

The Baruri Carapace

This item was trawled from the bottom of the Baruri River (a tributary of the Rio Negro, which is itself a tributary of the Amazon) in Brazil, embedded in a lump of curiously hardened clay. The Baruri Carapace is a remarkably complete set of plate (breastplate, helmet) and scale mail (arms, legs); while the (presumably leather) bindings and linings used have long since rotted away, the armor plates and scales remained essentially intact. The Carapace was made for somebody about 5 feet 4 inches tall, although researchers are less sure about that.

What makes this armor interesting is that it seems to be made out of treated chitin from a beetle. This very much includes the fore-and-back plates on the breastplate, which are each all one piece. For that matter, the helmet seems to be made out of the *head* of a giant beetle. Preliminary testing of the chitin suggests that the chitin came from a species related to the Amazon's titan beetle (*Titanus giganteus*), but even they're far too small to be providing this much material for armor. And a beetle that would be big enough has never been found before. It also can't be that old; while the chitin is well-preserved, it's not fossilized or anything. Carbon dating says that the stuff is

about two thousand or so years old, but that was after five tests and the lab still isn't confident about the results.

Keep in mind that the Baruri Carapace isn't exactly super-armor, by our standards; while it would stand up to copper or bronze, the Carapace probably would have gotten smashed up by steel weapons and it absolutely would not have stopped a bullet. However: it's remarkably light and sturdy. Think thick plastic -- and it's about as reactive, too. If there's a creature wandering around with that kind of exoskeleton then there's potentially a lot of profit in domesticating it for its hide. So it's the team's job to go find that bug.

Sure, it must be somewhere in the Amazon river basin. Which is still one of the more unknown spots on the map. That's why there's a team in the first place. As for the danger: why, clearly somebody took one of these things down with stone or copper weapons. Surely modern technology will make the job a cakewalk.

Really: what could go wrong?

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