those found occasionally elsewhere that are not mapped. However, deliberately attacking them along this Passageway causes sharp crystalline shards to fall from the canopy ceiling overhead, with tiny, blinding motes of sparkling crystal dust, until the attacks cease. Toadfolk guards and attendants will naturally warn against such actions. (SD: Falling shards cause 1d4 damage and characters are blinded each round until their attacks stop.)

**9. Secret Treasure Room:** A very well-concealed secret door on the northern northwestern wall of the Long Passage (8) leads to this little-used chamber. Its floor is rather drier than those commonly found elsewhere in the complex, and the ceiling is only roughly 12 ft high here (3.5 m). The door opens in the same manner as the usual ones elsewhere, if it can be located. The Toad Lord is always aware when it is opened. Inside are four living-vegetation "cupboards", each of which opens on its longer side, facing towards the Room's middle, in the same way the ordinary doors do. The cupboards are particularly thorny and resistant to damage. Each contains a single item of note (and anything else the GM may wish to include, naturally). The first has a golden Dwarf's-head mug which spits out any non-alcoholic drink poured into it. The second has an illuminated manuscript on finely-crafted, thin yet robust, birch-bark panels, a history of the Toadfolk. In the third is a detailed, waterproof, map of the Swamp of Toads, drawn and painted onto thin, rolled, crocodile skin. This magically changes when any features of the Swamp do, so is always current. In addition, carrying it allows the bearer to breathe underwater so long as they hold the map. The final cupboard contains a series of long, painted panels of moulted giant snake skin, carefully cut to a rectangular shape, and laced together with more snake skin, concertina-fashion, which when unfolded, show a series of scenes in which a gigantic, catfish-like creature is turning Humans into Toadfolk.

**10. Waiting Room:** Two Toadfolk Knights are in here, with a large, well-maintained, stone-lined and edged, decorative, shallow fishpond. It is very relaxing and calming to sit or stand and watch the colourful, harmless, small fish for even a few minutes, and time can simply drift-by without the viewers realising it, without care. The Knights are immune to this effect.

**11. Throne Room Entrance:** Another pair of Toadfolk Knights guard this short-passage accessway to the Throne Room.

**12. Throne Room:** This is a vast, open space, with a hard-to-define ceiling level around 30 ft above the floor (9 m). The central grove of mixed swamp-jungle trees help create this problem, because they reach up to, and grow out into that ceiling, as well as extending up beyond it, as seen from outside, in a canopy-dome. Each of

the trees has gently-glowing fruit or flowers across it, along with the normal hanging moss and lichen skeins, providing soft, if variable and changing, lighting across the entire chamber. The grove is surrounded by a circle of eight, ancient, upright, weather-worn standing stones, each between ten and fifteen feet tall (3 to 4.5 m). In the middle of the grove is a huge clump of similarly tall, though narrower, angular, blue-green, translucent crystals set into the floor. From this group radiates more soft light, and pleasing, relaxing, watery melodies that drift through the air continuously. An alcove in the south corner of the southeastern wall has a circular, well-like pool of fresh water, with an old, grey stone surround. In the outer corners of this small annexe are two more grey stone, quarter-circle plinths, raised, like the well-pool's surround, a few inches/centimetres above the floor, on each of which stands a naked Toadfolk statue, which is actually a living Gargoyle in Toadfolk form (SD, p. 216). Both are at the command of the Toad Lord, and Ssathrokkwa is usually here somewhere too, if often difficult to determine as separate from the foliage, commonly lying under, or in the branches of, the central grove. His six Handmaidens are likely to be draped about somewhere close to him too, and there are usually two or three ordinary Toadfolk attendants somewhere in the Room. Along with these is a somewhat odd-looking, largely unclad, Elf called Arbyll (SD, p. 216). He carries a highly-decorative bowl that rarely seems to be the same size twice, and he behaves in the manner of a court jester, sometimes collecting water from the annexe pool and sprinkling it over anything or anyone in the room, with abandon, though not with malice. Arbyll has been infected with a brain-controlling parasite, itself largely under the control of the Toad Lord, if often somewhat loosely. Arbyll's bowl is magical, and at his command, it can expand or contract to up to three times its common, roughly eight-inch diameter, size (20 cm). Audiences with, and services of worship of, the Toad Lord always take place in here. There is a very strongly swamp-animal scent to the air. Should the Toad Lord be elsewhere, either in the Palace or outside it in the Swamp, he is likely to be accompanied by his Handmaidens, Arbyll, and a variable number of Toadfolk attendants and Toadfolk Knight guards.

**13. Tower Access Passageway:** This is the first part of a long corridor running along the outside of the Throne Room (12). This section lies outside its northeastern outer wall. It can be reached through a doorway in the Throne Room's northeastern wall. The floor has patches of a sticky, harmless, colourless, goo along it, as somewhere along here is a Laser Cube. The Cube does not fill the Passageway, and if it can be seen or detected, it can be bypassed with care. It will not attack Toadfolk or others the Toad Lord favours.

**14. Tower Access Rising Passageway:** Beyond the door at the north corner where this Passageway's northeast end meets the northwest end of Passage 13, the passage's character changes into a drier, rising slope, with two sets of fairly ill-defined steps, carrying it up to the access hatch into the Watch Tower (15) at its southwest end. Branches grow through the muddy slope, helping support and maintain it, and keeping the ceiling height a rising constant all along it. The floor is mostly dried mud, sometimes with damper areas in parts, and there is a notably larger, much damper-looking area between the two sets of steps (beneath the "14" label), where the floor levels-out, and in which there is a concealed, two-feet-deep (60 cm) Ooze pit trap. The Toadfolk ordinarily avoid it. Others stumbling into it will discover the Ooze has the unpleasant property of creating a fear of small objects temporarily, which makes most activities more difficult than normal to accomplish while it is in effect. (SD: DC 13 CON or DISADV on all attacks and checks due to a fear of small objects that lasts for 1d4 rounds after escaping the pit.)

**15. Watch Tower:** Rising over the Palace and much of the surrounding vegetation by some distance, this is a room of living vegetation, "built" or grown as an integral part of the Palace, from where a regular, concealed, watch is maintained constantly by two or three Toadfolk. Access from the highest landing in Passageway 14 is by a squarish ceiling hole through the thickly-interlaced branches that form the Tower's floor. Strong liana tendrils form a rope-like method of climbing up to the Tower level through this hatchway. The Tower's observation room has a roughly 10 ft high (3 m) ceiling to the canopy's underside above, and is essentially a rounded-square zone largely free of branches and foliage, where it is easier to move about. However, the uneven and sometimes slightly mobile nature of the branch floor makes it difficult terrain for non-Toadfolk. The Tower level can be viewed using one of the map toggles in the FCW file. On the western floor, roughly halfway between the floor hatch and the nearest foliage wall is a cauldron-shaped, black iron bell, with no clapper and its open mouth pointing up. It has three legs like a cauldron that hold it in place in the floor branches. By touching it, any of the Toadfolk watchers here can send a magical, silent, mental alarm call to all the Palace's Toadfolk Knights and the Toad Lord. For non-Toadfolk, the air around this silent bell is distorted, making it hard to see and interact with, as if it were underwater.

**16. West Wing Access Room:** The northwestern door out of the Reception Hall (7) is the usual route into the western side of the Palace, where what are essentially the servant's quarters lie. Non-Toadfolk entering this Room trigger a magical, blinding prism-field trap within this area. This creates nonsensical, disorienting geometry, making trying to traverse the chamber correctly very difficult. At the same time, crystal shards shower down into the Room, causing damage, until the intruders leave. (SD: Blinding prism-field trap - DC 12

CHA or stunned for 1d4 rounds. Falling crystal shards strike each person for 1d4 damage per round.) The Room is commonly empty.

**17. Pet Room:** Through the northeastern doorway from the West Wing Access Room (16) is another similar-sized area, here though one where much of the northern two-thirds of the floor is taken up by a three-foot-deep (1 m) water pool. A Mutant Alligator is here, usually in the pool, and looking much like a mostly-submerged old log there. The bank is shallow enough it can crawl out easily into the rest of the room. The pool connects with other swamp water channels beneath the northeast and northwest walls, although the vegetation roots there act as barriers for anything larger or less agile than the smaller fish, on which the Alligator usually feeds.

**18. Link Corridor:** The western door from area 16 passes into this passageway, which connects on to areas 19, 24 and beyond. By day, it can be quite busy, with one or more Toadfolk passing along it in one direction or another every few minutes. It is quieter by night.

**19. Knights' Barracks:** Several off-duty Toadfolk Knights (SD: 2d6) are normally in here at any time of day or night. Their gear is stored in the freestanding wooden racks and shelves shown on the map, and their slightly raised sleeping pallets are roughly elongated oval areas of fresh, growing, soft green moss on the floor.

**20. Knight Commanders' Barracks:** Beyond the southwestern door from the Knights' Barracks (19) is this smaller room, with space, including more mossy sleeping pallets like those in area 19, for one or more off-duty knightly Toadfolk leaders (SD: 1d4). If more than one is here, one will be the current Guard Commander, in full normal armour and ready to act immediately. Otherwise this Commander will be elsewhere in the Palace. The mapped wooden racks contain off-duty armour and weapons for the rest.

**21. Armoury:** A small chamber off area 20 with more wooden racks of spare Toadfolk weapons and armour, with other gear for maintaining and repairing such items. A small wood chest contains a magical healing egg, a hand-sized, spherical, pearly object that can be commanded to float in the air and fly as directed (SD: at near speed). It can heal minor damage to any creature it touches once per day (SD: Heals 1d4 damage).

**22. Attendants' Room:** First door on the right along the Long Link Passage (24) from Corridor 18, this is where the off-duty ordinary Toadfolk Palace staff are liable to be found. The Room is similarly appointed with moss-pallet sleeping pads to both Barracks (19 & 20), and there are wooden racks with shelves for their usual gear, including tools and containers, for use around the Palace, although these Toadfolk are unarmoured and armed only with spears. (SD: 1d4 Toadfolk attendants will be here typically.)

**23. Major-Domo's Quarters:** The head Palace organiser-administrator, Kulloop, has the Quarters opposite the Attendants' Room (22), and is likely to be found here much of the time, when not involved in significant Palace activities elsewhere. She is also the High Priestess for the Toad Lord. She can be identified by her robes, a ceremonial, humanoid long-bone staff, and several minor adornments, including jewellery. When acting as High Priestess, she wears a cloak and cowl. Her appearance otherwise depends on what duties she is to perform. Wooden racks here hold items not currently in-use, along with administrative records regarding the Palace's normal operations, written on snake skin. A mossy sleeping pallet forms part of the floor.

**24. Long Link Passage:** The outer westernmost Passage, connecting areas 18, 22, 23 and 25, this is busy only at certain points during the day, and is rarely occupied at night, except around the doorways to areas 22 and 23, with Palace staff and guards going to and from the Canteen (25) or the rest of the Palace.

**25. Canteen:** This room is behind the last door off Passage 24. There are mossy seating pads across the floor, as this is where the Toadfolk come for meals, chiefly on small creatures and insects, who arrive from the canopy ceiling fresh and alive, courtesy of the Toad Lord channelling them in. Meals are organised in rotas, so that there are always the usual numbers of guards and attendants elsewhere in the Palace, while others are eating and resting here.