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TEAM BRAVO:

FLAMES OF WRATH



By Eric Cagle

A Short Adventure for Four 4th-Level Heroes

There are those who hold that whatever evil you do eventually comes back to you, in either this life or the next. And when your crime is particularly heinous, retribution can take highly unusual forms—perhaps even supernatural ones.

TEAM BRAVO: Flames of Wrath is an adventure set in the modern day, but it includes fantastic elements such as undead creatures with supernatural powers.

PREPARATION

You, the Game Master (GM), need a copy of the *d20* MODERN Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook to run this adventure. Fire is the main theme of the adventure, so pay special attention to the rules for smoke damage and catching on fire on pages 213 and 214 of the Core Rulebook. These rules are excerpted in a sidebar within the adventure as well.

To get started, print out this adventure and read it through. Full statistics for the new creature called the charred one are provided at the end of the adventure. Other opponents' statistics are provided in abbreviated form in the areas where they appear. Any text in shaded boxes should be read aloud or paraphrased for the players.

BACKGROUNI

With the rise of Shadow, dangerous creatures and weird energies have begun to cross over into the mundane world. The characters are part of the Police Special Investigations Division—better known as "Team Bravo"—for their local area. Team Bravo has been established by the police department to investigate unusual reports that cannot be explained by conventional methods.

A few weeks ago, a band of organized criminals who had been extorting protection money from local merchants hired a professional arsonist named Winston Kleese to put five buildings to the torch. He has

already completed the first three of these jobs—a dry cleaning shop whose owner had refused to pay for protection and the homes of two prominent citizens whose loan payments to the organization had become overdue. An exceptionally talented arsonist, Kleese carried out all three jobs without a hitch, leaving behind so little evidence that the police have thus far been unable to link him with the crimes.

But Kleese is also a psychopath with an evil nature. On the third job, he deliberately set the fire so as to trap the occupant of the house, a middle-aged councilman, in his bedroom. Waking up to a conflagration, the man burned to death while Kleese watched with interest from a position of safety.

This act of pure evil triggered a response from the Shadow, causing the victim's essence to return as a vengeful spirit called a charred one. Driven by its need for revenge, the charred one now seeks to burn Kleese alive as punishment for the crime he committed. The creature's burning touch ignites flammable objects, and since its arrival, it has set fire to several buildings and homes through which it has passed in its single-minded pursuit of Kleese.

This secondary string of mysterious fires has arson investigators stumped. The sites have shown no evidence of arson, and there is no logical explanation for why a fire would start at the ignition points that have been identified—the upper parts of walls, for the most part.

Meanwhile, Kleese knows he is a hunted man. Though he does not understand the precise connection between the charred one and his last crime, he does know that some supernatural flaming creature is pursuing him with deadly intent. He has managed to escape the charred one a few times, but each time it finds him it comes closer to catching him.

Kleese intends to leave the city in the hope of escaping it for good, but he still has to complete his contract for his employers. His most recent target was a grocery store, but the charred one caught up with Kleese while he was casing the premises, and the store burned down without Kleese ever lighting an incendiary. Now the arsonist has only one job left—to burn down a chemical plant in the heart of the city.

Team Bravo in Your Campaign

TEAM BRAVO: Flames of Wrath is the second adventure designed for Team Bravo, a cadre of special police officers assigned to handle investigations of bizarre incidents. Team Bravo could also be a subgroup of Department 7 assigned to operate within an established law enforcement organization. In addition to their regular duties, the heroes could occasionally receive advice, resources, and assignments from Department 7. Their superiors there may or may not ask that the heroes remain quiet about their association with Department 7.

Alternatively, the heroes could be private investigators or paranormal researchers who routinely plunge into dangerous situations in search of the truth. Characters who are not police officers may have a bit more leeway as far as methodology goes in conducting investigations, but they are by no means fully protected under the law. Thus, they must carefully weigh the risks of investigative methods such as breaking and entering, assault, and other illegal acts. Kleese hopes to get the job done and flee before the strange spirit can find him, but the charred one is on his trail and determined to get revenge. It doesn't care who or what gets burned in the process.

<u>SYNOPSIS</u>

The heroes are assigned by their superior to investigate the series of unusual fires. By the time they arrive at the site of the latest one, a burned-out grocery store, the fire is already out and an arson investigation team is on site assessing the situation. A video from the surveillance camera on the premises shows two incidents: Kleese breaking into the store to case it, and a ghostly flaming being floating through the walls just before they caught on fire.

In the course of investigating the man in the video, the heroes determine that he is a known arsonist and gain information about his next target: a chemical plant. The heroes arrive there some 20 minutes behind Kleese, but just as they confront him, the charred one appears and attacks him, setting the plant on fire in the process. The heroes must try to defeat the creature and save the plant. If they can bring Kleese to trial alive, so much the better, but either way he will set no more fires.

Character Hooks

As GM, you know best how to involve your players and their characters in an adventure. If you opt not to have them receive the assignment from superiors within a law enforcement agency, you must supply some other reason for them to take on the mission. You can use the following adventure hooks to spur your imagination, modifying them as necessary to make them appropriate for the characters' interests.

- A friend or family member of one of Kleese's victims hires the heroes to investigate the fire loved one.
- The heroes happen upon one of the charred one's incidental fires on their way home from an evening on the town.
- A psychic goes public with the claim that a vengeful spirit is behind the recent rash of unexplained fires. She insists that the entire city is in danger if the creature is not found and appeased.

<u>BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE</u>

This adventure begins with the heroes investigating an arson site (encounter A) after receiving their assignment. Next is a freeform section (encounter B) in which they investigate their sole lead, Winston Kleese. The climax of the adventure is a site-based face-off with Kleese and his supernatural pursuer at a chemical plant (see ChemRight, Inc.).

If the heroes are not law enforcement agents, adapt the following information to suit whatever hook you have used to get them into the adventure. Otherwise, begin play by having the heroes' superior, Lieutenant Miriam Durth, call them into her office for a new mission. Read or paraphrase the following when they arrive.



Lieutenant Durth looks up from the documents spread before her on the table long enough to give each of you a curt nod. "Sit down," she says. "I have a new mission for you. As you may be aware, there has been a string of mysterious fires throughout the city in the past few weeks. The first three appeared to be textbook cases of arson, though they were exceptionally well executed. But since then, ten more fires have occurred, and these cases have been much stranger. No evidence of arson has been found at any of these sites, and Simon Billox's Arson Investigation Unit has identified the same unusual pattern of start points in each instance.

"He says the evidence doesn't fit anything he's seen before, and he's asked for a unit of investigators who are experienced with unusual crimes. That's you. He's out at the latest site now; a fire gutted a grocery store last night. So get out there and go over the site with him. See what you can find out."

Lieutenant Durth answers any questions the heroes have to the best of her ability, arson and cannot give details about what the arson investigators find so unusual. She says the heroes will have to ask Billox about it.

When you're ready to begin, go to encounter A, below.

<u>a. The grocery</u>

The characters arrive at the scene of a fire that has clearly gutted a building in the commercial district. Only one fire truck remains, along with several police cruisers and a van marked Arson Investigation Unit. The fire has been out for a few hours, and Chief Arson Investigator Simon Billox and his team are hard at work.

If the heroes are on the scene in an official capacity, read or paraphrase the following. Otherwise, the officers on the scene shoo them away and refuse to divulge any information, though a successful Listen check allows a character to overhear Billox making the salient comments from the following text to someone else.

According to a sign that still hangs over the door, the charred remains of the building before you once housed a small grocery store. Though the fire is out, the building still smolders, even as water drips from the blackened timbers and stone.

A man steps forward to greet you. "Simon Billox, Chief Arson Investigator," he says, holding forth his hand in greeting. "Are you the special police unit?"

Billox checks the heroes' identification if they claim to be the investigators, then continues as follows if he is satisfied.

"I have to admit I'm baffled," admits Billox, shaking his head. "I've been investigating fires for thirty years, but I've never seen anything like this. I didn't know what to do, so I called Lieutenant Durth to see if she had anyone who could help. "The start points of the fire appear to be the interior surfaces of the walls. The ignition points are lined up straight, from one wall to the next, as though a large fire source had just moved straight on through the building, starting from the back. And we haven't found any trace of an accelerant anywhere. Come have a look."

As he starts into the building, one of his assistants approaches. "Chief, we found the security tape in the back room," he says. "It wasn't damaged by the fire or the water. There's something there that you might want to check out."

Billox nods toward you. "We may as well all see it together. Come on."

The assistant leads Billox and the heroes to what's left of the store's back room, where another member of the arson team and a police officer are viewing the tape on a monitor that shows some fire damage. At a point marked on the tape as 2am, a man approaches the main entrance and begins picking the lock. After letting himself in, he moves through the store, apparently casing it out. He pays particular attention to support beams and the like and makes a few notes in a small notebook he carries. Suddenly he breaks out in a sweat, looks about furtively, then departs in haste.

A few minutes thereafter, the image of a flaming humanoid figure floats into the room through a wall, which bursts into flame as the creature passes. The figure moves purposefully across the room toward the door by which Kleese departed, igniting furniture along the way, then it exits through the door, setting its frame afire as well.

A few frames on the video offer excellent head shots of the intruder. A successful Knowledge (streetwise) check (DC 15) is sufficient to identify him as Winston Kleese, a professional arsonist with ties to the local mob.

When the heroes have finished checking out the site, go to encounter B.

<u>B. HUNTING THE FIREBUG</u>

Although the tape clearly indicates that Kleese didn't start the fire, he is an obvious starting point for the heroes' investigation in the absence of any other clues. If they fail to recognize him from the tape, they can bring it to the police department, where other officers can make an identification within the hour.

At this point, the characters can use any of several different methods to find out more about Kleese. The most obvious options would be to interview the owner of the grocery store (a portly middle-aged man with a fearful attitude), talk to their underworld contacts, check out mob connections, or conduct research on past arsons at the local library.

Depending on where and how they conduct their research, they can find out the following pieces of information by asking the right questions and making successful Gather Information, Intimidation, or Knowledge (streetwise) checks at the given DCs.

- **DC 15:** The mob gave Kleese a contract to destroy several buildings as retribution for the owners' lack of payment.
- DC 15: The grocery store was on Kleese's hit list.

- **DC 18:** Kleese has hit all his targets except one: a chemical plant that belongs to a company called ChemRight, Inc. The plant is located in the heart of the industrial area.
- **DC 12:** Kleese is hard to find these days. He seemed on edge a couple of weeks ago, and now no one sees him at all. It's like he's hiding out, but there's nobody seriously on his trail.

Kleese spends all his time in hiding now, in a cheap hotel room on the poorer side of town. Since the charred one seems able to find him only when he moves, he has decided to go out only when he must do so for a job.

The Hunter

Each day, the charred one uses its locate killer ability in an attempt to find Kleese. If it gets no bearing on him, it hides in a culvert or other nonflammable shelter until the following day, when it can try again. If the characters are taking a long time to determine Kleese's final target, you can have the charred one find him once or twice more, causing more mysterious blazes and driving Kleese to a new hiding place. Otherwise, it does not find him until the final confrontation at the plant.

On the night of the day that the heroes determine Kleese's last target, he makes his move on the chemical plant. He remains in hiding until dark, then makes his way to the plant. Go to ChemRight, Inc. to continue.

<u>CHEMRIGHT, INC</u>

Kleese's final target is a chemical plant located in the heart of the city's industrial district. Owned by ChemRight, Inc., the plant produces a variety of chemicals for sale to industrial and commercial clients. The company's owners owe the mob a substantial amount of money in back protection payments, and because of the expense of complying with a government order to upgrade pollution reduction facilities at the plant, they have fallen seriously behind in their payments. As retribution, the mob has hired Kleese to put their building to the torch.

Kleese arrives at the plant after dark, about 20 minutes ahead of the heroes. (If they are hot on his trail, throw a distraction in their way to give him a head start.) He parks outside in the parking lot, and his car is the only one in evidence.

When the heroes arrive, the lights are out inside the building, granting nine-tenths concealment (40% miss chance) to anyone inside. Each room has two light switches, usually located near doorways.

1. Reception Area

The main entrance to the ChemRight plant is normally kept locked, but Kleese has already picked the lock to get in. A hidden video camera (Disable Device 15, Search DC 20) mounted in an upper corner of the room can scan the entire reception area as well as the main door. The wire from the camera leads into the office next door. In his haste to complete the job and flee, Kleese has neglected to find and disable the surveillance camera, as he normally would.

2. Offices

The plant houses three office suites, each of which contains low partitions, desks, computers, chairs, and typical office accoutrements. None of the doors to these rooms are locked. Each office suite has a window that looks out toward

Smoke, Fire, and Extinguishers

Because of the heavy use of fire in this adventure, the PCs are at considerable risk of being burned. Below are the rules for fire and smoke hazards that they might encounter, as taken from the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook*.

Smoke: A character breathing heavy smoke must make a Constitution check (DC 10, +1 for each previous check) each round or spend that round choking and coughing. Any character who chokes for 2 consecutive rounds takes 1d6 points of damage. Smoke also obscures vision, giving one-half concealment (20% miss chance) to creatures within it.

Catching on Fire: Heroes exposed to open flames might find their clothes, hair, or equipment on fire. Any hero at risk of catching fire is allowed a Reflex save (DC 15) to avoid this fate. A hero whose clothes or hair catch fire takes 1d6 points of damage immediately. In each subsequent round, the burning hero must make another Reflex saving throw. Failure means he takes another 1d6 points of damage that round. Success means that the fire has gone out. (That is, once he succeeds at his saving throw, he's no longer on fire.)

A hero on fire may automatically extinguish the flames by jumping into enough water to douse himself. If no body of water is at hand, rolling on the ground or smothering the fire with blankets or the like permits the hero another save with a +4 bonus.

Fire Extinguishers: The fire extinguisher (hardness 5, hp 3) described in the *d20 MODERN Roleplaying Game* is a CO_2 version commonly found in homes. It ejects enough chemicals to put out a fire in a 10-foot-by-10-foot area as a move action, and it contains enough material for two such uses.

A fire extinguisher that takes enough ballistic or fire damage to destroy it explodes, dealing 1d3 points of cold damage to every creature in a 5-foot radius, as well as releasing its fire-quenching contents in a 10-foot-by-10-foot area.

Sprinklers: Sprinkler systems are activated by heat or flame. If a large enough fire (one that covers at least a 5-foot-by-5-foot area) burns for 3 or more consecutive rounds in a building that contains a sprinkler system, the system activates, releasing a shower of water.

The water suppresses the flames and keeps the fire from spreading beyond its current area. Every round, each 5-foot-by-5-foot square of fire has a 20% chance of being extinguished. Any character who is on fire and within the area of the spray gains a +4 bonus on Reflex saves to see if the fire goes out.

The charred one takes no damage from the sprinkler system and cannot be extinguished.

the front of the building. The office suite next to the reception area (area 1) also contains the VCR that records the input from the surveillance camera.

Anyone who rewinds the tape to a point at least 20 minutes before the heroes' arrival and watches it sees a man picking the lock and entering the plant. He carries a heavy-looking backpack and looks about furtively. His expression is filled with a combination of fear and grim purpose. Anyone who has seen Kleese before, either in person or on the video from the previous arson site, can identify him as the man on this tape.

3. Hallway

When the characters enter the hallway, read or paraphrase the following aloud.

A hallway connects the reception area with the offices. The lights are off, so it's not easy to see where you're going.

The first hero to enter the hallway hears the sound of metal scraping against metal (no Listen check necessary). The noise comes from the plant floor (area 4).



When a character reaches the end of the hallway, a man's voice becomes audible (no Listen check necessary). Read or paraphrase the following aloud.

A man's voice pierces the gloom, echoing throughout the plant. "Who's there?!" he cries out in a panicked tone.

Kleese has not actually heard anything, but his fear of the creature that pursues him has grown so great that he has begun to hear noises where there are none.

4. Plant Floor

This area is the plant's center of production. A wide array of specialized processing machines and chemical tanks (each hardness 5, hp 10) line the walls. If an attack does enough ballistic damage to destroy a piece of equipment, its chemical contents spill out onto the floor, filling a 10-foot-by-10-foot radius. Everyone in this area takes 2d6 points of acid damage (Reflex DC 15 half) and must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 15) or become nauseated from the fumes.

Fire extinguishers hang on the walls at various points, as indicated on the map. Removing and readying a fire extinguisher requires a move action.

At the back of the plant is a large metal rolling door (hardness 5, hp 20) that leads to a loading dock. It can be opened by pressing a button on the wall beside it. The door takes 1 full round to rise high enough for someone to crawl out and 2 full rounds to rise completely.

About 20 feet above the plant floor is a metal catwalk built to allow factory workers to keep an eye on the tanks and monitor plant operations visually. The catwalk runs along all four sides of the room and over the center. There is nothing of interest on the catwalk itself.

The floor of the chemical plant is dark. In the gloom, you can make out a variety of industrial machinery and piping. Above the plant floor hangs a metal catwalk. The air is heavy with the acrid smell of chemical fumes.

Kleese is still in the room when the heroes arrive. He has just finished setting up the necessary accelerants and equipment to torch the building, and he has already rigged a remote detonator. When he hears the characters approaching, he hides behind the forklift, which provides one-half cover.

If the heroes identify themselves as police officers or move more than 10 feet onto the plant floor, Kleese shoots at them, shouting as he fires.

"Get out of here!" the man yells over his own gunfire. "You won't get me! It won't get me! It'll burn us all, don't you get it?!"

Any efforts to reason with Kleese fail—between being caught in the act of arson and hunted by the charred one, he's at his wit's end. He does his best to escape both the spirit and the characters.

After Kleese's first round of gunfire, have each hero make a Wisdom check (DC 15). On a success, the character becomes aware that the room is getting uncomfortably warm. After the third round of combat (or when Kleese's hit points drop to half, whichever comes first), the charred one arrives, floating through the back wall of the plant and igniting it. On his first turn thereafter, Kleese panics, accidentally activating the remote detonator and setting off the explosives he set within the plant. Fires erupt in the places indicated on the map. Every round, each fire spreads to cover one additional adjacent square of your choice.

The charred one moves unerringly to attack Kleese, turning its attention to the characters only after its primary target is dead or has fled. It fights until destroyed.

Winston Kleese, Smart Hero 2/Fast Hero 2: CR 4; Medium-size human; HD 2d8+2 plus 2d6+2; hp 24; Mas 13; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 20, touch 18, flat-footed 17 (+3 Dex, +5 class, +2 light undercover shirt); BAB +2; Grap +2; Atk +2 melee (1d3 nonlethal, unarmed strike); Full Atk +2 melee (1d3 nonlethal, unarmed strike), or +5 ranged (2d8, Desert Eagle); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; AL chaos, evil; SV Fort +1, Ref +5, Will +3; AP 0; Rep +1; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 11.

Occupation: Criminal (class skills: Disable Device, Hide).

Skills: Craft (chemical) +9, Craft (electronic) +7, Craft (mechanical) +5, Craft (structural) +9, Demolitions +12, Disable Device +11, Drive +5, Hide +8, Knowledge (physical sciences) +7, Knowledge (streetwise) +5, Listen +3, Move Silently +9, Profession +6, Read/Write English, Search +7, Speak English, Spot +4.

Feats: Armor Proficiency (light), Builder, Cautious, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Point Blank Shot, Simple Weapon Proficiency.

Talents (Fast Hero): Evasion.

Talents (Smart Hero): Savant (Demolitions).

Possessions: light undercover shirt, Desert Eagle (.50AE autoloader), 2 extra clips, demolitions kit, gas mask, back-pack, remote detonator.

<mark>CHARRED ONE</mark>

A charred one is the restless and vengeful spirit of a person who was burned alive, either through the willful or careless act of another or through fire from an infernal source. A charred one exists only to burn the living and exact revenge on those it holds responsible for its death. Its intellect has been replaced by a feral cunning and an insane desire to burn everything around it.

A charred one resembles a human being that has been burned to a blackened husk. Its glowing-red eyes glitter with hatred and malice. Despite its solid appearance, a charred one has no physical form and can glide through solid objects. It gives off a shimmering, intense heat that can ignite flammable objects and burn anything it touches.

A charred one speaks one language that it knew in life. Its voice sounds like crackling flames.

Species Traits

Fire Subtype (Ex): A charred one is immune to fire damage. It takes double damage from any cold attack except on a successful save, in which case it takes normal damage.

Heat (Su): A charred one generates an intense heat that deals 2d10 points of fire damage to anything it touches. This



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heat is usually enough to melt nonmagical weapons, but a magic weapon subjected to this effect receives a Fortitude save (DC 15). Flammable items, such as clothing, wood, or paper, are automatically ignited by the touched of a charred one (see Catching on Fire, page 213 in the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game*).

Incorporeal (Su): A charred one has no physical form and can be harmed only by other incorporeal creatures, +1 or better magic weapons, or magic, though it has a 50% chance to ignore any damage from a corporeal source. (You can choose to ignore this rule if your characters have no magic items.) In this state, the charred one can pass through solid objects at will, and its own attacks pass through armor. The charred one moves in complete silence and cannot be heard at all.

Locate Killer (Su): If the charred one was created as the result of arson or careless use of fire, it gains the ability to hunt down the perpetrator. This ability is similar to the *locate object* spell (as if cast by a 5th-level Acolyte), but the creature can locate only the person responsible for its death. A charred one can use this ability once per day.

Undead: A charred one is immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, necromantic effects, and mind-affecting effects. It is not subject to critical hits, nonlethal damage, ability damage, ability drain, energy drain, or effects of massive damage, or any effect requiring a Fortitude save unless the effect also works on objects or is harmless. A charred one can be healed with negative energy (such as an *inflict light wounds* spell). It is destroyed immediately if reduced to 0 hit points or less. It cannot be raised from the dead.

Charred One: CR 3; Medium-size undead; HD 5d12; hp 32; Mas —; Init +1; Spd fly 30 ft.; Defense 12, touch 12, flat-footed 11 (+1 Dex, +1 deflection); BAB +2; Grap —; Atk +4 melee (2d10 fire, incorporeal touch); Full Atk +4 melee (2d10 fire, incorporeal touch); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ fire subtype, heat, incorporeal, locate killer, undead; AL chaos, evil; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +7; AP 0; Rep +0; Str —, Dex 13, Con —, Int 6, Wis 17, Cha 13.

Skills: Hide +6, Intimidate +6, Listen +11, Read/Write Language (any one), Speak Language (any one), Spot +11. **Feats:** Weapon Focus (incorporeal touch).

Advancement: 6–10 HD (Medium-size); 11–15 HD (Large).

<u>CONCLUSION</u>

There is a slim chance that the characters can capture Kleese alive. If questioned, he criminal organization that employed him, providing the names of his mob contacts and the places where his meetings with them took place. He also raves about being chased throughout the city by the strange spirit.

If the heroes manage to put out the fires inside the plant, the owners of ChemRight, Inc. are extremely grateful and offer them a reward worth a +8 Wealth Bonus. If the characters allow the plant to be destroyed by fire, they must explain their actions to the very angry and confused owners, as well as to their superiors.

If the characters fail to eliminate the charred one inside the plant, it continues to hunt Winston Kleese (if he is still alive), catching up with him in his holding cell and killing him there unless the heroes take steps to protect him. This incident also burns down the police station. If Kleese is dead, the charred one simply continues its frenzy of arson, floating through nearby buildings in search of living beings to burn and starting more fires as it goes. It continues this activity each day until stopped.

<u>FURTHER ADVENTURES</u>

If the characters capture Kleese alive, he gives them vital information about the local mob, which may spur further adventures designed to bring down the organization.

Additional charred ones could also provide the basis for future adventures. After all, the creature that chased Kleese through this scenario was only one of his many victims over the years. Perhaps additional charred ones were created during his most recent arson spree and are even now beginning to seek him out, starting fires as they go.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Eric Cagle is a freelance game designer, previously associated with the RPG R&D department at Wizards of the Coast, Inc. Recent credits include the *Arms and Equipment Guide, Fiend Folio*, design work for the *Star Wars*[®] *Roleplaying Game*, and the *Urban Arcana* setting for the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game*. He's a frequent contributor to both DRAGON[®] magazine and the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS website.

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