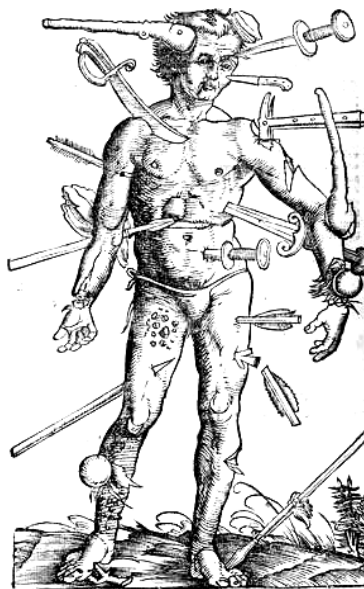


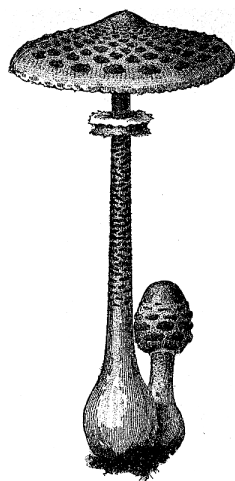
VARLETS AND VERMIN



MATCH WITS with the prehistoric horned gopher – Page 7



MARVEL at the Man of Wounds – Page 16



DODGE the Saucer Fungi – Page 11



REFRESH your approach to humanoids – Page 21

A pack of 52 monstrous challenges for low level adventurers

Compatible with Swords & Wizardry™ and other retro d20 adventure games

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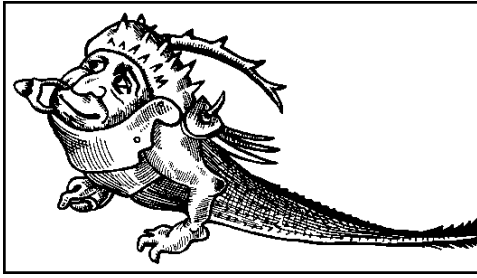
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Varlets and Vermin



INTRODUCTION

*Kobolds .. rats ... goblins ... kobolds ...
rats ... rats ... skeletons ... Oh! Some
fire beetles. Orcs. Giant centipedes.
Rats ... goblins ... rats ...*

First level characters in old-school adventure gaming can be forgiven for getting a little bored, especially if their players have been around the block a few times. Low level adventures have boring monsters because of the limited selection at those levels; after all, higher levels can always just add larger numbers of lower level monsters to provide an adequate challenge. Although stronger monsters every once in a while are good to provoke creativity, the usual meat and potatoes handed to beginning adventurers can get fairly tiresome. The sameness of low level monsters can also get in the way of developing consistent adventure environment themes.

This product presents stats and brief descriptions for 35 low-challenge monsters, grouped by the kind of setting they are most likely to be found in. Stats are developed for Swords and Wizardry™, but are compatible with most old school role-playing products and retro-

clones from Original to Advanced. Armor classes for ascending AC systems are given in brackets.

At the end are seven ideas for creating distinctive groups of humanoids, followed by ten further ways in which specific higher-level monsters can provide a survivable challenge at low character levels.

The monster listings are presented in S&W format. Some notes on special rules:

Attached/entangling creatures and damage: Because several of these creatures attach to or entangle their victims, the referee may want to use the rule that any damage in excess of that needed to kill the attached creature, or any weapon attack that misses the creature by 1 point exactly, harms the creature's victim instead.

Surprise: Some creatures have an enhanced chance of surprise, assuming a d6 roll is used to establish surprise in an encounter. A 1-3 chance means normal opponents only surprise the creature on a 6, while a 1-4 or higher chance means the opponents cannot surprise the creature at all.

Modifiers to armor class and saving throws: Some creatures have a beneficial modifier to their armor class and saving throws that is based on dexterity and/or luck. This modifier does not count as armor. It doesn't apply if the creature cannot move, is unconscious, or is unaware of the attacker.

AT THE ENTRANCE

Don't let sunlight and open sky fool you. There are monsters that thrive on these things, too. The ones that hit you before you descend are bad ... but the ones that stick around waiting for you to come back up are much, much worse.

Doom Vultures

Armor Class: 7 [12]
Hit Dice: 2
Attacks: Beak 1d4
Saving Throw: 16
Special: None
Move: 3/15 (flying)
Challenge Level/XP: 2/30

These foul and cowardly birds do not attack the unharmed, but will always prefer to attack whoever in a group has lost the most hit points, no matter what their level or equipment. Larger and more aggressive than normal vultures, small numbers of the doom breed circle high over dungeon entrances, battlefields, and other places from whence the grievously wounded are known to stagger.

Mithridatium Bush

Armor Class: 8 [11]
Hit Dice: 3
Attacks: None
Saving Throw: 14
Special: Sleep cloud; immunities
Move: 0
Challenge Level/XP: 1/15

This plant appears to be a shrub or hedge with tightly closed pods. On the close approach of living

creatures, the pods open, revealing exotic blackish-crimson flowers that exhale soporific pollen throughout a 5 foot range. All within range must save (as poison) or fall into a dreamless sleep, with grogginess lasting a full hour after waking. The bush is not harmed by blunt, piercing, or missile weapons. Local folklore hints at woeful consequences if its leaves and branches are burned, but what these consequences are exactly, if anything, is something for the referee to decide.

Strangle Vines

Armor Class: 7 [12]
Hit Dice: 2
Attacks: 3 whips; strangle 1d3 /round
Saving Throw: 16
Special: Entangle, immunity
Move: 0
Challenge Level/XP: 2/30

A mass of animated, carnivorous vines that lash out at random when approached closely. If they hit on an exact multiple of 4, they ensnare the throat and do 1d3 damage that and each subsequent round, otherwise a hit merely entangles the victim's limbs (-2 to hit and +2 to be hit per entangling). The vines are not harmed by blunt, piercing, or missile weapons.



Razor Thorns

Armor Class: 7 [12]
Hit Dice: 2
Attacks: 2 whips, 1d3 each
Saving Throw: 16
Special: Immunity, bonus vs. unarmored, thorns.
Move: 0
Challenge Level/XP: 2/30

Cousin to strangle vine, this tangle of malicious thorny vines will lash out at random when approached closely, with +2 to hit against an unarmored opponent. Unlike strangle vines, they do not ensnare victims, but have the same immunity to blunt, piercing, or missile weapons. The thorns are detachable and stick in the flesh, so that the wounds do not heal until all the thorns have been plucked out, taking 1 round/hit point damage.

Trickster Beast

Armor Class: 4 [15] (*counting +4 dexterity and luck bonus*)
Hit Dice: 1d4 hit points
Attacks: None
Saving Throw: 14 (*counting +4 dexterity and luck bonus*)
Special: Minor illusions
Move: 15
Challenge Level/XP: 1/15

These quick-thinking, fast-talking animals come from a smaller mammal species, be they rabbits, foxes, monkeys, or whatever fits the area. They are able to walk on their hind legs and to change their appearance magically, appearing as a small-sized creature such as a dwarf or gnome, or a man-sized creature if one sits on the other's shoulders. They can also create

sound and glowing light illusions at will to a range of 60 feet. Trickster beasts usually are out to relieve adventurers of their treasure by deception, but sometimes they team with more malicious creatures to create a lethal ambush. A few times they even really do intend to help the party on their mission.

RAT VARIATIONS

Dungeon food chains would be much poorer without the ubiquitous giant rats. They go anywhere, eat anything, carry enough disease to be slightly scary, and are smart enough to give a modest tactical challenge. These creatures are variants on the rat, but can be changed with little trouble to whatever species fits your dungeon ecology. Remember! No animal is too silly to deliver the death blow to a 1st level character.

Panzer Rats

Armor Class: 3 [16]
Hit Dice: 1d4 hit points
Attacks: Bite, 1d3
Saving Throw: 18
Special: 5% chance of disease
Move: 9
Challenge Level/XP: A/5

Armored breeds of rats include both the mutant strains with keratinous plating, and the rarer and more disturbing examples of rats who have managed to clothe themselves in small helmets and mail coats. These stats, without the disease, can also represent hostile armadillos, tortoises, or horned toads.

Scaler Rats

Armor Class: 7 [12]
Hit Dice: 1d4 hit points
Attacks: Bite, 1d3
Saving Throw: 18
Special: Surprise on 1-4,
5% disease
Move: 12, 6 on walls/ceilings
Challenge Level/XP: A/5

It is either adhesive, sucker-tipped toes, or steely hooked claws, that allow these grayish-brown mutant rats to scale walls and hang from ceilings in the dungeon. Their self-righting instinct is as sure as a cat's, allowing them to drop and dive jaws-first on passers-by. Scaler rats can be re-imagined as hostile, gecko-like lizards, or perhaps giant black squirrels in a woodland setting.

Miner Rats

Armor Class: 7 [12]
Hit Dice: 1d4 hit points
Attacks: Claws, 1d3+1
Saving Throw: 18
Special: +2 to hit vs. armor, surprise on 1-4
Move: 12, 3 through earth
Challenge Level/XP: B/10

Shallow dungeon levels are often dug into packed earth or clay. In such an environment a digging pest can thrive, and so the vicious Miner Rats are found in their tiny and labyrinthine burrows, ready to pop out of walls or ceilings to assault the unwary. Minerals in their diet help build their tough, armor-punching claws. These stats can also model aggressive breeds of moles, badgers, or prehistoric horned gophers. Tougher Miner types are rumored

to exist at lower levels, with red-hot claws that crack and melt through solid stone.

Rat Swarm

Armor Class: 9 [10]
Hit Dice: 2 (attacks as ½ HD)
Attacks: Up to 4 per person in area,
1 damage each
Saving Throw: 16
Special: Damage resistant
Move: 12
Challenge Level/XP: 2/30

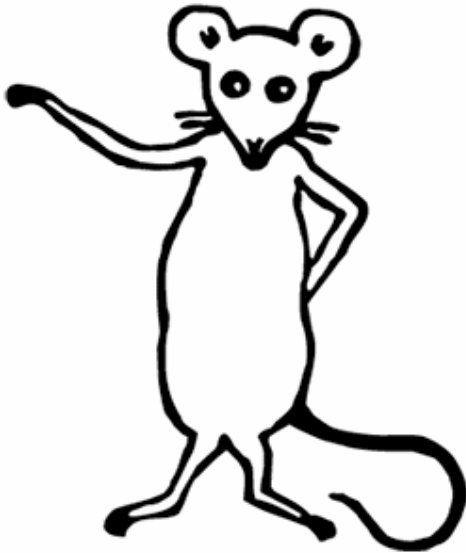
Swarming rats are individually of normal size but are bound together by ravening hunger, collective intelligence, or foul magic. These stats represent a fearsome pack of some two score rats spread over a roughly 10 by 5 foot area. Even one of these can challenge a low level party, because it is hard to protect the weak and wounded from their onslaught. Their bites do little damage individually but there are many of them. The pack will move to engulf the maximum number of victims allowed by its area. Anyone within the swarm's area takes 4 attacks per round while those on the borders fighting it take 2. Attacks without area effect, such as weapon strikes, can do only 1 point of damage per hit to the swarm.

The swarm's hit points represent sufficient dead to disperse the rats, but multiple routed swarms may rally and regroup at some point in the future. Disease, even at a 5% chance, can be an especially nasty addition to the swarm due to the high frequency of attacks. These rules can also model any kind of swarming and biting creatures, from angry frogs to killer bees.

Zombie Rats

Armor Class: 8 [11]
Hit Dice: 2d4 hit points (attack and are turned as 1 HD creatures)
Attacks: Claws, 1d3
Saving Throw: 17
Special: Disease 15%
Move: 9
Challenge Level/XP: 1/15

It may not even be apparent that these are undead creatures until the fighting begins up close. The disease chance is that much greater, and the rats themselves are that much tougher, for being undead. These stats will also do for any kind of zombified small animal.



OH GARBAGE DUMP

Being knee-deep in refuse is a common condition of humble dungeon delvers. Having monsters among the refuse is almost expected. After all, food in the dungeon is scarce, and anything that can be eaten, no matter how repulsive, will be — often by something just as repulsive.

Giant Botflies

Armor Class: 6 [13]
Hit Dice: 1
Attacks: Bite, 1d2
Saving Throw: 17
Special: 20% chance to inject larvae;
fire vulnerability
Move: 15 (flying)
Challenge Level/XP: 1/15

Foul insects that feed off carrion and refuse, giant botflies also have a chance to inject larvae into the body of their victim after a successful bite attack. The larvae are hard to detect normally at first; they will incubate under the skin for 1d4+1 days and then burst forth as 2d6 immature botflies (1 HP each, no injection attack) doing 1 point of damage in the process per hatched fly. Only a *cure disease* spell or stronger healing magic will destroy the larvae. If damaged by normal or magical fire, a botfly's wings will burn off, leaving it unable to fly. Its AC will be 9 [10] and its walking movement only 3.

Giant Pillbugs

Armor Class: 4 [15]

Hit Dice: 1-1

Attacks: Bite, 1d3

Saving Throw: 17

Special: Roll up (AC, save improved by 4)

Move: 6, or 9 rolling

Challenge Level/XP: 1/15

Pillbugs dwell among rotting garbage and wood, and where these things are piled in huge heaps, the giant variety can be found. With tough armored plates overlapping like banded mail, these three-foot long, many-footed insects are hard enough to hit. But when they have taken half or more of their hit points in damage, they roll up into an armored ball. In this form the pillbug is even harder to hit (armor class and saves improved by 4), cannot attack, and moves to escape danger by a strange kind of gyroscopic rolling.

Chartreuse Crud

No stats (Special)

Chartreuse crud is a sickly yellow-green infestation that resembles a slithery lichen composed of feathery, overlapping scales. It is photophobic, fleeing from even dim light with remarkable quickness, pooling in dark shadows, corners, and crannies. Pieces of clothing, heaps of garbage or rubble, and treasure sacks are particularly nasty hiding places for the crud.

There is disagreement on the exact nature of its danger to explorers, and it is possible that different strains exist with different effects. If

uncertain about the basic facts of chartreuse crud, roll d6 on this table:

1: Hallucinogenic effect on touch; character is confused (as *confusion* spell) and must save every hour to regain wits from this spell-like effect.

2: Corrodes metal as a rust monster, but any kind of metal, not just ferrous.

3: Eats leather, wood, hair, and other non-living substances of plant or animal origin.

4: Is harmless, but sticks to hands and feet, or their coverings, making them slippery (-2 to hit while on hands, +2 to be hit while on feet).

5: Enters the bloodstream; every 6 hours, save or lose 1 HP from poison-like effects until *cure disease* is applied.

6: Roll twice more for two effects; if 6 is rolled again, this has the poison-like effect "on contact, save at +2 or die."

A light spell cast directly on the crud will destroy it, but other normally destructive means such as fire or acid will have no effect on it.

Scrap Golem

Armor Class: 7 [12]
Hit Dice: 2 (10 hp)
Attacks: Strike, 1d6-1
Saving Throw: 16
Special: Surprise (1-4), takes half damage from piercing weapons and fire
Move: 3
Challenge Level/XP: 2/30

“Golem” may be a misnomer, as it is hard to see how or why these conglomerations of refuse would have been animated intentionally. Rather than towering over its foes, a scrap golem uses natural disguise to leap at them, snaking out ropy tendrils of flying debris. Each damage result from 0-5 represents a hit by a different component of the golem.

- 0: Rotten food, no damage
- 1: Bone piece, 25% chance of lodging in wound
- 2: Wood splinter, 50% chance of lodging in wound
- 3: Blunt brick piece
- 4: Sharp stone fragment
- 5: Sharp rusty metal scrap, 50% chance of lodging in wound, then further 50% of contracting dungeon tetanus (fatal within 1-4 days).

Items lodged in the wound from damage prevent healing of those hit points until carefully removed (1 round per hit point of damage).

Translucent Worms

Armor Class: 9 [10], -4 to be hit in habitat
Hit Dice: 1d4 hit points
Attacks: Bite/burrow, 1d4
Saving Throw: 18
Special: Translucent (surprise 1-4 in habitat), flesh burrowing, splitting.
Move: 6
Challenge Level/XP: B/10

Translucent worms have about the thickness of a good piece of rope and stretch from one to four feet long, a length reflected by their hit point roll. Their normal habitat is in piles of rotting refuse or vegetation, but they can also be found in dirt and murky water. If they roll a 4 for damage on their attack they have burrowed into the flesh of the victim and automatically hit each round thereafter until dead, but no longer benefit from their habitat penalty to be hit.

Hard as it is to believe, flesh burrowing is not the most annoying trait of translucent worms. Indeed, when a worm of 2 or more hit points is struck by a physical attack, this only splits the worm into two worms, dividing the hit points of the former worm between them. The “rear” worm spends 1 combat round re-forming mouth parts and then joins the fray. Only a 1 hp worm can be slain by striking. Fire and other area effects damage the worms normally.

THE UNDERDIM

Below the shallow caves and cellars, a phantom underworld of vast cave networks awaits, populated by strange and terrible things long isolated from the light. Even though the full force of these perils is too deadly for the novice adventurers to face, the low links of the underworld food chain often trickle up to the easier levels in search of a better existence.

Saucer Fungi

Armor Class: 8 [11]
Hit Dice: Saucer 1+1, stalk 1
Attacks: Saucer edge 1d4
Saving Throw: 17
Special: Launch saucer
Move: Saucer 12 (flying), stalk 0
Challenge Level/XP: 1/15

These two to four foot tall mushrooms will detach their saucer caps and send them flying at intruders who approach within 90 feet. In flight, the saucers extend sharp edges capable of cutting rope, flesh, or leather. If the saucer misses its target or hits for 1 or 2 points, it returns to the stalk, which spends a combat round recharging it for the next throw. If the stalk is destroyed, the corresponding saucer flops to the ground.

Eye Droppers

Armor Class: 8 [11]
Hit Dice: 1+1
Attacks: Bite 1d6
Saving Throw: 17
Special: Surprise 1-5
Move: 3
Challenge Level/XP: 1/15

The basic form of an eye dropper is a gelatinous swirl of transparent protoplasm about the size of a sack. Its name comes from two unsettling features. Over its lifetime it accumulates the teeth and eyes of its victims, preserved within its plasm and put to work as new body parts. It also is able to climb walls and ceilings and will often wrap itself around a stalactite or lintel, from where it will drop on its prey. If its roll is enough to hit AC 10 (with any dexterity bonuses) it will adhere to the victim, attacking at +4 thereafter.

Meat Slugs

Armor Class: 9 [10]
Hit Dice: 2
Attacks: Bite 1d4
Saving Throw: 16
Special: Sticky slime
Move: 6
Challenge Level/XP: 1/15

The slow moving meat slug is found in the food pens of strange underground races, though some wild slugs persist in shallower caverns. Meat slugs dine on wall scum, fungus, mold and anything else they can get their leech-like mouths on. Their slime is thick and sticky. If a melee weapon does maximum damage to the slug, it will be stuck, requiring a combat

round to free. Also, anyone who treads on its 60 foot long slime trail must stop and loses half his or her move, this round and next.

Degenerates

Armor Class: 8 [11]

Hit Dice: 1

Attacks: Crude weapon 1d6

Saving Throw: 17

Special: None

Move: 12

Challenge Level/XP:

Degenerates descend from human slaves used as the meat animals of abominable subterranean races. Although they walk upright and wear crude garments, these pale-skinned cannibals have been bred down to a dog-like intelligence and have no moral scruples whatsoever. In parleying, they appear to use words of the common tongue, but really it is a parrot-like regurgitation of random vocabulary and scraps of the other party's conversation. Their own behavior will complement the attitude of the adventurers. If approached with fear and caution, they will surge forward and attack; if approached aggressively, they will cower and submit; if approached with offers to cooperate, they will gladly agree, all the while looking for advantage and a chance to dine on fresh flesh. They make interesting slaves or antagonists of humanoid tribes, as their human form may attract misguided sympathy from the explorers.

Fire Moths

Armor Class: 7 [12], -2 to be hit with melee weapons

Hit Dice: 1

Attacks: Fire 1d6/ 1d3

Saving Throw: 17

Special: Immune to fire

Move: 18 flying

Challenge Level/XP: 1/15

With the way moths are fatally attracted to flame, it was only a matter of time before the first giant fireproof moths mutated and spread, in inhabited underground caverns where fires and lava flows are often lit. A fire moth has no attack in itself, but sweats an oily secretion that catches fire easily. The now-blazing moth will then ram into its foes for 1d6 fire damage on a successful hit, or fly overhead and drip flaming oil which hits for 1d3 damage. Low-level parties prone to carrying open torch flames and starting oil fires have a distinct hatred for these insects.



THREE FEET OF WATER

Flooded corridors and caverns present their own set of challenges. Drowning is an ever-present hazard, pits and spikes on the floor are harder to detect, and a whole new class of creature awaits just below the surface.

Amphibious Jumping Tiger Shark

Armor Class: 6 [13]
Hit Dice: 2
Attacks: Bite 1d6+1
Saving Throw: 16
Special: Leap
Move: 18 swimming, 9 on land
Challenge Level/XP: 2/30XP

Only a mad wizard beginning to run out of ideas could have created this striped, furred, man-eating abomination. The size and shape of a five-foot-long shark, it also sports two powerful cat-like hind legs that retract partly into its body for streamlined swimming. On land it uses its legs to leap up to 30 feet horizontally or 10 feet vertically. If it can submerge itself at least 10 feet for buoyancy and momentum, it can make a similar jump out of the water.

Greenhair

Armor Class: is hit automatically
Hit Dice: 2+4
Attacks: Entangle
Saving Throw: 16
Special: Attack immunity, entangle
Move: 0
Challenge Level/XP: 1/15XP

Growing thickly in underground waters, these carnivorous weedy strands possess a dim and malevolent sentience. A single greenhair clump covers a roughly 5 feet square area and can float as high as 10 feet in deep enough water. Greenhair does not attack as such, but rather seeks to entangle creatures moving through its zone, dragging them down and drowning them under the water.

Each person in the area of greenhair must save at the start of each round, -2 if carrying a heavy load, -4 if encumbered. Failing the save once means the victim cannot move. Failing a second round's save means the victim is brought to his or her knees, a third means the victim is brought to hands and knees and cannot use their arms, and a fourth means the victim is brought prone. If any of these take the victim's head underwater, he or she takes drowning damage per round as appropriate (or 1d6 damage/round if the rules do not cover drowning). Greenhair can not be harmed by any weapons other than slashing melee weapons, but these automatically hit. Killing a greenhair clump releases its victim.

Ice Nixie

Armor Class: 6 [13] (*counting +3 dexterity and luck bonus*)

Hit Dice: 1

Attacks: Ice dagger 1d4 in melee; ice darts 1d3 with 20 foot range increment

Saving Throw: 14 (*counting +3 dexterity and luck bonus*)

Special: Freeze water, ice charm

Move: 9, 15 (swimming)

Challenge Level/XP: 1/15

Cold-blooded variants of the familiar aquatic fey folk, ice nixies do not confine themselves to arctic pools, but spread their chill aura to all kinds of fresh water, including underground. They can cause water to freeze at a range of 60 feet, up to a cubic foot per combat round. They use the resultant ice to create all sorts of improvised structures, armaments, and inconveniences.

The ice nixie's *charm person* power, usable once per day, is different from the normal nixie charm. It causes the victim's heart to grow cold, rather than warm. He or she becomes indifferent to the well-being of any comrades, and acts only in line with self-interest. If this extends to theft, betrayal and robbery, so be it, but certainly there is no reason to harm the inoffensive and penniless ice nixie. Only the nixie's will, or its death, will release a victim from the charm.

Spitting Striders

Armor Class: 6 [13]

Hit Dice: 1

Attacks: Bite 1d6; goo 1d4 with 15 foot range increment

Saving Throw: 17

Special: None

Move: 12 on water, 6 on land

Challenge Level/XP: 1/15

If scholars know about these creatures, they surely must debate how insects of their size and weight can walk on water. Nevertheless, the spitting strider performs the miracle daily, perhaps aided by the viscous, caustic substance it spits from its sharp jaws at enemies. Striders are unsure on land but will climb up to attack if they are being harassed from afar. If the water surface becomes choppy, they only move one third as fast.

Torpor Remora

Armor Class: 8 [11]

Hit Dice: 1/2

Attacks: Bite (slowing, no damage)

Saving Throw: 18

Special: Torpor

Move: 6

Challenge Level/XP: A/5

Shallow and murky waters are the habitat of the torpor remora, a blackish-green eel about the size of a small cat. These creatures attack the feet by preference, using the armor class of a character's footwear (soft leather is AC 8[11], hard leather is AC 7[12], metal shod boots are AC 4[15], full plate footwear is AC 2[17]). If a remora hits, it attaches itself, and the victim must save each round (poison) or undergo the effects of a slow spell, moving and

acting at half speed. Because the remora's bite has a numbing effect, someone who is hit is not likely to notice it. A slowed person hit by a second, different remora becomes completely paralyzed. Each hour after the initial bite, a save is allowed to undo one effect (paralyzed people become slowed, slowed go back to normal).

ADVERSARIAL GAMEMASTER'S BULLPEN

In a world with ear seekers, throat leeches, trappers, lurkers, mimics and all the other deceptive tricks of the dungeon, the fantasy world hardly needs any more annoying critters to throw at players. And yet, here they are.

Barrel Beast

Armor Class: 9 [10]

Hit Dice: 1 to 3

Attacks: 1d6 kick

Saving Throw: 17, 16 or 14 by hit dice

Special: Overbear, knothole attack 1d6 (10 foot range), damage resistance

Move: 9

Challenge Level/XP: 1-3/15, 30, 60

An innocent looking barrel can come to be stuffed full of the infamous barrel beast in the same way that a deserted shell is taken over by a hermit crab. One end of the barrel is missing, and this end sits on the floor while the beast watches through a knothole. When a living being approaches within 5 feet, the beast rears up on its long,

clam-like, prehensile foot and clobbers the victim with the barrel, doing 1d4 damage on a successful hit, and knocking him or her down unless a save is made. Thereafter, the barrel lies on its side, rolling and hopping around while the beast lashes out in normal melee attacks with its foot. Every other round the beast also squirts one opponent within 10 feet with a foul, acidic substance from the knothole, doing 1-6 damage unless he saves. The barrel beast is easy to hit but all weapon damage against it, except from chopping weapons like axes, is reduced by 2. When its hit points are at 0 or lower, the barrel breaks and the beast collapses into an inert, oozing mound of filth and hair. Different sizes of barrel beast (small keg beasts and big tun beasts) are known to exist.

Hoard Serpent

Armor Class: 4 [15]

Hit Dice: 1 to 3

Attacks: Bite or tail, as weapon damage.

Saving Throw: 17, 16 or 14 by hit dice

Special: Immunity, surprise on 1-4

Move: 6

Challenge Level/XP: 1-3/15, 30, 60

The hoard serpent is both an embodiment and punishment of greed. It is formed by eldritch forces from a heap of treasure. Its body is a long, coiling stack of coins (100-200 of them), and it has 1 or 2 semi-precious gem eyes set in its head, which is also formed of scaled coins. It attacks with a weapon from the hoard, either a dagger set in its jaw, or a sword-sized weapon set in its tail. It takes no damage from

normal fire or missile weapons. 1 HD hoard serpents are made of copper coins, 2 HD of silver and 3 HD of gold, with each gem and weapon worth about 10 gp per hit die. When dead, the serpent's constituent treasure collapses and may be gathered normally.

Man of Wounds

Armor Class: 9 [10]

Hit Dice: Equal to number of weapons stuck in body

Attacks: Weapon, as fighter with level = hit dice

Saving Throw: As fighter with level = hit dice

Special: Damage reversal

Move: 12

Challenge Level/XP: 2/30

It is not clear, even to the Man of Wounds himself, whether he has been blessed or cursed by the magic that makes any weapons that hit him stick in his body and add to his power. When found, he will have 2 or more weapons stuck in or to his body, with a hit die for each rolled according to the damage dealt by that weapon – so, a 1d4 dagger, 2d4 maul and 1d6 sword would give him three effective hit dice and 3d4 + 1d6 hit points. He also carries a weapon of his own.

Any weapons that hit him stick to him; roll damage, and add that to his hit points, then add 1 to his hit dice. The only way to harm the Man of Wounds other than magic is to grab his weapons (on a bare-handed hit vs. AC 5[14]) and pull them out of his body, dealing damage equal to the weapon's hit die roll and reducing his Hit Dice by 1. When all

his weapons are gone, the Man of Wounds' enchantment is broken, and he falls to the ground bleeding with zero Hit Points.

Insistent Shale

No stats (Special)

Among the many marvels of the elements is a form of stone with the ambition to turn the world to silicate, petrifying all living or formerly living material it touches. This insistent shale, as alchemists call it, appears to be a flat slab of intensely gray-colored rock, either lying on the ground or worked as a protective measure into the architecture. Petrified statues of dungeon animals often announce its presence. Anyone who touches it with naked flesh must save or be turned to stone. Objects of organic material, such as wooden poles or leather boots, are also turned to stone by touching it. It can be damaged only by picks or blunt metal weapons, which hit automatically. The shale requires 5-30 points of damage to shatter, depending on its size – and when it shatters, all with exposed skin within 15 feet are attacked by flying fragments as a 4 Hit Dice monster, and if hit must save at +2 or turn to stone. Depending on how the dungeon architect has used it, insistent shale can be a distraction, an annoyance, or a real threat to explorers.

Pemblings

Armor Class: 3 [16]

Hit Dice: 1/2

Attacks: Bite 1d4

Saving Throw: 18

Special: Damage immunity

Move: 9, 10 foot leap

Challenge Level/XP: B/5

Pemblings are mindless lesser elemental creatures that look like fist-sized rocks when dormant. Awakened, they open a wide mouth full of sharp teeth and start rolling rapidly toward their prey. They attack by leaping and biting, take only half damage from edged and pointed weapons, and are immune to normal fire.



PAUPER'S CEMETERY

Skeletons, zombies, and the occasional low numbers of ghouls? Shallow crypts and abandoned graveyards should be less predictable. Not everything dwelling with the dead is dead, and not every dead body is whole ...

Skull Creeper

Armor Class: 7 [12]

Hit Dice: 1d4 hit points

Attacks: Bite 1d3; strangle

Saving Throw: 18

Special: Damage resistance

Move: 9

Challenge Level/XP: A/5

Sometimes, a necromancer who wants skeletal servants that can fit into tighter places will wire a human skull onto two sets of hand bones, creating an unnerving, spider-like scuttling thing. The creeper's first attack on making contact is a bite. On the second round and thereafter, it will try to hit the victim's unarmored AC (with dexterity modifiers) to crawl onto the body. If it succeeds, one round later it will reach the throat and start strangling for 1d6 damage each round. Two creepers count as a whole skeleton both for *animate dead* and turning purposes.

Dust of Ages

No stats (Special)

One little-known peril of ancient burial places is the dust that forms from the bones and bodies of the dead over centuries. If animated by collective regrets or an evil force, it will billow up when disturbed, forming a cloud of shifting, vaguely human faces and forms — echoes of those that were.

The roughly 10 by 10 foot dust cloud may be turned as a 2 Hit Die undead monster. It seeks to engulf any intelligent creatures, who must save the first round so engulfed, or flee in terror for 1d6 rounds. If the creature stays, the dust will try more insidious means next round, invading breathing passages (unless another save is successful) and doing 1d6 choking damage per round. Weapons and magical spells are useless unless they specifically affect undead. A sprinkling with consecrated water will settle the dust down, but only for as long as the water remains.

Cerement

Armor Class: 8 [11]

Hit Dice: 2

Attacks: Touch for 1d3 wisdom drain, envelop for 1d6 wisdom drain

Saving Throw: 16

Special: Damage immunity

Move: 9

Challenge Level/XP: 2/30

Haunted winding sheets and grave wrappings, or perhaps the bed sheets in an accursed tavern room, form the body of this undead creature. It will rise and attack in a

snake-like or human-like parody of form. A successful hit threatens sanity, draining 1d3 wisdom points from the victim, while a second hit in a row will allow the creature to envelop its victim for 1d6 wisdom points. When a character goes below 3 wisdom points he or she becomes catatonically insane, and at 0 wisdom dies of fright. Wisdom is restored at 1 point per day of rest. Cerements can only be harmed by fire and slashing weapons.

Fardarrig

Armor Class: 5 [14] (*counting +3 dexterity and luck bonus*)

Hit Dice: 1+1

Attacks: Thighbone shillelagh 1d4

Saving Throw: 14 (*counting +3 dexterity and luck bonus*)

Special: Telekinesis of dead; ventriloquism

Move: 15

Challenge Level/XP: 1/15

Fardarrigs are a type of graveyard leprechaun with brick-red skin. Their main goal is to hide and frighten away intruders. Fardarrigs use ventriloquism and a telekinetic power to move dead corpses or body parts within 30 feet of their location, up to one whole body at a time. Corpses so animated will seem like a tough kind of undead. They will attack and take physical damage as a zombie or skeleton, but the parts may continue to attack after the creature is destroyed. Not being undead, they cannot be turned or damaged by holy means. With enough supply of bodies, even a single fardarrig may create what seems to be a never-ending stream of undead foes.

Ghost Face

Armor Class: 4 [15]

Hit Dice: 1

Attacks: None

Saving Throw: 17

Special: Spells; breath, save or drain 1d4 Constitution; surprise 1-5; only damaged by magic weapons, holy water, or spells

Move: 9 through stone or walls

Challenge Level/XP: 2/30

A solitary spirit not possessed of enough will to come back as a ghost or spectre may still manifest itself as a ghost face. The face will appear to emerge from a wall, door, hedge, or other barrier, appearing much as it did in life. All within 5 feet of it are exposed to its noxious breath (those reduced to 0 Constitution die) whose effects last a full day. The face also casts spells as a 3rd level wizard or evil cleric. It is exceptionally hard to deal with, using its ability to fade back into the walls and its high surprise chances to avoid direct attack or turning.

POOR WIZARD'S ALMANACK

Failed summonings or minor planar gateways can sometimes yield much smaller versions of the usual elementals. Due to their weakness, the elemental nuisances – as they are known – seek to hamper people they meet rather than outright attacking them. Low-level spellcasters often find them to be useful allies in keeping attackers at bay. The elemental selection is rounded out by another creature that might be left behind by

altogether more powerful and mysterious sorceries ...

Elemental Nuisance: Air

Armor Class: 7 [12]

Hit Dice: 1d4 hit points

Attacks: Whirling debris (1d2)

Saving Throw: 18

Special: Damage immunity

Move: 18 (as zephyr), 9 (as tornado)

Challenge Level/XP: 1/15

This minor air elemental manifests as a zephyr-like breeze, capable of blowing out torches, scattering held scrolls, and the like. When provoked, it forms into a small tornado. All within 10 feet of it must save or take 1d2 damage from debris kicked up by the twister. Being hit by the tornado itself will knock a bipedal creature of man-size or smaller to the ground. Apart from damage-dealing spells and magic weapons, the only way to kill an air nuisance is to stop it moving, smothering it with a cloak-sized (hit for 1d3 damage) or rug-sized (hit for 1d6 damage) piece of thick fabric.

Elemental Nuisance: Earth

Armor Class: 5 [14]

Hit Dice: 1d6 hit points

Attacks: None

Saving Throw: 18

Special: Trap, damage immunity

Move: 12 in earth, 6 in stone

Challenge Level/XP: 1/15

The earth nuisance can be conjured in dirt or stone. Either way, it has a direct and persistent way of inconveniencing those who tread on it – it instantly scoops out a shallow

pit in its substance and then clamps the pit's walls onto the victim's feet (save or be trapped and unable to walk). If in stone, it can not be harmed by any physical means other than blunt weapons, and in earth, only by sharp weapons when these are used to dig. Furthermore, any physical hit does 2 less damage to the earth nuisance, unless it is by a pick or shovel.

Elemental Nuisance: Fire

Armor Class: 6 [13]
Hit Dice: 1d4 hit points
Attacks: Ignite for 1d2
Saving Throw: 18
Special: Ignite, damage immunities and vulnerabilities
Move: 12
Challenge Level/XP: 1/15

The fire nuisance is easily spotted, being a flickering, fist-sized yellow flame that moves quickly along any surface. It is sometimes ordered to conceal itself in a larger fire or to provide a permanent flame for a wall torch. If it hits, it rushes onto the victim's hair or clothing and ignites it, causing 1d2 damage on the first round and every round thereafter until the fire is smothered or doused. It also has a particular fondness for spellbooks and scrolls. Being hit by water will damage it – 1d3 for a bottle full, 1d6 for a bucket – and it is also subject to smothering damage just as the air nuisance is. No other effect except cold-related magic will harm it.

Elemental Nuisance: Water

Armor Class: 7 [12]
Hit Dice: 1d4 hit points
Attacks: Choke
Saving Throw: 18
Special: Ruin items, damage immunities
Move: 9, 15 swimming
Challenge Level/XP: 1/15

Unlike the fearsome wave shape of its larger kindred, a water elemental nuisance appears as a pool or trickle on land, or as a ripple in a larger volume of water, with a volume of only a couple of quarts (litres). If it reaches a character, it will crawl on his or her body and equipment for 1-3 rounds, dousing lit flames, ruining unprotected scrolls and spellbooks, and damaging non-magic metal armor with a rapid rusting power so that it will lose 1 AC benefit per round. When this period of time is over, the nuisance will head for the victim's mouth and throat, and unless a save succeeds will do 1d6 choking damage per round. It can only be destroyed by splashing it to pieces; thus, only hand-held weapons and impact effects (such as magic missile) will damage it, and then only for 1 point per hit. What's more, a non-magic metal weapon that hits will be damaged, taking a permanent -1 damage penalty (minimum 0 damage).

Demi-Real Monster

Armor Class: As original monster

Hit Dice: 1 (or more)

Attacks: As original monster; maximum damage = 2x hit dice if not fully real

Saving Throw: As current hit dice

Special: As original monster; hit dice gain/loss

Move: As original monster

Challenge Level/XP: Original monster minus 3; XP according to Hit Dice of finally killed monster, minus 1

When a summoning goes partly wrong, or an illusion of a living thing takes on existence, a demi-real creature is created. The monster starts out half-transparent and shaky in form, with only one hit die and doing a maximum of 2 points of damage on a hit. Special attacks also may be weaker; for example, saving throws against the monster's effects may be at +2 for each missing hit die.

The monster gains hit dice by leaving its mark on the world – most often, this means scoring damage in combat. For every 4 full points it scores, keeping a running tally, it gains back one hit die and can do 2 more damage. Roll new hit points with each die as the creature gains them. Once it has its full hit dice it is permanently real. If killed before then, its body will waver and wink out of existence.

A demi-real creature that is aware of its existential condition, and able to communicate, may very well try to negotiate a different way to gain full reality than fighting a dangerous group of adventurers.

APPENDIX A: HALF MAN, HALF AMAZING

There are these finch-men, see? Just like the creatures in Hieronymus Bosch paintings. They live in the upper caves, and the crawdad-men live in the lower caves. If you get between them you can provoke a real donnybrook. But watch out for the rhino-men in the ruined tower. They and the ferret-men from the gatehouse are in cahoots ...

Most humanoid monsters may as well be kobolds, orcs, gnolls, or ogres: new heads, same hit dice. It's a no-brainer to stick them in the right ecosystem, give them one or two distinguishing traits (natural armor for those turtle-men, sideways movement for the crab-men), and call it a day. Coming up with their stats in an old-school system should not be a problem for the game referee.

The secret to making groups of humanoid warriors memorable is to treat them as military cultures, not species. Give each race a different tactic, a different motive. One example of this is the Degenerates back on p. 12. Stats aside, they're just humans with a special culture and behavior. If the fighting methods of your humanoids are different enough from each other, you may not need different races. Make them all orcs, from seven distinctive tribes. Make them humans, even, if that suits you.

Here follow seven warrior ways to consider for fleshing out any humanoid race.

Rabble

When gathering for war, this tribe forms an unruly mob. They pick up stones for throwing, and arm themselves with a motley variety of armor types and weapons. If they become aware of an enemy, they will size it up. Against a group that is likely to give a hard time, or when surprised without a chance to assess the situation, they fade back toward their lair, hurling rocks and missiles as they go. When they spot a group they believe to be weaker, they throw missiles and rush into melee with cruel vigor. In a fight, at 25% casualties the group will make a more or less ordered retreat. At 50% or more casualties they will flee, or surrender abjectly if in their lair. The rabble chooses a large open space as their home, so that when cornered in it they can spread out and make numbers count.

Fanatics

This group lives and dies for a simple belief, and guards a sacred place related to it – be it an idol, altar, or the relics of a fallen hero. They wear and carry distinguishing symbols of their creed, marching and fighting in close order and with good discipline. Also, for every five fanatics encountered, there is a 50% chance of finding a level 1-3 cleric with them (multiple clerics can be rolled).

If found away from their guardian place, the fanatics will attempt to communicate, brandishing symbols of their faith. The communication is one way, though; fanatics only care to convert others by force or persuasion. Met with failure to

respect their belief, they will howl and attack ruthlessly, retreating only around 50% or more casualties. When defending their sacred place, they fight to the death. Fanatics often will have surrounded it with places of tactical advantage and deadly traps.

Warband

This humanoid culture lives by an uncompromising code of martial honor. Their daily sport is fighting, with mock weapons and real ones. Many of them bear scars and mutilations from these exercises. On the basis of these fights they form a strictly hierarchical society and warrior unit.

The leader of the band will have 2 hit dice more than usual, and be accompanied by 1 sub-leader for every 5 normal members of the band, with 1 more hit die. Leaders and sub-leaders will have the pick of the best armor available. However, they reject shields, missiles, and pole weapons as being ignoble, wielding instead one- or two-handed close melee weapons. The rest of the band will have a mixture of shields, missiles, and pole weapons – sometimes all three. Finally, the 1-3 warband members with lowest hit points are relegated to the role of flunkies, given no armor and only sticks to fight with, and kept in the back. These flunkies hate their lot and may pitch in with the adventurers if it is clear that the order of their band is about to be decisively overthrown.

The leader-warriors of the band prize single combat. When they

meet a group of explorers with time to communicate, the leader will challenge the strongest looking warrior in the group to a duel. The loser is expected to surrender and perform some service to the winner, avoiding combat. All others are expected to stand back during the duel and not interfere. Any deviation from this code, and the entire band will attack the honorless interlopers without mercy. The warband members (except for flunkies) will never flee, and retreat only grudgingly. They will surrender only if severely wounded, outnumbered, and if they believe their opponents to be honorable.

Hunters

Weapons and tactics designed to catch their opponents alive set this culture apart from the others. They may be slavers, believers in a cult of human sacrifice, or just compassionate souls – but which one they are is not always clear at the start. Hunters are armed with one or more of the following non-lethal weapons, which ignore armor and shield when hitting but not dexterity-based AC bonuses:

- Lasso: Ensnare a random body part (1 = neck, 2= body, 3-4 = right arm, 5-6 = left arm) – rope can be cut by an edged weapon on a successful hit against AC 9[10]
- Net: Completely ensnare the victim – if he has an edged weapon he can cut his way out in 1d4+1 rounds.

- Glue bomb: 10 foot diameter area; save or have feet entangled for 1d4+1 rounds
- Choking smoke bomb: 20 foot diameter area; save or be unable to attack for 1d4+1 rounds

They also carry more conventional melee weapons, which they use to subdue, or to deal damage in extreme circumstances. Hunters are as often found far away from their lair as close by. Close to home, they will set and monitor non-lethal traps such as nets rigged from above, tripwires, or soft-floored pits. They defend their home to the death but are quite quick to fade back if a fight is going against them elsewhere, retreating when they have taken 35% or more casualties, and fleeing or surrendering at 60%.

The following three cultures should each be considered as having a special ability, worth +1 Hit Die when figuring each humanoid member's experience points.

Lurkers

Killing from hiding and at a distance is the most efficient way, to this culture with absolutely no scruples about warfare. They may be found on their way to a murderous errand, or defending their own lair in a manner that provokes fearful whispers from nearby denizens. When away from home they can improvise hiding places at a 50% chance of success, and surprise on 1-4. Closer to home they know and prepare hiding places that are 90% effective in concealing them, and surprise on 1-5. They have +4 to hit against

unaware opponents, and are also 90% effective in moving silently from one hiding place to another. Lurker cultures prefer missile weapons such as crossbows, bows, javelins or blowguns, and carry short daggers or swords in case they are forced into melee – which they avoid at all costs. Truly dangerous versions of this culture have also mastered the arts of setting traps and applying poison to their weapons.

Legions

Whether trained by a masterful employer, or just veterans of long years of campaigning, these humanoids form disciplined and specialized units for close-order fighting. The main line consists of two ranks. The first rank is armored in chain and armed with shields and heavy one-handed weapons – swords, axes, or maces. First rank soldiers sometimes also carry throwing axes or javelins, for the round before armies clash. The second rank is more lightly armored, in studded leather or scale, and carried long spears or polearms that can attack together with the first rank. Missile troops form a third rank. They usually either take up positions on the flank to shoot, or have the other ranks open up gaps to let them go to the front, shoot, and then retreat again. Finally, if there are any mounted troops, using horses or things more fantastic, they will be positioned on the far ends of the line, moving to outflank and attack from the rear.

A legion's impressive panoply of war is commanded by a leader with 1

additional hit die, who stays in the back or moves to the front as needed to survey the scene. Orders to retreat, advance, or wheel are communicated through a coded system by a drummer or trumpeter that accompanies the leader. They retreat after taking 50% casualties (toward which the leader, if killed, counts as 5 dead individuals), and flee in panic after taking 75%. Although the legion prefers fighting terrain that allows its full numbers to tell while not being outflanked, it can also adopt its tactics to narrow passages as little as two abreast.

Opportunists

Somewhere in the deepest darks of the underworld, strange taverns serving unsavory fungal libations have sprung up on the borders between the various humanoid races' spheres of influence. It is in such a hell-hole that misfits and outcasts from all the kindreds congregate to forget their troubles and plot their schemes. Often their talk turns to the fabulous treasures and perils to be found in the keeps, temples, and towns of the overworld. Sometimes a terrible oath is sworn: to plunder these riches or die in the attempt. Conveniently, there is a thriving black market just next door to provide them with all they need for an expedition. Hooded cloaks and smoked-glass visors in case they get caught in the burning sunlight. Poison, incendiaries, and gaseous weapons extracted from minerals and beasts unknown to the surface world. And the usual handy assortment of poles, ropes, spikes and the like.

Opportunists strike in groups of 4 to 8, with at least one and often more spellcasters (character levels 1-3) among them. They are exceptional individuals among their race, with maximum hit points on their first hit die and +1 to hit. They may also be accompanied by a roughly equal number of lesser hirelings whose lives are considered disposable, and by a few tamed attack and burden beasts of the underworld.

Smart opportunists base themselves in a dark forest or cave, take the moon into account, and strike when it is dark. In a town or countryside, they seek out locations likely to have treasure – taverns, temples, or wealthy houses. They are armed and equipped extremely well, but shun non-magical metal armor in favor of quieter harness. They are confident of their ability to enter by stealth and dispatch any guardians or inhabitants of those places. Because they know themselves to be at a disadvantage once a whole settlement is aroused against them, they will scout carefully, choosing their targets, and retreat to safety after the first strike.

If the opportunists have one fault it is that they tend to move slowly and over-cautiously in the places they finally loot, constantly mapping and checking for hidden treasures, chambers, and traps. Parley and surrender are not beneath them, for they fight for no principle or home, merely wealth and individual survival. *Thus always with adventurers ...*

APPENDIX B: TEN TAMED TITANS

Low-level doldrums can also be conquered by putting limits on higher-level monsters so they are not as likely to kill the party outright. Some of the more obvious ways to do this are:

- juveniles with lower hit dice
- wounded or disabled monsters
- intelligent creatures that trick, riddle or negotiate
- giving the party access to allies
- giving the party access to the monsters' nemesis weapons, items, or substances
- chaining up captive monsters, putting the monster in a pit, or other tactical advantages for the party

Here are ten more, each adapted to a particular iconic higher-level creature.

The Troll Cabinet

A curiously wrought metal cabinet, roughly nine by three feet, with a number of doors in its surface, occupies a corner in a warlord's lair or wizard's retreat. If rapped on, a loud, frantic scuffling and scrabbling will be heard from all parts of the cabinet. A dismembered troll is kept here, the parts prevented from recombining by the inside walls and latched doors of the cabinet. The top section contains the head, the middle the torso and arms, and the lower section contains the abdomen and legs.

- The head (30 XP) has 1+1 hit dice and is able to roll at about a rate of 3. It bites for 1d8 damage.
- The torso/arms (120 XP) have 3+1 hit dice. The arms pull the torso along at a rate of 6 and it uses them to strike for 1d4 each (but -4 to hit; it cannot see.)
- The legs/abdomen (60 XP) have 2+1 hit dice. They move at the troll's rate of 12 and can kick once for 1d4 damage, again at -4 to hit.

Each part regenerates for 1 hp/round. If any of the parts can combine, they will find each other and do so, pooling their hit dice, hit points, regeneration rate, and attacks and using the best move among them. The arms section will also attempt to open the other doors of the cabinet if at all possible.

The Sleeping Dragon

For six hours in the morning every day, the whole dungeon rumbles with a massive snoring – the sound of a sleeping elder dragon. It is fed by low-level worshippers through a vent in its ceiling, and spends its days dreaming and its nights daydreaming, sprawled out on a massive hoard of coin and treasures. The party will come upon the vent just having disposed of the worshippers, so the window of opportunity is short, as the dragon expects to be fed when it wakes every day. Descending while the dragon is asleep and taking the best part of the trove is a tricky proposition. Any sound has a 5% chance, cumulative, of waking the

dragon (so the second sound will have a 10% chance, and so on.)

The Mimicking Golem

Standing like a statue in the middle of a large room is a golem. When a person enters the room, the golem will start copying that person's actions – stepping forward 2 feet (on big legs) for every 1 foot the other moves forward, turning and moving sideways as a mirror image of the person (that is, right from the golem's perspective when the other turns left), and attacking if the other attacks. If the target person leaves the front 90 degree arc of the golem, it will imitate the closest other person in view. The point of the set-up? There is some task that only the golem can perform – smashing a wall or a door, reaching a high-up item or lever. Getting it to do the task following its rules of mimicry will be a puzzle in and of itself.

The Contra-trice

Of course the adventurers have heard of cockatrices through legends and lore, but this one looks a little different. Perhaps it has black feathers, or a serpent's head and rooster's body. In any event, there is little to fear from this monster, because its bite has a reverse effect in addition to the usual 1d3 damage – it turns stone to flesh. Contra-trices are much prized by dungeon architects, because if properly trained, they can both dig out the dungeon for you and supply your creatures with freshly created meat. Or, they can turn a collection of stone creatures into an instant army with just a word and a peck ...

or be just the thing you need to get past that stone golem on level 2 ... The only problem is that if captured and not fed their special food (whatever that may be) they have a 25% chance per day of turning back into a flesh-to-stone monster.

The Worm Turns

The adventurers come across a circular, 5 foot diameter passageway in the clay or rock of a shallow underground level. The floor is some 2 feet deep in a sludgy, rubbly, compacted mess, reducing movement to half rate. Even so, if they follow the passageway in the direction of the squelching and rumbling noise that comes from one end, they will come across the tail end of a half-sized juvenile purple worm (7HD, does half damage, 600 XP), who is digging its way through the level at the equivalent of a movement rate of 6. If they attack, they get surprise on the worm, and the tail stinger attacks at -4 to hit due to not being able to see. However, once it knows it is being attacked, the worm will start a slow turning arc, describing a 40 foot diameter circle, in order to loop back on its own tunnel. Once it closes the circle in about 10 combat rounds, the worm will move at its faster normal rate of 9, easily outpacing the characters mired in the worm's castings. If the worm is killed without having had a chance to fight at its front end, the party only gets 50% of the experience due – still a substantial haul. This also makes a good challenge for mid-level adventurers, substituting a mature worm for the juvenile.

Shadow Cast

Shadows, while hard for beginning adventurers to kill, are at least not as immediately lethal as comparable monsters. In this variant, the adventurers come upon some magic or restless spirits that turn their own shadows into hungry beings. Each shadow will only attack the character who casts it, and must save or suffer 1d6 damage per round if its caster is positioned between two different light sources. If the victims are plunged into complete darkness? Well, either the shadows will withdraw, or they will batten on the darkness, becoming nearly unstoppable.

The Diminished Giant

This encounter appears to be with a short caveman, albino northern barbarian, dark-skinned and red-haired dwarf, or stony humanoid. This person is outrageously rude and demanding, trying to start a fight, but will not attack without being attacked first. Its strange behavior is actually a condition of a curse that has shrunk the giant, who retains all hit points but attacks only as a 1 HD creature and does damage as with a normal weapon. The curse can only be lifted by taking damage from steel or iron weapons in combat – for every 2 full points taken, the giant regains one hit die for attack and save purposes, and its weapon grows in proportion.

Stalker With Restraining Order

The invisible stalker, so lore tells us, follows a single command to the letter. In this case, the job of this

particular elemental servant, as tasked by a long-dead benevolent wizard, is to do everything possible to inconvenience intruders to a certain area without harming them. So, torches are snuffed, belongings wrested from hands, barriers placed, and other dire omens enacted by the stalker, in the hopes of deterring further exploration of the stalker's grounds. If attacked, the stalker will continue its pacifist mission regardless — to the death if needs be.



The Hydra's Heads

Through some eldritch sorcery or diabolical medicine, the individual heads of a hydra have been removed and are kept alive as highly enraged guardians in a wall setting or statue — preferably one that is not vulnerable to missile fire. Each one attacks as a 1 HD creature and does 1d6 damage, being worth 15 XP.



Thieving Harpies

Perhaps they have realized that fighting adventurers to the death is generally a losing proposition, or perhaps they have been given their orders by a greedy boss creature who wants to weaken intruders. In any case, this pack of harpies armed with short swords and axes will use their weapons not to damage their foes, but to cut straps, then snap up backpacks and treasure sacks, or grab hold of spears and bows and wrest them away. Each harpy will flee if reduced to half hit points or less.



~ FINIS ~

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