# Jarlaxle's Guide to Traps

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This book is dedicated to the memory of Rick Loomis of Flying Buffalo Games. Rick gave us the *Grimtooth's* series of traps books, which inspired generations of gamers and game designers. Rest easy, Rick.

*Disclaimer: Many foolish, greedy delvers were sliced, incinerated, impaled, squished, and maimed during the making of this book. I had to make sure these contraptions worked, and anyway they had it coming. If any of them were your relatives, I'd like to say I'm sorry, but I'm really not. I regret nothing.*
*- Jarlaxle*

# INTRODUCTION

**W**ELCOME TO THE GUILD'S ULTIMATE GUIDE TO TURNING PCS INTO PUREE! In these pages, you'll find a mouth-watering array of ways to turn characters inside out or fry them.

Before we go any further, let's get something out of the way. There's a little bit of dissent in the role-playing community about how traps are lame because they don't have much to do with story and player agency and blah blah blah. We hear that concern, and we'd like to address it.

If you don't think traps are cool, and you're reading this, sorry. No refunds. But before you get all huffy and take to social media to call our ancestors into question, read a bit further.

See, here's the thing: Traps are a time-honored part of fantasy role-playing games. When we sit down to play a fantasy role-playing game, a game where our characters explore ancient dungeons, the lairs of foul creatures, or a spooky castle on the mountaintop, we expect to kill monsters, dodge traps and walk out with the treasure. Traps don't have to make "sense," except insofar as they exist to keep intruders out of secure areas.

It's worth pointing out there should always be a chance a character notices a trap or hazard. None of the traps in this book are no-chance-to-spot, save-or-die character killers like the sphere of annihilation trap in the original Tomb of Horrors. But the chance to spot or avoid some of them is quite small, and the chance of most of them reducing your character to their component atoms is quite large.

If that's not your expectation, adjust your expectations. Otherwise, your character might lose a hand or an eye—or worse. If they do, don't come crying to us about "agency", because you exercised your agency when you chose to make Wisdom your dump stat. It's not our fault you didn't put any emphasis on Perception.

That said, GMs, read your players! If your players don't appreciate the idea of things they don't even notice turning their beloved characters into a fine red mist without warning, this book isn't going to be of much use to you other than as wistful entertainment. If you want to include the contents of this book in your game, talk it over with your players and seek their approval first, before ever you use anything in these pages. And even then, you should be ready for them to throw pizza crusts at you when they lose their beloved character to the White Dragon Breath Torrent.

There's your disclaimer. Now let's get to the proper Introduction, shall we?

The creators of this book are lovers of old-school traps. You know, the kind of traps that really ruin a character's day. The kind of traps that make you bring a stack of character sheets to a dungeon crawl. The kind of traps that, as you read the book, make you say, "Oh, hell no, y'all, that's just ... damn."

Plus we all had a copy of a certain book which shall remain nameless but the title of which rhymes with Jrimtooth's Flaps, and we were certain we could make such a book for 5th Edition DUNGEONS & DRAGONS. We think we got pretty darn close, but you can be the judge of that.

So here you are. Enjoy. Or, you know, don't. We've already deposited your money with Bregan d'Aerthe, and good luck getting it out of their vaults without getting your arms ripped off.

*R P Davis, Lead Designer*

P.S. If you're too gentle or frightened to use a trap or hazard as-is, you can tone down the mayhem. Coward. You might make the whole thing an illusion, which is funny for those who make their saving throws. It's up to you. But if you do, we'll know. And we'll point at you and laugh at your lack of spine.
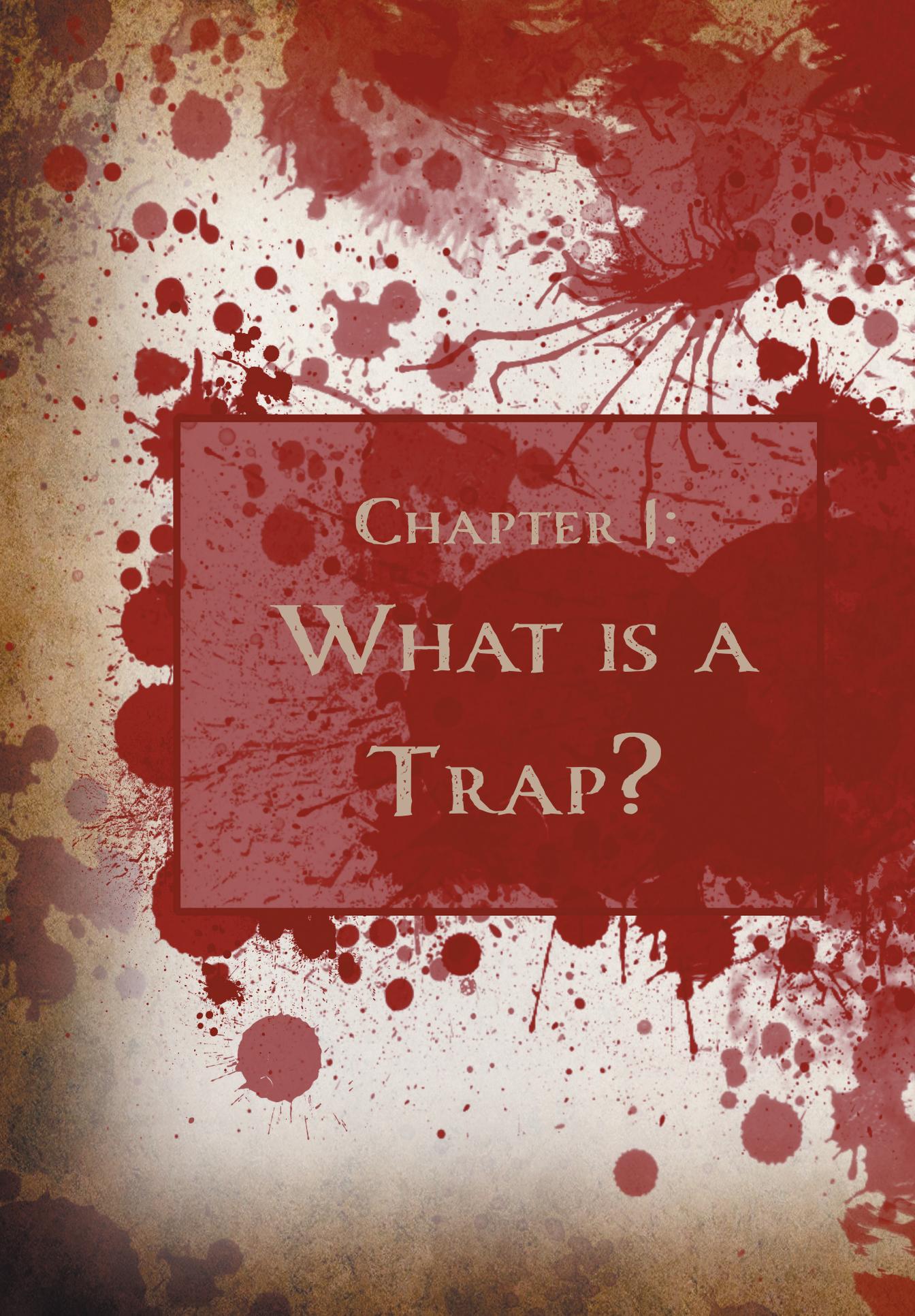
# Chapter I:

# What is a Trap?

*One of my favorite pastimes as a boy in Menzoberranzan was designing traps; devious, deadly traps. I would scrawl out diagrams for my creations on whatever surface I could find. Traps were always exciting to me (and they're very exciting for intruders!). Trap building and trap design is not my primary calling but taking hands off is a subject that I have some, er, hands-on experience with. Traps make thieves and other interlopers think twice before attempting to plunder a cache. Many novice trappers fall prey to the two gravest errors of trapping – using too many traps and trapping something for no reason.*

## When to Use Traps

I have always delighted in the good use of a trap. One good trap is better than ten bad ones. Sometimes you set a snare and what you catch surprises you more than what you don't. Maybe you catch one of your minions skimming from the coffers; that is really rewarding. Now you have the chance to really show those who do your bidding that your 'good nature' is not to be tested. It is always a good idea to use traps in the following situations:

**To Prepare People.** Good goons are hard to come by and even harder to train. Most folks will hoard money and resources, saving up to buy some bauble. Long term plans are good but I like to teach my toadies to be prepared, that danger is everywhere. Better equipped flunkies live longer than scrimpers. The sooner they learn that, the better. The life they save might be yours!

**To Surprise People.** Many people in my line of work don't like surprises, and for good reason; surprises are usually not pleasant. I beg to differ. I just love surprises, and so do my minions. Sometimes I set traps for them in their chambers or in the common hall. Nothing too deadly but something that will leave a scar. A good rousting keeps the blood pumping and the wits sharp. It keeps them on their toes and they love it! Well... maybe not, but I do it anyhow...

**To Disrupt Intruder Actions.** Something as simple as a bear trap in the rose bush can severely hinder any would-be housebreaker. It keeps them stationary so my guards can easily acquire them and it hobbles them if they manage to pry their foot from the iron jaws. They won't be running or scaling any walls tonight. This will limit their entry and egress options to heavier patrolled areas. This measure and other obstacles limit movement quite effectively.

Something as simple as using difficult terrain can do this. A trap or set of traps designed to restrain can be used to limit character movement during an encounter. When used with physical obstacles that limit movement and provide cover, you make a more dynamic and interesting encounter. It will force characters to use their resources more effectively and fight more strategically.

*I know what you're thinking: the more traps, the better. Not so. The better traps, the better. If thieves expect a place to be trapped, they will come prepared and scour every inch of a place, finding all the secret doors in the process and making quite a haul. This will take a lot of time and be boring to watch. I like the stunned look on a burglar's face when the door slams behind them and the spikes shoot up from the floor. Much more satisfying, albeit messy.*

# When Not to Use Traps

No one really likes to get punked all the time. Bad trap use and design lead to predictable and boring gameplay. Many novices lace a dungeon with deadly traps that have absurd DCs. Then they plop legendary items in every treasure chest and in every room. Balancing aside, this dungeon is silly.  Why bother to place items for characters to find if they can't get past the traps? The following is a list of the "pitfalls" of poor trap use.

**When There Already Enough Traps.** Traps are expensive and do require maintenance. Some need to be manually reset. Finding a nimble-fingered flunkey up to these tasks is challenging; many require a lot of 'encouragement'. Besides who wants to pay a thief to run around resetting all your traps when you could be paying them to break into a rivals' vault and stealing their loot.

**When the Thing to be Protected Isn't Worth the Expense.** Ah, a common mistake among the nouveau riche. A certain item may have sentimental value to you, but that doesn't mean a thief would bother stealing it. Store keepsakes in your quarters and put a lock on your door like a normal person. The only people interested in stealing those things from you is a rival and if they have ransacked your bedroom; you have more pressing security issues. Set traps to guard something worth the effort it takes to protect. Thieves won't be tempted by the bait if they don't think they have a chance at actually getting it or if they think it's not worth the hassle of bypassing all the traps and locks.

**To Punish People.** I don't like to punish a scoundrel for outwitting me. They have bested me once, then shame on me. I should have done better to protect my assets. I have not drawn blood in many moons, that's what my henchmen and "pets" are for. Don't take it personally, revenge is far sweeter when the temper cools.

**Randomly.** When I was an adventurer, we went on several raids in Undermountain. No chambers were as infuriating and frivolous as the sections of the Mad Mage Halaster. The guy would lock a secret door to a room filled with deadly traps and when we finally opened the treasure chest, it was empty. Halaster

was bat-in-a-hat crazy wasting money on locks and traps that protect nothing. Why spend so much money securing a treasure that isn't even worth as much as the chest it's in?

## THE TRAP MAKERS TOOLKIT

*Now we come to my favorite part, designing traps. The brass tacks that pin the hides to the wall.*

Once the concept of the trap is manifest, it is time to solidify the design with concrete planning and engineering concerns. Time to turn those gears in your head into gears under a pressure plate. Each subsection contains some functional considerations for the specific parts of the trap.

**Goal.** Ah, the bait. We discussed this before but only one example was offered. Loot is fine but simplistic. A reward is not always extrinsic. Put a switch on the wall and almost certainly someone will pull it, even if it has no discernible function. They might believe it opens a secret door, or closes a pit; they don't know and that in itself is enough of a bait. In this scenario, the trigger is pulling the lever, switch, handle, etc. Returning the switch to the upright position is a common failsafe but you would be surprised how few people think to do that. Dullards.

**MacGuffin.** I really hate getting caught in my own traps. Some trap designers use a MacGuffin, something that allows characters to

bypass the trap passively. Failsafe and passwords are a good measure to ensure you and your compatriots do not accidentally fall prey to your own dirty tricks. The possibilities for such MacGuffins are endless just be sure it is something the characters actually have a shot at getting, otherwise you are wasting time designing it.

*Time.* Now is the time to decide on initiative count for elements of complex traps (and sometimes simple traps too, see "Dancing Blades"). Time is reduced by increasing the DCs of the trap or the number of rolls needed to disable the trap. Consider the effects reducing time will have on other parts of the traps construction. Traps like the "Switch Cinch" (see the Traps chapter)are really effective when a time restraint is placed on them, like say a gelatinous cube slurping down the corridor or a damaging effect from another trap that is counting down. A trap will lose its immediacy and become a puzzle if there are no time constraints. Characters are free to try and try again until they succeed if they aren't racing the clock or at least in some kind of peril while negotiating the trap; so setting a DC is meaningless if they have time to perpetually reroll an ability check.

*Location.* If the characters are free to leave and come back, say so. Place traps where they pose a real danger. Doors are good places to set traps because characters will almost always check a door for a trap. It

would make sense that a door might be trapped and not a fountain as the door controls the ingress and egress from room to room and also blocks line of sight. That said, unusual trap placement can lead to some amusing outcomes. As before, limit these kinds of surprises as characters may begin to tire of such antics before long.

*Effect.* When the trap is triggered, what happens? Does the character roll a saving throw, is it an attack versus the character's armor class? Consider the difference between the two examples listed, which makes more sense given the intent and design? Play with the DC and damage. High DCs make damage more likely. Low damage acts only as a drain on healing resources rather than a real threat. Is there a danger other than damage to consider? Does a haunting cause disadvantage on certain rolls? Perhaps a condition like blindness or poisoned or restrained is more fitting. Using non-quantitative danger metrics can make balancing more of a challenge, but often it leads to more exciting gameplay. You can always up the XP rewards or treasure output if a threat was more dangerous than anticipated.

*Trigger.* The trigger has a lot to do with how the trap is meant to work. Most of the time there is no wrong answer when it comes to the trigger. It can be an aesthetic choice as opposed to an engineering choice. Deciding how the trap works

will suggest how it is triggered, the rest is just describing the action to the characters.

This activates the trap. There are four main kinds of triggers: Location, Proximity, Timed, and Environmental (for more, see the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). Deciding on either of the following triggers can add to a traps signature:

**Location.** The trap is triggered when a creature steps on a plate, trips a wire, etc.

**Proximity.** The trap is triggered when a creature enters within a certain area.

**Timed.** The trap is triggered when a creature enters and remains in the triggering area for a set amount of time.

**Environmental.** The trap is triggered when the triggering creature is detected by body heat, vibrations through the ground from footsteps, a vacuum released from opening a door, etc. (for more, see the *Book of Challenges*)

## Features of a Trap

Now that a trap has defined parameters, it's time to define the features of the trap. How difficult will it be to disarm? Does it reset? Why is it here? How can it be avoided? Trap design and placement can further stress overall design themes or just wreak havoc on unsuspecting characters. Use the following features to make traps more detailed:

**Appearance.** Attentive characters will always be gleaning information about the location based on the descriptions given. If the blades look like they were sharpened and the gears oiled, who did that? Who lit the torches in sconces. Why are the magical dweomers on the doors still strong? The characters may have been lead to believe this place was abandoned but evidence like refurbished traps may suggest otherwise.

**Difficulty Class (DC).** The result of a check or save needed to avoid the threat the trap poses. Bumping up the DC of the trap makes it more dangerous even if the damage is low. It is always good to include fewer traps but increase the DCs. It makes traps seem more dangerous.

**Reset or Reuse.** So again, if something is resetting the traps, it may still be here to check the trap (as in a restaining trap). See the section above (Appearance) for more on foreshadowing. Allowing characters to tinker with the trap and use it for their benefit lets those skill-heavy characters have a chance to get some time in the spotlight too. So often the trap bypass procedure is just disarming the trap, then character moves on to the next Wisdom (Perception) check and subsequent Dexterity, Wisdom, or Intelligence check to disable the trap / pick the lock / ad nauseam. Let the characters have a little fun; it is a non-verbal compliment on the traps intriguing design.

*Purpose.* Doors, stairs, and hallways make great places for traps. Seasoned characters know this whether they are aware of it or not. They will check for traps, and check if it is locked every time they approach a door. Use this knowledge when placing traps so that the trap has a purpose. Also, characters will check certain objects for traps. Treasure chests are a common item to be trapped (and locked); characters will proceed cautiously. Expect characters to look for secret doors behind the bookshelf as well. In that same room is a cot. Someone might search the cot but no one checks the cot for traps; what purpose would that trap serve? The cot might make for a good haunting but not a trap.

*Bypass, Failsafe, Safety.* Is there a switch that shuts it off, a MacGuffin that disables the trigger, a password that dispels the magical runes? If so, what is it and how can the characters get it. If there is such a thing, they should have a shot at getting it, even if they don't know how or when to use it. One clever trick is to plop it in a loot pile inside the dungeon. Smart characters may realize what it does and use it to great effect while leaving, bypassing all the traps they struggled with on the way that may have reset. See "When you Simply Must be a Jerk" for a clever spin on this scenario.

## CONSIDERATIONS BY TRAP TYPE & MECHANIC

There are two types of traps: mechanical and magical. Each of these has two subtypes: simple and complex. Each of these entries has game mechanics that can be tinkered with to create more interesting situations. Consider these options when creating the in-game effect mechanics for a trap:

*Mechanical Traps.* These work via mechanical means: gears, pulleys, inertia, etc. They are usually disarmed with skill checks. Are the inner workings accessible? Can they be destroyed so that even if the trap is capable of resetting, it can't?

*Magical Traps.* What spells created the trap and what spells negate it? What is the trigger? Does dispel magic work? If it doesn't, why not? Consider what would be the trap's failsafe based on its construction and use that to determine what it would take to disarm it.

*Simple Traps.* Generally, the effect is triggered and it is resolved. It may need to be reset manually; how is this done? Most simple traps lose a great deal of their effectiveness if they are found before the triggering event. Keep this in mind for low damage, restraining, delay, and alarm traps.

*Complex Traps.* With complex traps, Initiative is timing. A high initiative trap effect is good for restraining characters and subjecting them to lower initiative damage effects. Low initiative effects are

great for damage effects and status ailments like poison and suffocation.

**Active Elements.** The more active elements a trap has, the more dangerous it is and the less time characters have to disable it or escape. Try to use an inverse proportion for DC and damage if the trap has numerous active elements, like an effect that has a low DC but high damage, or a high DC but low damage. One can also lower the DCs and damage to make the trap less lethal if many active elements are involved.

**Dynamic Elements.** Dynamic elements drastically reduce the amount of time the characters have to overcome the trap. The longer the trap is running, the more influence the dynamic effect has. A countdown counter (every 3 rounds) could be added to a dynamic effect if it is too intense.

**Constant Elements.** Constant Elements disrupt attempts to disable parts of the trap. As the complex trap is gradually disabled, it's elements can become less effective. Constant elements can target those attempting to disarm the trap. The trap may have 'safe spots' in its area of effect for the characters to discover as they work on the trap. As they make progress on the trap, the safe spots may get larger. The DCs and damage from the traps elements could lower as more of the trap is disabled.

## A Word on Puzzles

Puzzles can indeed be fun (meta-gaming aside) and clever designers can work them into traps.

Take this example: in some other area nearby, the puzzle is presented obviously. The characters can stay and solve it, or move on and come back later, if at all. The reward for solving the puzzle, in addition to perhaps some combination of experience points and loot, can be a MacGuffin that allows the characters safe passage through a particularly deadly trap or protection from a sinister haunting. This lets the puzzle sleuths get some time in the spotlight too and saves the party some trouble later on.

This is a plausible solution for old, abandoned places that remain heavily trapped. Even the most powerful characters die. They die knowing the magical wards they set will fade and the traps they build will decay and break. They die knowing thieves and looters will come to raid their troves eventually. Why not set a trap that can't be bypassed, make a lock that can't be picked? A puzzle will ensure that only the worthy few will reach the most prized treasures. When I die, I don't want some slack-jawed farm boy on his first heist picking through my vaults!

I have only two cautions for using puzzles: do not force characters to solve them before they can continue and do not (as dungeon master) give the characters the answer.

Not forcing the characters to solve puzzles is as simple as it sounds. The doors shouldn't lock behind them. Don't put a door puzzle on the only door that leads to where the characters need to go. Puzzles aren't dangerous by nature, they are a diversion and they can, if used improperly, eat up a lot of table time.
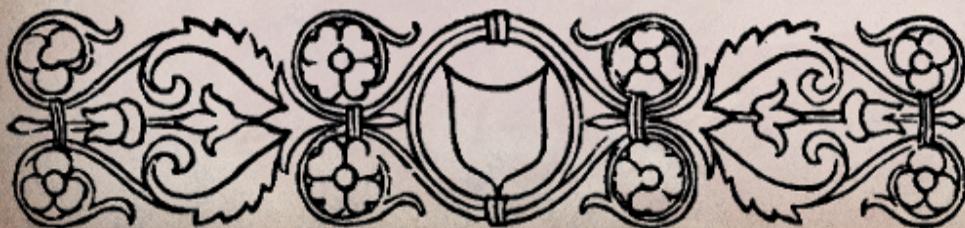
The second rule is don't give away the answer, and by extension, the prize. This is a common mistake. Characters may get frustrated because they can't solve the puzzle but that is no reason to spoil a clever design. Remind them that they can (and should) come back to it later. Characters will be looking for hints as they continue the main story arc and DMs can drop clues as they progress. Remember that characters have no idea what the reward is for solving the puzzle so if they really struggle and have good ideas, but just can't figure it out, some more loot can be added to the reward to soothe a sore ego or two, if needed.
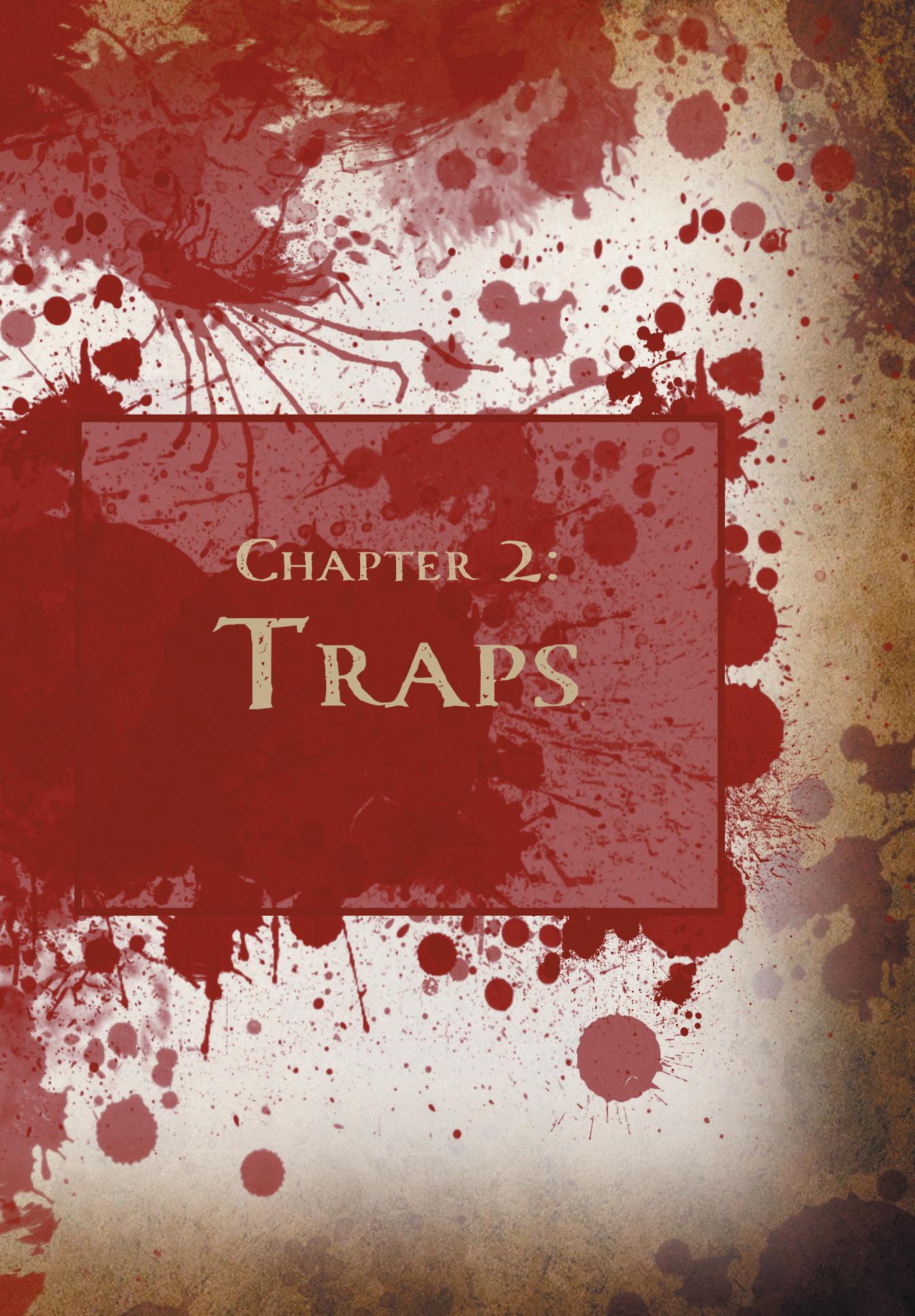
*I would be remiss if I didn't at least mention hazardous terrain in this screed. Hazardous terrain is really great for controlling movement. I have a thriving patch of Grab Grass surrounding my villa for just such a purpose.*

## HAZARDOUS TERRAIN

Once characters realize a certain area is dangerous, they tend to avoid it. This can give DMs who use it judiciously a lot of power because they can control where characters go without being accused of "railroading". Railroading is when a character's choices seem to have no effect on the game's course and all choices lead to the same outcome. Once the characters get the MacGuffin (see "failsafe"), they can come back later and traverse the area with impunity. They can, of course, slog through the hazardous terrain but make it clear that the characters are aware of other options.

I can hear you shouting "Enough! Get on with it!" from here, so here we go.

# Chapter 2:
# Traps

# All That Glitters

*Simple magical trap (levels and threat vary)*

What adventurer doesn't like treasure? When the hapless fools open the door to this room, they see a carpet of glittering gold and gems, and a wooden treasure chest is invitingly open on the far wall, away from the door.

The floor is a specially-modified *wall of force* covered with illusory treasure. Prodding the treasure with a 10-foot pole reveals nothing but assurances the treasure is real; the coins and gems move, and the floor is solid—until a creature weighing more than 75 pounds steps on it. That character plunges 20 feet into a 20-foot-deep pool containing a vicious, hungry predator of your choice. It might be a swarm of quippers or giant shark in a pool of water. It might be a gelatinous cube that entirely fills the bottom of the pit. It's up to you!

***Trigger.*** A creature that steps on the floor dispels the *wall of force* and the illusion.

***Effect.*** The triggering creature makes a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On a success, the creature manages to grab the doorjamb before it falls. On a failure, the creature falls into the water/puddle of black puddings/whatever you've chosen.

***Countermeasures.*** A creature with a passive Perception of 16 or higher notices something isn't quite right about the treasure. Using *mage hand* or some other magical means to remove a piece of treasure causes the treasure to disappear when it leaves the room. The contents of the room radiate strong illusion magic. A successful DC 15 *dispel magic* destroys the illusion and the wall of force.

# BANDALOO'S WATERY GRAVE

*Complex Trap (level 5-10, dangerous threat)*

A millennia ago, the master gnomish architect and engineer, Bandaloo Springwinder, created this multi-stage trap to protect his most valuable designs. Since then, its construction has been passed from master to apprentice amongst the best builders in gnomish history.

A large pool (30' x 10') contains a chest bolted to the bottom on a cross-shaped stone brace beneath ten feet of water. The pool is lined with exquisite ceramic tiles which are laden with gnomish runes and pictograms which connect to a mechanical release. The water is unnaturally clear and the distortion makes the depth of the pool difficult to determine without entering it.

**Trigger.** There are two ways the first part of the trap is triggered, either by attempting to move the chest or by depressing any tile inside the pool that is not meant to disable the internal mechanisms.

**Effect.** If the trap is triggered, a stone slab set into the wall, 2 inches below the surface of the water, slides quickly into place trapping anyone below. Anyone unable to breathe underwater will eventually drown.

**Countermeasures.** If the stone slab is jammed with iron spikes (keeping the lid from closing) or if the correct tile(s) are pressed, the trap is disabled. Detecting the slab requires a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check; due to the distortions created by the pool, this check is made at disadvantage from above the surface of the water. A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check and 20 minutes will revel the correct tiles to depress; add an additional 2 to the check and an extra 20 minutes per additional tile in the sequence. If the correct tile(s) are pressed, the floor of the pool slowly drops ten feet leaving the chest suspended on the stone cross which acts as a bridge. This also disables the second part of the trap.

**The Chest.** The chest is watertight and also trapped. Inside the locked chest is an iron strongbox and an alchemical mixture that explodes when it comes into contact with water. The mixture is completely obscured from the outside, and a successful DC 25 Intelligence (Investigation) check is required to detect it. If the chest is opened underwater, an explosion occurs, requiring anyone in the pool to make a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or take 22 (4d10) bludgeoning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one, as the shockwave bounces off the walls of the pool and through the water. If the save is failed by 5 or more, the adventurer is also stunned for 2d4 rounds. The strongbox protects its contents from

## Piranha Zombie

*Tiny undead, neutral evil*

**Armor Class** 10
**Hit Points** 11 (3d4+3)
**Speed** Swim 30 ft

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 6 (-2) | 14 (+2) | 12 (+1) | 1 (-5) | 6 (-2_ | 5 (-3) |

**Saving Throws** Wis +0
**Damage Immunities** poison
**Condition Immunities** poisoned
**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8
**Languages** None
**Challenge** 1/8 (25 XP)

*Undead Fortitude.* If damage reduces the piranha zombie to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5+the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the piranha zombie drops to 1 hit point instead.

### Actions
*Bite.* Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 0 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d2 + 2) piercing damage.

this explosion. Attempting to break the bolted chest free of its moorings requires a successful DC 22 Strength check.

*Variants.* Over the centuries, other builders have tried to add their own flair to this construction, the most notable of which is a hidden side chamber that releases a number of Zombie Piranha into the pool when the lid slams shut.

## Vendamoor's Watery Grave of Doom

The arch-engineer Vendamoor Pryhammer constructed a version of this trap that replaces the water with a massive gelatinous cube. He wore a medallion that made him immune to acid damage in order to enter the pool.

*Construction.* Building this trap requires a master gnomish engineer who has a copy of the diagrams needed to do so. Building a version that has only one tile takes two months and costs 40,000gp. For each additional tile in the combination, it takes an additional week and 5,000gp. The secrets of this trap are contained in a copy of Bandaloo's Codex which would fetch a hefty price to the right buyer (4,000gp).

*Gelatinous cubes are wonderful things. Not only do they make great guardians in a dungeon complex, they clean up after themselves and require very little maintenance. I use one in my own home. Her name is Verax. Couldn't say why.*

## Bell On The Door, The

*Simple trap (level 1- 4, moderate threat)*

This trap is an effective alarm measure. Some intelligent races put bells on doors and curtains so that even the sneakiest of thieves ring the dinner bell when they make an entrance.

*Trigger.* A creature that opens the door or curtain triggers the trap.

*Effect.* This trap is as simple as it sounds; a bell is attached to a door or a curtain and set in such a manner that it rings when the door or curtain is opened. If the creature is trying to open the door or curtain quietly, they must roll a Dexterity (Stealth) ability check with disadvantage.

*Countermeasures.* A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the trap as the creature hears the bell ring when the creature opens the portal. If they have not seen the door or curtain open and not heard the bell, they have disadvantage on their ability check to locate the trap on the other side. A successful DC 13 Dexterity check using thieves' tools removes the bell silently from the door or curtain once it has been found. The trap can be reset by putting the bell back on the door or curtain.

*Variant Effect.* When the bell rings, a wave of psychic energy strikes all living creatures within 10 feet of the bell. A creature in the area must make a DC 15 Constitution

saving throw. On a failure, a creature takes 22 (4d10) psychic damage, is stunned, and its turn ends. At the start of each of its turns, the creature takes an additional 22 (4d10) psychic damage. The creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success, but each time after the first the save DC increases by 2 as the cacophony in its head increases. If a creature is reduced to 0 hit points or less, its head explodes and it dies.

**Variant Countermeasures.** A creature that receives a *lesser restoration* spell automatically succeeds on its Constitution saving throw.

## Buzz Off!

*Simple mechanical trap (levels 1-4, dangerous threat)*

Everyone knows an unattended treasure chest in an empty room is totally irresistible to D&D players. They either charge right in (if they're new) or they spend hours trying to find the fiendish trap (if they're veterans). Here's a variation on the tempting-chest-in-an-empty-room trap.

**Trigger.** A creature opens the chest.

**Effect.** The door slams shut and locks. Nozzles spray the room (and everyone in it) with sweet, sweet strawberry jam. A moment later, 1 **giant wasp** per character materializes in the room. The wasps

are so attracted by the jam they go mad; they have advantage on attack rolls they make against creatures covered in jam. In addition, they have disadvantage on saving throws they make, and attacks against them have advantage.

**Deadly Variation.** Honey sprays out, and 1 **brown bear** per character materializes. The bears are so attracted by the honey they go mad; they have advantage on attack rolls they make against creatures covered in honey. In addition, they have disadvantage on saving throws they make, and attacks against them have advantage.

**Countermeasures.** A successful DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check notices small holes in the walls from which a sweet smell emanates. Stuffing the holes with cloth or wax blocks the nozzles. Spells capable of sensing magic, such as *detect magic*, reveal the chest radiates strong conjuration magic. A dispel magic spell destroys the trap on the chest. A successful DC 16 Dexterity check with thieves tools unlocks the door. A successful DC 18 Strength check forces the door to open.

## Catastrophe

*Simple trap (level 1-4, deadly threat)*

This deadly trap was first encountered in the lair of Axium the Unbalanced, a wizard whose already tenuous grip on sanity was permanently severed when she embraced lichdom.

In an otherwise small room (which is nevertheless just large enough for all

members of the party to fit), on the wall opposite the door is a wooden plaque on which is mounted the nether half of a common house cat, including the tail. Affixed to the plaque is a small brass label on which is scribed "Aren't puns wonderful?"

**Trigger.** This trap is activated when a creature steps close enough to the cat-ass-trophy to read the brass label. When it does so, the intruder steps on a hidden pressure plate, releasing a magical gout of flame from the cat's taxidermied anus.

**Effect.** The trap activates when more than 20 pounds of weight is placed on the pressure plate, causing the statue to release a 30-foot cone of fire. Each creature in the fire must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A creature which is reduced to 0 hit points by the flames immediately dies, its body reduced to ash.

A few seconds after the flames die down, long enough for the heroes go finish shouting in pain, the ceiling falls in. A creature which didn't immediately flee the room when the flames fired from the cat's anus must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) bludgeoning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Once the trap is triggered, the floor of the room is filled with rubble and becomes difficult terrain.

**Countermeasures.** The DC is 15 to spot the pressure plate, as well as faint scorch marks on the floor and walls. A spell or other effect that can sense the presence of magic, such as *detect magic*, reveals an aura of evocation magic around the cat-ass-trophy.

Wedging an iron spike or another object under the pressure plate prevents the trap from activating. A successful *dispel magic* (DC 13) cast on the cat's ass destroys the trap.

# Cheap Shitty Traps Like Kobolds Use

Or goblins, or ewoks, or any other group of people with only a tenuous grasp or mastery of technology—or who have to make do with what they've got, like guerrilla fighters in the Underdark. These can be sprinkled anywhere they make sense.

## Kobold Manticore

*Simple mechanical trap (level 1-4, dangerous threat)*

This trap uses a tripwire to release a sapling which has been bent and twisted into a living spring. Sharpened sticks have been lashed to the sapling. The tripwire is 3 inches off the ground and stretches between two trees, across the path. The sapling is hidden by foliage.

**Trigger.** A creature that steps on the tripwire triggers the trap.

**Effect.** The trap makes an attack against the triggering creature. The attack has a +8 attack bonus and deals 11 (2d10) piercing damage on a hit. This attack can't gain advantage or disadvantage.

**Countermeasures.** The DC to spot the tripwire and sapling is 10. A successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools breaks the tripwire harmlessly. A character without thieves' tools can attempt this check with disadvantage using any edged weapon or edged tool. On a failed check, the trap triggers.

## Foot Stuck In A Hole

*Simple mechanical trap (level 1-4, dangerous threat)*

This is nothing more than a small pit, about 2 feet deep and 1 foot across, which has been concealed by foliage. In the bottom of the pit are sharpened wooden stakes that skewer the foot of the fool who fails to spot it.

**Trigger.** When a creature steps on the cover, their foot breaks through.

**Effect.** The trap makes an attack against the triggering creature. The attack has a +8 attack bonus and deals 5 (1d10) piercing damage on a hit. This attack can't gain advantage or disadvantage. A creature hit by the trap has its speed reduced to 0. It can't move until it breaks free of the trap, which requires a successful DC 15 Strength check by the creature or another creature adjacent to the trap.

**Countermeasures.** A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check discerns an absence of foot traffic over the section of ground that forms the pit's cover. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check is necessary to confirm that the trapped

section of ground is actually the cover of a pit.

**Refinement.** Truly vindictive kobolds will install stakes in the sidewalls of the pit. These stakes are angled down. When a Medium or larger creature triggers the trap, these stakes close around the creature's leg. Breaking free of the barbs deals 5 (2d4) slashing damage to the trapped creature.

## Spring-Loaded Fire
*Simple mechanical trap (level 1-4, dangerous threat)*

This trap uses a tripwire to release two vials of alchemist's fire. The tripwire is 3 inches off the ground and stretches between two trees, across the path. The vials are concealed in small, spring-loaded containers hidden by foliage.

**Trigger.** A creature that steps on the tripwire triggers the trap.

**Effect.** When triggered, the springs launch the vials into the air, where they explode, showering a 10-foot-radius area with sticky goo which is also on fire. The triggering creature and other creatures in the area must make a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, a creature takes 5 (2d4) fire damage at the start of each of its turns. A creature can end this damage by using its action to make a DC 10 Dexterity check to extinguish the flames.

**Countermeasures.** The DC to spot the trip wire is 10. A successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools breaks the tripwire harmlessly. A character without thieves' tools can attempt this check with disadvantage using any edged weapon or edged tool. On a failed check, the trap triggers.

## Bucket of Wriggly Death
*Simple mechanical trap (level 1-4, deadly threat)*

Precariously balanced on top of a slightly-ajar door is a bucket. Yeah, just like the old "bucket o' paint" gag from the movies. The difference is this bucket is full of a **swarm of poisonous snakes**.

**Trigger.** A Small or larger creature touches the door, triggering the trap.

**Effect.** When triggered, the bucket falls, dumping deadly snakes over the creature that touched the door. The snakes immediately attack.

**Countermeasures.** The DC to spot the bucket is 15. A Medium or larger character can simply reach up and tip the bucket onto the far side of the door, but this releases the swarm into the room. A Small creature can use a pole or tool to do the same. A Medium or larger creature can attempt to reach up and remove the bucket keeping the snakes within. A creature making the attempt succeeds on a successful DC 12 Dexterity check.

## Chest Go Boom
*Simple mechanical and magical trap (levels 1-10, dangerous to deadly threat)*

This chest looks perfectly normal and mundane, made of wood dark with age, bound in black iron, securely closed with locks. One of the locks has a very real poison needle trap, which will indeed kill the unwary or unlucky. But the real killer is the combustible poison gas in the second trap, the one that's much more difficult to detect—if the overconfident

**Chest Go Boom**

**Trigger.** If the chest is opened without the magical trap being disabled, it bursts in a thunderous explosion.

**Effect.** When the trap triggers, a cloud of gas fills the space within 15 feet of the chest. The cloud spreads around corners. A creature in the cloud must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. 1 round later, a metal spring unwinds, striking a flint against steel, igniting the gas in a blast of fire. Each creature in the cloud must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 11 (2d10) fire damage and 11 (2d10) thunder damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. In addition, unsecured objects that are completely within the area of effect are automatically pushed 10 feet away from the chest by the explosion, which emits a thunderous boom audible out to 300 feet.

rogue even thinks to look for it after finding the needle.

## Poison Needle

**Trigger.** When the trap is triggered, the needle extends 3 inches straight out from the lock.

**Effect.** A creature within range takes 1 piercing damage and 22 (4d10) poison damage, and must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 hour.

**Countermeasures.** A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check allows a character to deduce the trap's presence from alterations made to the lock to accommodate the needle. A successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools disarms the trap, removing the needle from the lock. Unsuccessfully attempting to pick the lock triggers the trap.

## Burny Poison

**Countermeasures.** A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check deduces the presence of the trap through the design of the lock and arcane sigils on the surface of the chest. A spell or other effect that can sense the presence of magic, such as *detect magic*, reveals an aura of evocation magic in the chest. A successful *dispel magic* (DC 13) cast on the chest destroys the trap, while the trigger can be disabled

with a DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools.

# Coin In The Fountain

*Simple trap (level 1- 4, dangerous threat)*

A creature finds an ornately carved wall fountain of a lion's head. Its jaws are open and its mouth is filled with fresh, clean water—and a tempting gold coin. The water flows like slobber through the lion's teeth, over its lips, and trickles into a small basin shaped like a food dish on the floor below.

***Trigger.*** A creature attempts to take the coin.

***Effect.*** When a creature attempts to take the coin, the lion's jaws animate and clamp shut. The triggering creature must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw, taking 11 (2d10) piercing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. In addition, the lion's bust is magically animated and attacks any adjacent creature with its powerful jaws. Each attack has a +8 attack bonus and deals 11 (2d10) piercing damage on a hit. This attack cannot gain advantage or disadvantage. The lion has a movement of zero and can attack twice per turn on initiative count 20. It is AC 17 with 18 hit points.

***Countermeasures.*** A successful DC 17 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals the transmutation dweomer that animates the trap and purifies the water. If the fountain is destroyed, the magic dissipates and the fountain becomes inert. Casting *dispel magic* and similar spells of 3rd level or higher also renders the trap inert. If the fountain is destroyed or the magic is dispelled, the water putrifies. Creatures who have already taken a drink from the fountain are poisoned until they complete a short rest. If the gold coin is returned, the fountain becomes dormant again.

### Coin in the Fountain

## DANCING BLADES

Hazim Al-Siddiq was a great wizard known for his dazzling evocations and conjurations. He is also known to have employed this devious magical trap in his palace. From a distance, there appears to be a finely made scimitar(s) on the 5-foot space the trap occupies. A closer inspection could lead to a would-be thief being sliced to ribbons.

**Trigger.** A creature that enters any space within 5 feet of the trapped space triggers the trap.

**Initiative.** The trap activates on initiative count 20.

**Effect.** When the trap is triggered, the creature(s) triggering it must roll initiative. Creatures who act before the trap may move away from the trap and avoid the slashing blades before they strike. On the traps initiative, the trap makes two attacks with each scimitar (maximum of 4) against any creature within 5-feet of the trapped space. Each attack has a +8 bonus and deals 9 (2d6+2) slashing damage on a hit. This attack cannot gain advantage or disadvantage. Due to the chaotic nature of the swirling blades, this attack cannot score a critical hit.

**Countermeasures.** A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals the trap. It seems odd to the character who succeeds on this check that such a finely made weapon would simply be discarded in such an overt location. Once the trap is triggered, a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check allows the creature to recall the magical nature of the trap and that casting *dispel magic* will render the trap permanently disabled. Spells of a similar nature that are 3rd level or higher will also disable the trap. Once the trap's magic is dispelled, the swords fall gently to the ground. The swords are finely made non-magical scimitars. Creatures can choose to attack and damage the sword(s), which have AC 19 and have 10 hit points each. Destroying the sword(s) renders the trap inert.

## DOORS, THE

This one is so simple they'll never see it coming. The trap consists of a set of bronze doors. Each door 15 feet wide and 30 feet tall. Make them shiny bright as though new, or crusted with verdigris. In any case, it's embossed with bas relief depicting gruesome scenes of slaughter and mayhem: People being devoured by dragons, dismembered by demons, eviscerated by elementals...you get the idea. Cartouches in the doors bear inscriptions which say "Do not touch!" in Common, Elvish, Dwarvish, Celestial, Infernal, and Draconic. The doors are ever so slightly ajar.

### THE WALL CAME TUMBLIN' DOWN
A variation on this is a tall, wide stone wall around a regular old dungeon door. Experienced players will, if they can, have their characters stand off to one side in case a white-hot jet of flame fires out of the door or something when it's opened. The door is unlocked and isn't stuck. But when someone opens it, the wall itself topples onto the characters. The only one who escapes unscathed is the one holding the doorknob.

The doors are also delicately balanced. When a creature touches them, they're designed to fall outwards, onto whoever fails to heed the warning. And seeing as they weigh about 40 tons each, that's not going to end well.

**Trigger.** A creature touches the doors.

**Effect.** The multi-ton doors fall over, smashing the feckless idiots to paste. The players roll all the dice they own and total the result. Yes, all of them. All of them, which makes one huge number. That's how much bludgeoning damage the doors deal when they fall on a creature. Creatures can make a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw. On a success, the creature takes half damage. As if that's going to help.

**Countermeasures.** A successful DC 22 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) notices the doors are delicately balanced. There is no way to physically alter the balance, because that means you have to touch the door. The only way past is by being ethereal or in gaseous form or a Tiny creature or by some means that doesn't touch the doors. Like, at all.

## Faux Pas

*Simple trap (level 1- 4, moderate threat)*

This trap is yet another take on a small outdoors pit trap. A hole is dug in about an 18-inch diameter circle about 1-foot deep. Sharpened sticks are driven into the ground around the rim at a downward angle. The trap is covered with leaves and otherwise hidden. When someone steps in it, their foot is pinned in place by the

Faux Pas
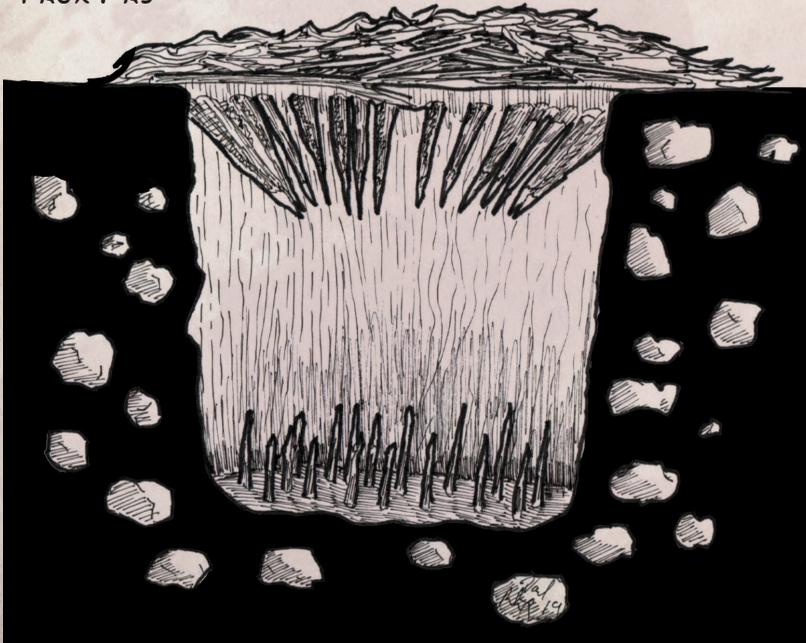
stakes. Something akin to caltrops is usually placed in the bottom of the pit to encourage the victim's reflexive reaction to just yank out their foot, causing even more damage.

**Trigger.** A creature that steps on the affected space triggers the trap.

**Effect.** This simple pit trap is placed in a 5-foot space and is triggered when a character enters the space. The creature must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. On a successful save, the creature catches itself before their foot is caught and instinctively steps back. On a failed save, the creature steps fully into the pit and takes 3 (1d6) slashing damage from the stakes and 3 (1d6) piercing damage from the caltrops (if any). The affected creature must then make a DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) ability check. On a success, the creature realizes that in order to prevent further injury, they must remove the stakes pinning their foot in place. Doing so is an action that does provoke an attack of opportunity and disables the trap.

Creatures that fail this check immediately pull their foot out of the hole and take an additional 7 (2d6) piercing

Flash & Thunder



Flash & Thunder

damage as the stakes gouge their feet. Taking this additional damage reduces the creature's walking speed by 10 feet until the creature regains at least 1 hit point, or the wound is treated with a successful DC 17 Wisdom (Medicine) check.

**Countermeasures.** A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the trap. The trap can be avoided or disabled by using an action to remove the stakes from the rim of the hole. The trap can be reset by driving the stakes through the rim of the trap.

## Flash & Thunder

*Simple trap (level 1-4, dangerous threat)*

These simple magical traps were created by scribing runes on prepared surfaces. Magic-using creatures sometimes leave these traps where the affected tomb robbers can be collected by minions for questioning.

**Trigger.** A creature that moves within 10 feet of the trap triggers it.

**Effect.** When it goes off, the rune releases a pulse of blinding light and disorientating magical energy. Each creature within 20 feet of the rune must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw. On a success, the creature is blinded and incapacitated for 1 minute. A creature that succeeds by 5 or more isn't affected at all. On a failure, a creature is blinded and incapacitated for 1 hour. A creature that fails by 5 or more is blinded and stunned for 2d6 hours.

**Countermeasures.** A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals

the rune. A spell or other effect that can sense the presence of magic, such as *detect magic*, reveals an aura of evocation magic around the rune.

Defacing the rune disables it, but as the rune is carved into a hard surface (rock or wood), physically defacing it is a difficult task.

A successful *dispel magic* (DC 13) cast on the rune destroys it.

## Floor Winch

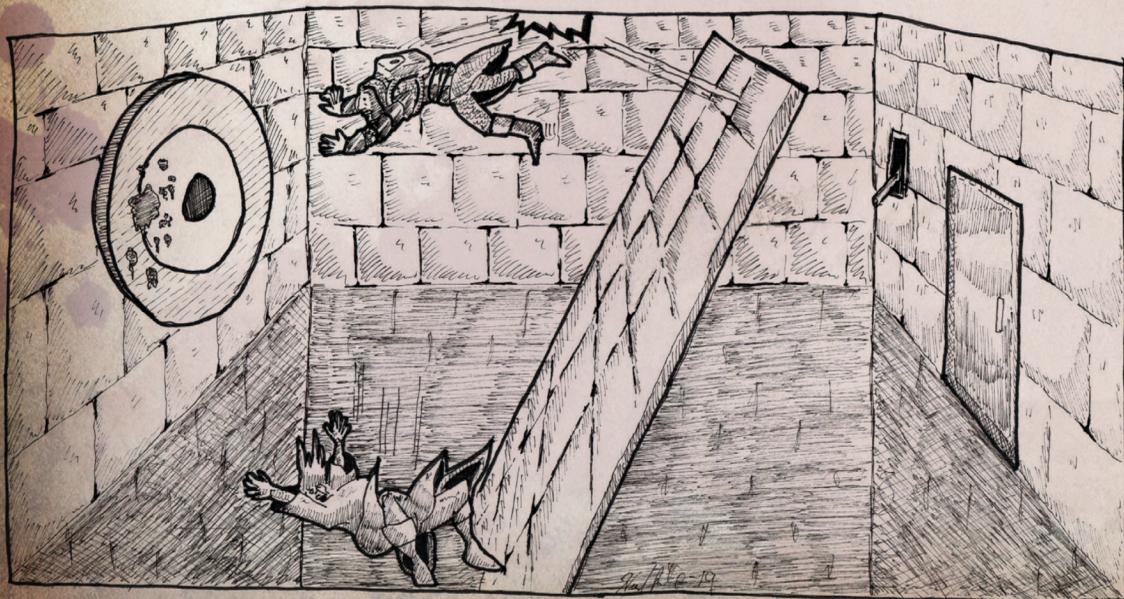*Simple trap (level 11- 16, deadly threat)*

This trap is set in a 10-foot by 10-foot square room. A lever is on one of the walls; when a creature pulls the lever, they release the spring-loaded winch and the floor spins violently on a steel axis, flinging everyone in the room against the ceiling and wall.

**Trigger.** A creature that pulls the lever triggers the trap.

**Effect.** When a creature pulls the lever, every character in the room is smashed against the walls and ceiling by the catapulting floor and must make a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw, taking 99 (18d10) bludgeoning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

**Countermeasures.** A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals the trap as the character can find no discernable function for the lever and deduces that it is probably a bad idea to pull it. Incorporeal creatures or creatures under the effect of a *gaseous form* or similar spell or effect are not subject to this trap.

FLOOR WINCH

# Gibbering Head

A severed head lies upon the cold floor. As you approach, its eyes shoot open and it begins to spew a cacophony of curses, blasphemies, and hate. Your darkest fears and sins flash before your eyes.

A necromancer's failed attempt to create a **flameskull**, this cursed, disembodied head is often left immobile, waiting to probe the minds of any sentient creatures who wander near. When a creature approaches, it attempts to probe the creature's memories for fears or past dark deeds, twisting them into a horrifying psychic assault that often ends in the target being enslaved.



Gibbering Head

***Trigger.*** A creature that can hear enters the gibbering head's line of sight triggers this trap.

***Effect.*** The triggering creature must make a DC 13 Charisma saving throw. On a failure, the creature takes 5 (1d10) psychic damage and has disadvantage on its next attack roll. On a success, the creature takes half as much damage and doesn't have disadvantage on its next roll. If the creature fails the save by more than 5, the creature is also cursed with magical deformities. While deformed, the creature has its speed reduced by half and has disadvantage on ability checks, saving throws, and attack rolls based on Strength or Dexterity.

A creature that can't hear the gibbering head is immune to this effect. The transformed creature can repeat the saving throw whenever it finishes a long rest, ending the effect on itself on a success. At the start of each of the creatures turns while it can hear the gibbering head, the head continues to shout at the creature, continuing the effect of the trap.

***Countermeasures.*** A creature with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 15 or higher is able to hear faint chaotic whispers before entering the chamber where the gibbering head lies.

***Hear no Evil.*** A creature that can hear who succeeds a DC 10 Wisdom (Religion) or Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals the source of the effect. Creatures can avoid being affected by covering their ears. Alternately, casting the *silence* spell or similar effect renders the gibbering head ineffective.

***Attack.*** A creature can attack and destroy a gibbering head with brute force. The head has an AC 10, 10 hit points, and the Undead Fortitude trait with a Constitution bonus of +2.

# I Believe I Can Fly

By the time characters reach Tier 2, they're familiar with spells and magic items that allow them to transcend the law of gravity, and likely have access to them. Potions of gaseous form, slippers of spider climbing, spells like *fly* and *levitate*—a vertical shaft is hardly an obstacle to them.

Unless you get clever.

Some people like to put beholders into such places, but you don't really need that. They're notoriously unreliable. All you need is to make their only way forward a 10-foot by 10-foot, 100-foot-long vertical shaft and a clever person to cast some spells. Oh, and you need to be cleverer than the heroes who want to kick in your door and take your stuff.

## Glyph of Warding

**Trigger.** 50 feet up the shaft is a *spell glyph of warding*. When a creature comes within 5 feet of it, it triggers.

**Effect.** The glyph casts *dispel magic* on the area within 20 feet of it, using a 7th-level spell slot.

**Countermeasures.** When a creature comes within 10 feet of the glyph, it spots the magical rune on a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check. The rune can be destroyed with a successful *dispel magic*.

## Antimagic Field

**Trigger.** At the top of the shaft is a permanent antimagic field.

**Effect.** A creature using magic to travel up the shaft quite suddenly has a very bad day.

**Countermeasures.** Physically climb up and around it.

In both cases, all you really need to do is trust in skill and physical abilities rather than using magic to do the heavy lifting. The shaft's walls are rough enough that a creature can physically climb it pretty easily—all it takes is a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check. If the lead climber takes the time to use ropes and pitons, climbers who follow the first make their Strength (Athletics) checks with advantage.

# Imitation is the Sincerest Form of Slaughter

This isn't so much a trap as an encounter, but it's in here because everyone forgets about mimics these days. Here's an amped-up mimic you can use to catch the heroes with their chain-mail trousers down. But if they win through, they get some really shiny things. If they win.

Remember, a single successful mimic encounter creates an unnatural paranoia among the players, lasting for the rest of the session if not their entire gaming careers. You owe it to them to make sure they live the trope.

Add a rectangular room to your dungeon, entered by one door. Read or paraphrase the following:

> The door opens into the narrow wall of a 50-foot by 20-foot room. On the end away from you there are three archery targets, made of rotting straw, wood, and leather straps. Next to the door is a barrel half full of rotten arrows, and lying on the floor next to it is a warped longbow. Halfway down the room on the left-hand wall, pegs driven into the stonework hold rusty, decrepit longswords, spears, and battleaxes. On the right-hand wall is a weapons rack. Interestingly, though the other items in this room are clearly old and neglected, the weapons remaining on the rack—a longsword and a halberd—are shiny and well maintained.

The weapons rack is 6 feet tall, 10 feet wide, and 2 feet deep. It contains the mouldering remains of 3 spears, 2 greataxes, and the shiny weapons. Spells such as detect magic reveal the shiny weapons to be magical. The archery targets show signs of use but are otherwise unremarkable.

**Trigger.** A living creature comes within 5 feet of the "weapons rack."

**Effect.** The "weapons rack", which is really a powerful **elder mimic** (see Appendix), springs to life and attacks.

**Countermeasures.** A DC 22 Wisdom (Perception) check notices a slight twitch of the mimic's eyelid. A creature must be within 10 feet of the mimic to notice the twitch, and such a creature isn't surprised the first round of combat.

**Tactics.** The elder mimic attacks with its longsword and halberd. If it is reduced to less than half its hit point maximum, it surrenders. Remember, it's intelligent and can speak rudimentary Common. It bargains with its magic weapons; if the heroes let it depart alive, it gives the weapons to the party.

**Treasure.** The weapons consist of a *+1 halberd* and a longsword which is enchanted never to rust (consider it a magic weapon for the purposes of overcoming resistance to damage from nonmagical weapons).

# It's Log, It's Log, It's Big, It's Heavy, It's Wood

*Simple mechanical trap (level 1-4, dangerous threat)*

This is a simple trap that uses a great big log to crush the creature who triggers it into paste.

A large log—I mean big, like 3 feet in diameter by 10 feet long—is suspended from the ceiling on ropes. A rope is attached to the far end (the end away from the door) and run through greased metal rings to the knob on the inside of the door. Closing the door pulls the log back. Opening the door releases the log. Opening the door really quickly, like characters do when they make a Strength check to force open a door in a dungeon, lets the log fly toward the idiot tough guy with enough newtons to turn him into a Fig Newton.

**Trigger.** A creature that opens the door triggers the trap.

**Effect.** The trap makes an attack against the triggering creature. The attack has a +8 attack bonus and deals 22 (4d10) bludgeoning damage on a hit. This attack can't

gain advantage or disadvantage. A creature hit by the trap must make a DC 15 Strength saving throw. On a failure, the creature is thrown 20 feet away from the door and lands prone. If a wall or some other solid surface is closer than 20 feet from the door, the creature takes an additional 1d6 bludgeoning damage for every 10 feet it flies. On a success, the creature falls prone.

**Countermeasures.** A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that the door isn't stuck or locked; it's under a considerable amount of tension and the only thing holding it in place is the latch. A failed check shows the door is stuck. (You know what'll happen next! One of the characters will want to do a Strength check to force it open. That's when you clap your hands in delight.)

Opening the door slowly and carefully lets the log come to rest without danger. In order to do so, the creature that opens the door must make a successful DC 15 Strength check. Failure means the trap triggers as above. Failure by more than 5 indicates that the creature is flung into the log, taking damage as above and automatically failing the Strength saving throw.

## Kelvin's Ice Tomb
*Simple trap (level 5-10, deadly threat)*

A popular choice of trap built by the goblins who infest ice-riddled mountains, this trap is best placed near ledges where creatures want to descend. The goblins use buckets of water to build up a slide that looks stable, but is deceptively thin.

The outside edges of the slide is thicker, which is how the goblins descend using the slide.
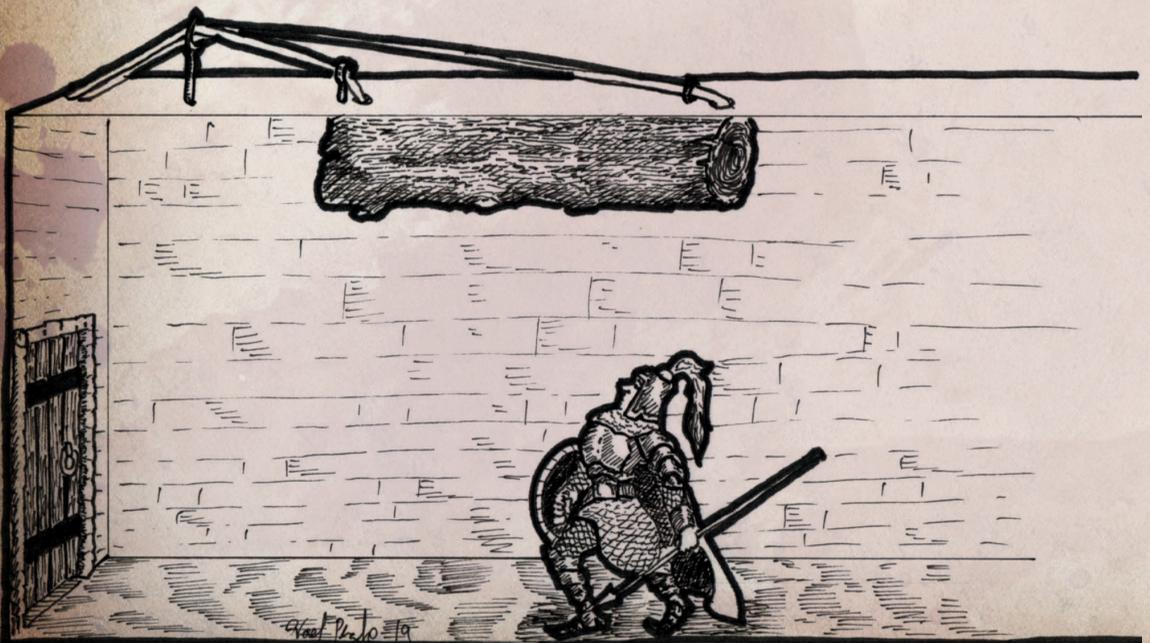
*Trigger.* A creature that weighs more than 50 lbs uses the slide without specifying they're using the outside edge.

*Effect.* Falling creatures must make a Dexterity saving throw (DC 15), taking 4d10 piercing damage from ice covered stalagmites below, or half as much on a success.

*Countermeasures.* A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the trap, as well as the safer outside edges.
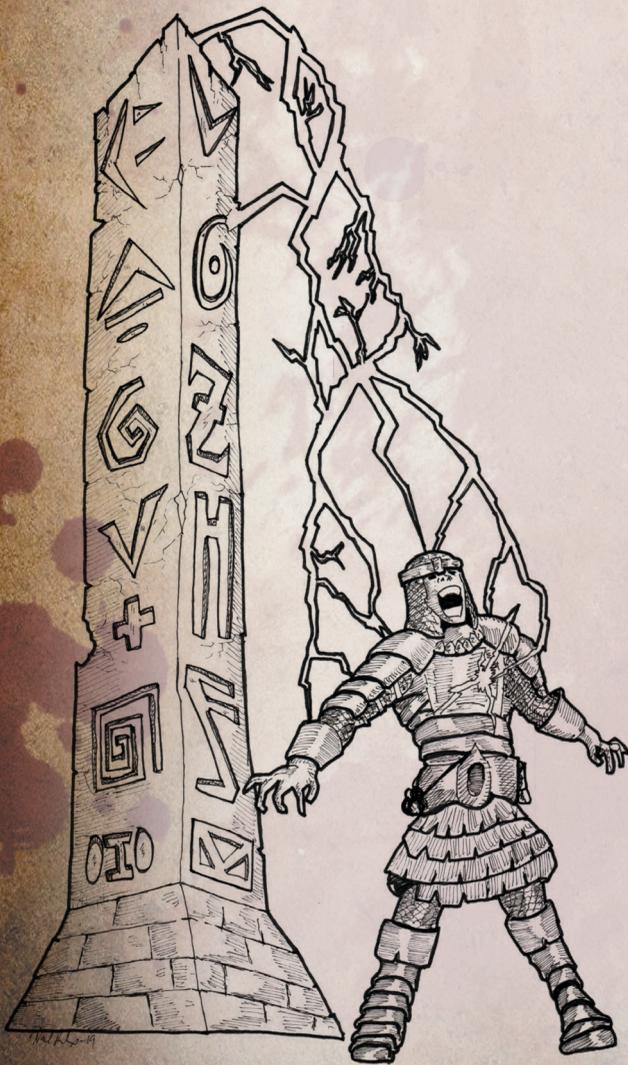


## LIGHTNING OBELISK

*Complex trap (level 1-4, dangerous threat)*

The obelisk stands 20 feet tall and 5 feet per side. Blue and white lightning crackles and leaps along its length. The tower is covered in intricate carvings that praise some sort of primal force or deity. Small piles of black dust fill the area within 20 feet of the obelisk, and the smell of charred meat touches your nose.

A lightning obelisk is often put in place by members of the Howling Hatred, a group of cultists who worship Yan-C-Bin, the evil Prince of Elemental Air. Frequently placed at the entrance of a less-guarded lair to prevent unwanted monsters and wandering adventurers from easily entering, the obelisks are designed to slay weaker foes and slow stronger enemies until reinforcements arrive.

*Perception.* A creature can see charred burns all over the area's floor, walls, and ceiling with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check.

A creature who searches the obelisk can spot cleverly hidden keyhole at its base with a successful DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation) check. If the creature adjacent to the obelisk has advantage on the check. There is a total of two key holes.

Trigger. The trap activates as soon as a creature starts or ends its turn within 20 feet of the obelisk.

*Initiative.* The trap acts on initiative count 20 and initiative count 10.

**Effect.**  Each creature in a 30-foot-radius sphere centered on the obelisk must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 11 (2d10) lightning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A creature who fails by 5 or more must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the creature is paralyzed for 1 minute.

**Active Event.** This trap punishes those who attempt to disable it without using the proper process.

**Key lock.**  If a single key is inserted or both keys aren't turned simultaneously, the trap's area increases by 10 feet with each attempt, up to a maximum of 50 feet. In addition, the damage increases by 5(1d10) with every 10 feet the area increases.

**Dynamic Elements.** The more a creature is exposed the more deadly the trap becomes.

**Shocking Experience.** Each time a creature suffers the effects of the trap, it loses one of its Hit Dice.

**Countermeasures.**

**Key to success.** The trap is designed to be disabled by a set of two keys turned in the hidden keyholes simultaneously. The keys are carried by a few members of the Howling Hatred. Those who carry a key are immune to the effects of the obelisk while they hold them.

**Altering the Spell.** A creature with proficiency in the Arcana skill can engage in a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) skill challenge and attempt to modify the magical current within the obelisk to disrupt its connection to the Weave. The creature must make 3 successes before it suffers 2 failures.

On a success, they alter the trap's effect from an area effect to a line effect. When the trap is triggered the effect is a 100 foot by 5 foot line.

On a failure, the lightning energy surges through the caster and they lose two Hit Dice. If the character has no Hit Dice remaining they suffer a level of Exhaustion.

# Maddening Mural

*Complex Trap (level 5-10, deadly threat)*

The mural carved onto the ceiling appears like a normal forest vista at first glance, but the more you look at it, the more strange the details become. The fanged mouths, hidden eyes, shadowy claws, and the general scene begins to twist and turn into horrifying monstrosities that feel as if they are reaching out and trying to claw at your sanity.

The odd mural has been imbued with evil magic designed to twist and assault the sanity of those who look upon it closely. These can often be found in a temple of Lolth in the Underdark or a similar place where dark deities are worshiped.

**Trigger.** The maddening effect only affects those who view it from within 30 feet away; farther away and the mural appears normal.

**Effect.** A creature within 30 feet of the mural that can see it must make on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the creature takes 22 (4d10) psychic damage and must make a roll on the Short-Term
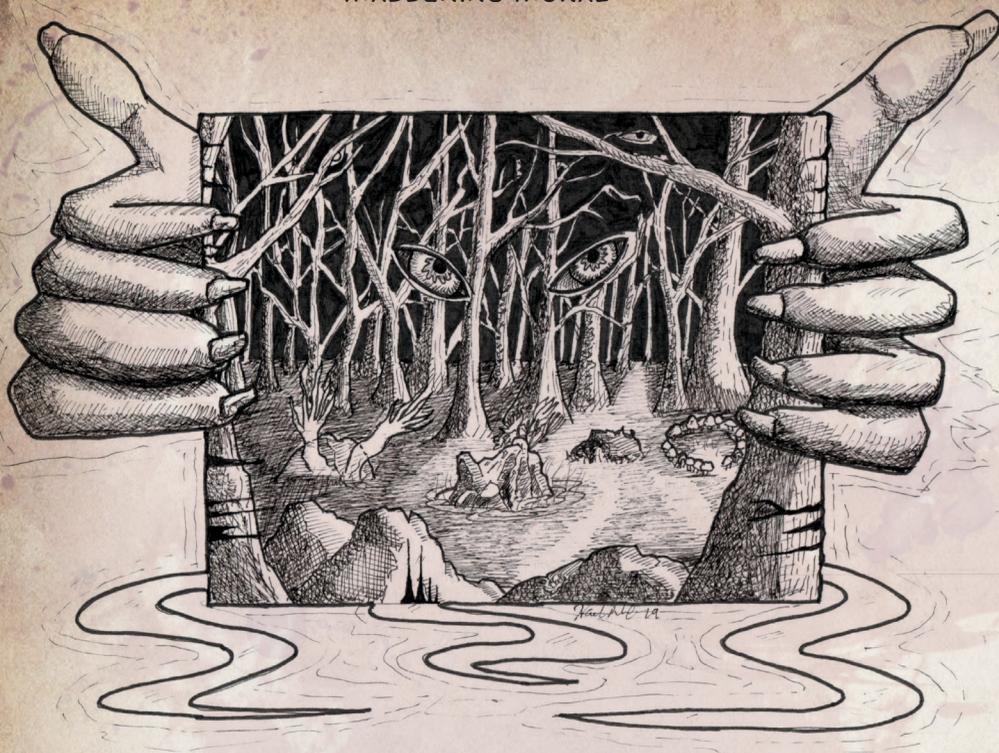
Madness table (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). If the save is failed by 5 or more, the creature rolls on the Long-Term Madness table instead.

***Countermeasures.*** A successful DC 18 Arcana (Intelligence) check reveals the mural for what it is—a trap that induces madness—and the character knows that closing their eyes will negate its effect.

Once the trap is triggered, a creature outside its area which investigates the mural makes a discovery on a successful DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) or (Arcana) check: That creature identifies small gems embedded in the mural as the source of its magic.

A creature adjacent to the mural removes a gem with a successful DC 16 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. When they do, they also notice the murals

enchanted power source is reduced. Each removed stone weakens the trap's damage by 1d10. When 4 stones are removed, the trap is destroyed. On a failure, the trap triggers, whether or not the creature making the Dexterity check is looking at the mural.

The magical mural, which counts a 6th level spell, can be destroyed with two successful castings of *dispel magic*. The first success weakens the mural's damage by 1d10 and lowers the save DC by 5. The second success disables the trap.

# Mummy Dust Trap

*Simple trap (level 5- 10, dangerous threat)*

This trap is set within a treasure chest. When a creature opens the chest, a counterweight squeezes a make-shift bellows and sprays a puff of blackish, vile-smelling powder at the creature and those located close to the area.

**Trigger.** A creature that opens the chest triggers the trap.

**Effect.** Within the chest is a make-shift bellows filled with mummy dust. When the trap is triggered, any creature within a 10-foot cone must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the creature takes 10 (3d6) necrotic damage and is cursed with **mummy rot**. Creatures that succeed on this saving throw take half damage and are not cursed. Creatures cursed with mummy rot cannot regain hit points and its hit point maximum decreases by 10 (3d6) for every 24 hours that elapse. If the curse reduces the creatures hit point maximum to 0, the creature dies, and its body turns to dust. The curse lasts until removed with the *remove curse* spell or other magic.

**Countermeasures.** A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the trap as the creature begins to open the lid. A successful DC 15 Dexterity check with thieves tools disables the device by removing the counterweight from the lid of the chest. Once triggered, the trap must be reset to function again. If a character has mummy dust or another suitable irritant in powder form, the trap can be reset with a successful DC 17 Dexterity check. A failed check results in the trap being triggered and nothing happens. Creatures who fail this check by 5 or more spring this trap on themselves, becoming subject to the effect of the material they used when they attempted to reset the trap.

# Pit and the Portcullis, The

*Complex mechanical trap (level 1-4, deadly threat)*

Adding a gelatinous cube encounter to a dungeon is a classic trope. Putting one into a pit trap is a trope within a trope. Using them in conjunction with other traps is just pure evil. Try this one on for size.

You can place this anywhere a corridor ends in a "T", where passages lead off at right angles to the corridor the characters are currently in. To one side, an iron portcullis is cunningly hidden in the ceiling. To the other, 15 feet down the passage is a hidden pit trap.

## Portcullis

**Trigger.** A creature passes under the portcullis.

**Effect.** The portcullis slams down with a loud clang.

A **gelationous cube** lurks 10 feet beyond the portcullis. When the portcullis triggers, the cube slurps toward the intersection, eagerly seeking its next meal.

**Countermeasures.** A successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check spots the slot through which the portcullis drops, as well as the rusty iron spikes on the bottom of it. A lever 20 feet beyond the portcullis

(10 feet beyond the gelatinous cube), away from the intersection, raises the portcullis and immobilzes it for 1 minute. Once the portcullis is detected, an iron spike or similar object can be jammed into the slot, preventing the portcullis from falling. It can also be magically held shut using the *arcane lock* spell or similar magic. A creature directly under the portcullis when the trap triggers must make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, the creature takes 22 (4d10) bludgeoning damage, and is prone and restrained by the portcullis. On a success, the creature adroitly avoids the portcullis and can decide on which side they want to leap. A creature restrained by the portcullis is freed on a successful DC 20 Strength check. The portcullis can be raised with a successful DC 20 Strength check. While it's being held open, the portcullis's space is difficult terrain.

## Hidden Pit Trap

This pit has a cover constructed from material identical to the floor around it.

*Trigger.* When a creature steps on the cover, it swings open like a trapdoor.

*Effect.* The intruder falls 30 feet into the pit below, taking 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage from the fall. In addition, if the gelatinous cube can do so, it follows a creature into the pit, automatically hitting with its Engulf attack.

*Countermeasures.* A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check discerns an absence of foot traffic over the section of floor that forms the pit's cover. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check confirms that the trapped section of floor is actually the cover of a pit. Once the pit trap is detected, an iron spike or similar object can be wedged between the pit's cover and the surrounding floor in such a way as to prevent the cover from opening, thereby making it safe to cross. The cover can also be magically held shut using the *arcane lock* spell or similar magic.

## Red Phosphorous Arrow Trap

*Simple trap (level 5- 10, dangerous threat)*

This variation on the common crossbow trap has a nasty surprise: the arrowheads on the crossbow bolts are made from a red phosphorus, resembling match heads. When the trap fires the bolt, the friction from the bolt traveling along the bolt rail ignites the tip. These bolts lodge easily in flesh and cause severe burns if not snuffed quickly. They are usually triggered by a tripwire.

*Trigger.* A creature walks through a tripwire's area.

*Effect.* When the trap is triggered, it makes two ranged attacks against the triggering creature. Each attack has a +8 attack bonus and can't gain advantage or disadvantage. On a hit, the target creature takes 5 (1d10) piercing damage and 5 (1d10) fire damage. Taking this damage reduces the creature's walking speed by 10 feet until the creature regains at least 1 hit point or the wound is treated with a successful DC 17 Wisdom

(Medicine) check. Until the flames are extinguished, at the start of each of its turns the creature takes an additional 5 (1d10) fire damage. A creature, including the target, can use its action to extinguish the flames.

**Countermeasures.** A successful DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the trap. A successful DC 12 Dexterity check using thieves' tools disables this trap by snipping the tripwire. This trap can be reset with a DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check.

## Slicing Wheel Handle, The

*Simple Trap (level 5-10, dangerous threat)*

Woe betide the gormless sap who just starts spinning the wheel without checking it carefully. This revolving door handle has razor-sharp blades tucked into it. Hopefully you 'finger' it out before you leave your prints all over the place.

**Trigger.** Anyone grasping the handle with one or both hands and turning the wheel.

**Effect.** The triggering creature must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the creature takes 22 (4d10) slashing damage as the hidden blades slice out from the interior of the handle, directly attacking the fingers or palms of the victim. If the victim takes 10% or more of their maximum hit points in damage from the trap, one (1-50 on a d100) or both hands (51-100 on a d100) are rendered useless until the damage is healed.

If the saving throw is failed by 5 or more, roll on the Slicing Wheel Table.

**Countermeasures.** A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the stealthily hidden blades running along the top of the wheel handle, but only if the creature checks the wheel handle specifically for traps (checking the door won't do). A successful DC 15 Dexterity check with thieves tools disables the trap, as does pressing a hidden stud hidden in the wall next to the door.

| SLICING WHEEL TABLE | |
|---|---|
| **1d10** | **Result** |
| 1 - 4 | the victim loses 1d3 fingers chosen randomly from both hands |
| 5 - 8 | the victim loses 2d4 fingers chosen randomly from both hands |
| 9 | victim loses the hand between the thumb and forefinger (half the palm and 4 fingers) randomly from either left or right hand |
| 10 | victim loses both hands between the thumb and forefinger (half the palms and 8 fingers) from both hands |

SLICING WHEEL HANDLE
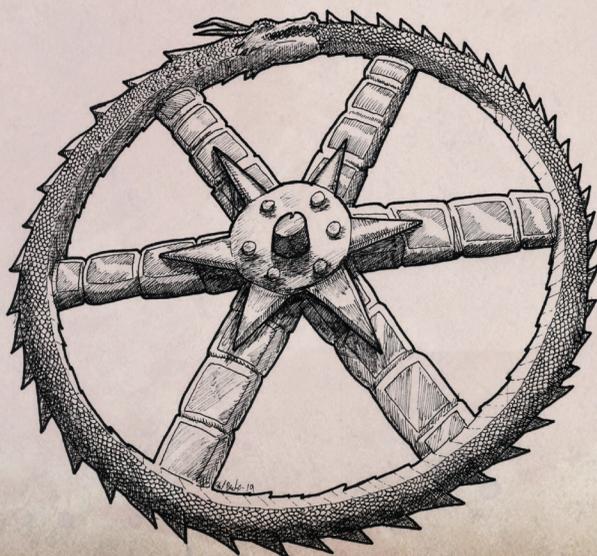
# Sound & Fury

*Complex trap (level 5-10, dangerous threat)*

Sound and Fury is a clever ruse to lure adventurers to their spectacular doom. A portcullis guards the entrance to a 5-foot wide, 40-foot long hall leading to a chamber beyond. The wheel that raises the portcullis is just to the left of it and is locked. This is surely the entrance to the treasure chamber the characters have been seeking. Defeating the lock requires a DC 15 Dexterity check with thieves' tools to open or a DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check to smash.

***Trigger.*** This trap activates when any creature steps on the floor of the last 20 feet of the hallway. That entire section of the floor is a series of pressure plates. The trigger can be detected with a DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check.

***Effect.*** Triggering the trap causes the portcullis to slam closed. A creature standing under the portcullis when the trap is triggered must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, the creature takes 7 (2d6) piercing damage, becomes prone, and is restrained. On a success, the creature takes no damage, and lands in an unoccupied space adjacent to the portcullis. The creature chooses the inside or outside. Raising the gate to free a pinned creature requires a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check. The pinned creature makes such checks with disadvantage.

***Initiative.*** The trap acts on initiative count 10.

***Active Element.*** Sound and Fury is an oil-based trap with one active element. Two different oils pour from opposite walls when the trap is triggered, when they meet a chemically induced explosion occurs.

### Sound & Fury
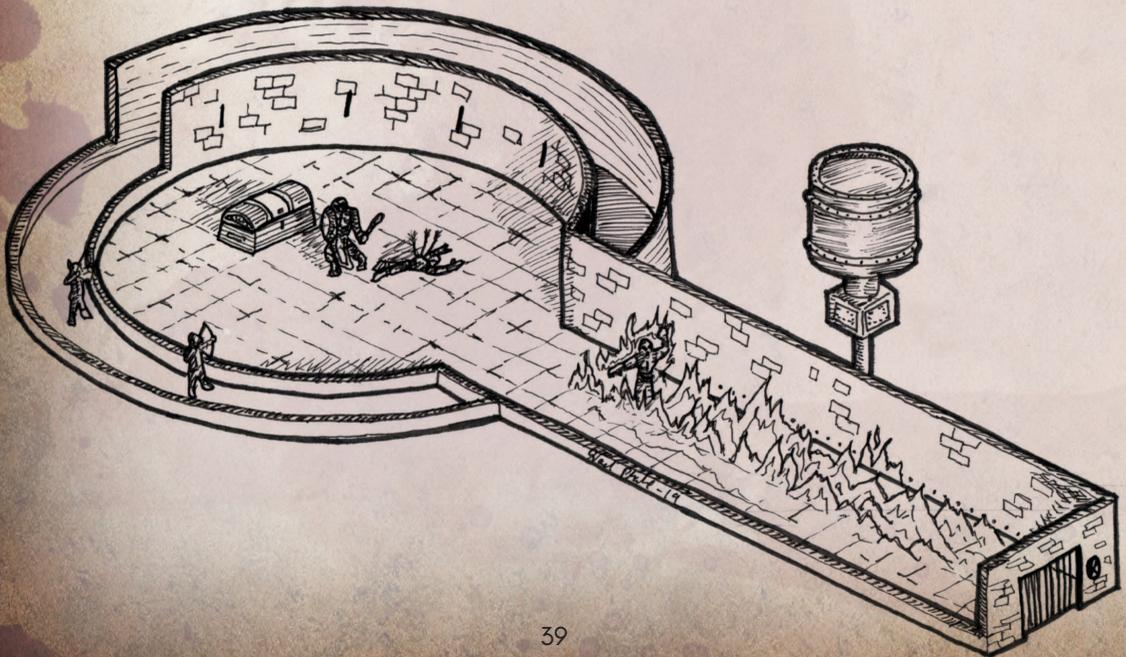
**Explosion (Initiative 10).** On the trap's first turn, an explosion rips through the hall. Creatures in the hall take 21 (6d6) thunder damage and make a DC 15 Strength saving throw. On a failed save, they are knocked prone.

**Dynamic Elements.** The dynamic element of the trap is fire.

**Fire.** On round two and each round thereafter, any creature within the burning area takes 7 (2d6) fire damage. The fire grows each subsequent round, adding an additional 7 (2d6) fire damage to the previous round.

**Constant Elements.** Fire is a constant element of the trap beginning on round 2. The fire exhausts its fuel supply in round 11.

**Fire.** A creature that enters the trap's area for the first time on a turn or starts its turn there takes fire damage equal to the Dynamic Element.

**Countermeasures.** The trap could be thwarted by disabling the pressure plates. The pressure plates could be held open by supporting their corners. Each plate is two and a half feet by two and a half feet meaning each five-foot square has four plates. They fit together closely. Disabling each plate requires a successful DC 20 Dexterity check with thieves tools to lift the corner just enough to insert a coin or similar object underneath the corners without activating the trap. There are 16 plates in total.

The explosion could be thwarted by plugged the holes from which the oil pours or magically transmuting the oil into an inert substance.

The portcullis could be jammed open by inserting an object under the gate.

## Notes.

- The purpose of "Sound and Fury" is to alert the defenders to the presence of intruders while trapping or potentially killing them.
- The treasure chamber at the end of the hall could be the real deal. That's up to you.
- The recommended setup is a circular chamber with a chest or two in the center and six to eight arrow slits around the perimeter.
- Two rounds after the trap triggers (round 3), the defenders start to appear behind the arrow slits and fire crossbow bolts at anyone in the room. The defenders have full cover behind the arrow slit, so bump their AC appropriately. They can be whatever sort of creature fits thematically with your dungeon.
- If the builders have abandoned the dungeon, then perhaps no one appears, but instead, there are wandering monsters attracted by the explosion waiting outside the portcullis when the party emerges.

**Scaling.** Scaling Sound and Fury is as easy as changing the damage output of the explosion and fire and deciding whether to have defenders or wandering monsters compound the character's woes.

# Spear Gauntlet

*Complex Trap (level 1-4, dangerous threat)*

The sound of a click barely precedes the upward rush of spears thrusting out of small dark holes in the ground. They pierce parts of your body with agonizing pain before retreating back into their dark home as swiftly as they appeared.

In this 30-foot stretch of hallway, bridge or other narrow passage, many of the cobblestones are pressure plates. The area is full of pitted dark holes that are difficult to spot. When a creature steps on a pressure plate, or starts its turn there, the trap is triggered, causing spears to thrust upward from all the holes that fill the floor.

**Trigger.** A creature weighing 20 pounds or more that steps on the plates will trigger this trap.

**Effect.** Any creature in the area of the spear gauntlet trap must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 11 (2d10) piercing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

**Countermeasures.** The cleverly hidden spear holes embedded into the grooves of the floor are difficult to see as they are obscured by dust. With a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, a character can see slight indentations through the dust and grooves in the floor.

A character can deduce the location of a pressure plate with a successful DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check from the variations in the mortar and stone used to create it compared to the surrounding floor.



SPEAR GAUNTLET
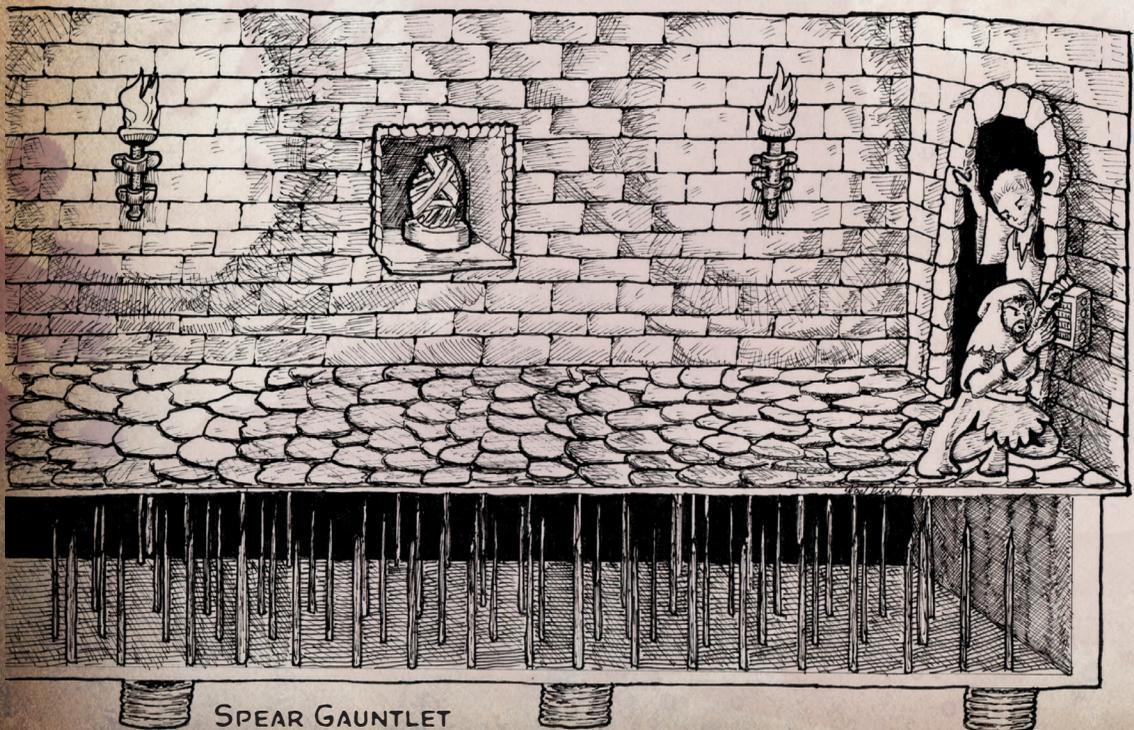
A creature can spot a hidden control panel at the end of the gauntlet with successful DC 25 Wisdom (Perception) check. If they are within 5 feet of it, they have advantage on the check.

A creature can attempt to outrun the gauntlet with a DC 25 Strength (Athletics) check. On a success, a creature who can move at least 90 feet in a single turn can run through the gauntlet triggering the traps and not being caught within them. Failure on the Strength check or not being able to move the entire distance results in the creature being caught in the spear trap, with their speed becoming 0 until the end of the turn and taking 11 (2d10) piercing damage.

A creature standing adjacent to a trigger plate can attempt to disable it by wedging metal spikes under it. A successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools disables the plate. A failure triggers the plate.

A creature adjacent to control panel can shut down the entire trap with a successful DC 20 Dexterity check using the thieves' tools. A failure triggers the trap.

A creature can ready an action to attack the spears when they appear. A 5-foot area of spears has AC 14 and 5 hit points. A miss results in the attacker taking 11 (2d10) piercing damage.

A creature who attacks the control panel can disable the trap. The control panels AC is 16 and has 10 hit points.

If the panel is destroyed, all spears are triggered and stay in the upward position, leaving no room to pass through without hacking a way through.

# SPLINTER SPIKE

*Simple trap (level 1- 4, dangerous threat)*

This trap launches spring-loaded spikes into unwary fools who step on the pressure plate. As an added danger, the spikes are brittle, breaking off in the wound causing great pain and infection.

**Trigger.** A creature that steps on the pressure plate triggers the trap.

**Effect.** When a creature steps on the pressure plate, large spikes spring out of holes in the floor. Each spike is made of obsidian, a brittle type of volcanic glass that breaks off in the wound. When the trap is triggered, it makes two attacks against the triggering creature. Each attack has a +8 attack bonus and deals 5 (1d10) piercing damage on a hit. These attacks gain advantage if the triggering

**SPLINTER SPIKE**

creature is prone. A creature taking this damage from obsidian spikes cannot regain hit points until a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check is made to remove the shards of glass from the creature's wounds. Creatures using a healer's kit or have taken the Healer feat make this check with advantage.

*Countermeasures.* A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the small holes in the floor and the pressure plate that triggers them. A successful DC 15 Dexterity check with thieves tools disables the device.

This trap can be reset using any kind of spikes. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check is needed to craft the spikes and a successful DC 15 Dexterity check is required to properly set the springs beneath the floor. Failing either of these checks results in the trap not functioning when later triggered.

## STICKY FLOOR



## STICKY FLOOR

*Simple trap (level 5- 10, deadly threat)*

This trap is usually found in a room with wood floors, though any floor that is comprised of a material that has seams or cracks will suffice. When a creature steps on the floor, the seemingly solid surface buckles under their weight and squeezes a quick-drying goo up through the seams in the floor.

*Trigger.* A creature that weighs more than 50 pounds steps on the floor.

*Effect.* The triggering creature must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw. On a success, the creature avoids getting stuck in the goo. On a failure, the creature becomes stuck in the goo, gaining the restrained condition. Creatures failing this save by 5 or more fall prone as well. A creature restrained by this effect may use their action to make a DC 17 Strength check to free themselves. If a creature fails this saving throw three consecutive times, it is subject to the incapacitated condition. In any case, the affected area becomes difficult terrain.

Some variants of this trap use adhesive that is mixed with acid or poison, causing 11 (2d10) acid or poison damage each turn the creature begins their turn in an affected space; succeeding on the initial Dexterity saving throw halves the damage. This option can be

SWITCH CINCH
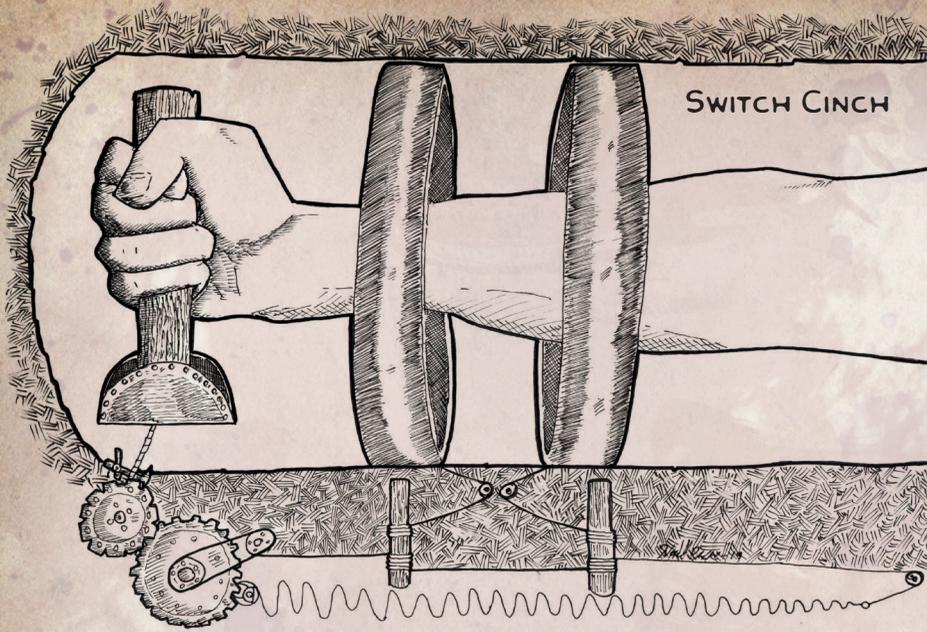
quite deadly as restrained creatures have disadvantage on Strength checks to free themselves.

**Countermeasures.** A successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the trap. The trap can't be disabled. A creature that can fly, levitate, is incorporeal, or that is under the effect of the *gaseous form* or similar spell is unaffected, as is a creature that weighs less than 50 pounds. Creatures can otherwise avoid the room entirely. A restrained creature can use oil or a similar lubricant to grant themselves advantage on Strength checks and Dexterity saving throws related to this trap. Using *oil of slipperiness*, *universal solvent*, or casting a *grease* spell renders the affected area inert. A fine powder, like a one-pound bag of flour, poured in a 5-foot space hardens the adhesive to a brittle clay that breaks easily, granting the creature advantage on Strength checks related to this trap.

## SWITCH CINCH

*Simple trap (level 1- 4, moderate threat)*

This trap presents as a fairly obvious "hidden" switch behind a loose stone or panel in a wall. When a character reaches in to flip the switch, all is fine until they try to pull their arm out again.

**Trigger.** A creature reaches into the hole in the wall and pulls the lever.

**Effect.** A creature that reaches into the hole in the wall and pulls the lever, hears a slight metallic "ping", resulting in the tension spring around the telescopic bands within the wall breaking and the bands cinching closed. Their arm is not crushed but proves to be held quite firm, as if caught in a Chinese finger-trap. Pulling and forcing the creature's limb only seems to tighten its grip. Until the creature's arm is removed from the trap, the creature is restrained.

**Countermeasures.** A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the 'secret panel' but a DC 15 Intelligence

(Investigation) check reveals its true purpose. The trap can be bypassed if the characters manipulate the switch without reaching into the hole (using a mage hand spell, for example). If sprung, a creature can free themselves on a successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves tools. Using a flask of oil or the effect of a grease spell gives the character advantage on this check. If the characters can find another way to access the inner workings of the trap, a successful DC 13 Dexterity check using thieves' tools disables the trap and frees the trapped creature by using the tools to cut the bands.

# Thirsty Pincushion Throne, The

*Simple Trap (level 5-10, deadly threat)*

Thinking oneself as royalty and sitting on this throne could lead to yourself, and your 'subjects', suffering a royally unfitting death.

When a creature above a certain weight sits on the throne, barbed spears erupt upward from the throne's seat and into the creature's body. Once embedded into the creature, the spears drain the creature of their precious bodily fluids whilst their 'subjects' (other creatures within a certain distance of the throne) take damage from the throne's aura.

**Trigger.** A creature which weighs more than 40 pounds sits onto the seat part of the throne.

**Effect.** The triggering creature must make a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the creature takes 55 (10d10) piercing damage and is restrained by 3d4 barbed iron spears. While restrained, at the beginning of each of the creature's turns, it takes Xd10 damage, where X equals the number of barbed spears restraining the creature, as suction holes along the length of the spears drain the creature's body of its precious bodily fluids. If the creature is reduced to negative hit points equal to its Constitution score, it dies.

The barbed spears bite into the creature's body, holding it in place. Each iron barbed spear has an AC of 19 with 10 (3d6) hit points and must be broken to free the creature without additional slashing damage. Once all the spears are destroyed, the creature can be successfully pulled off the throne without taking additional damage.

Attempting to remove the seated creature whilst the barbs are intact requires a successful Strength check, the DC of which is equal to 10 plus 2 per intact barbed spear; failure results in the creature taking Xd6 slashing damage, where X equals the number of embedded spears. On a success, the creature is pulled free, but the barbs rend flesh from the creature's body. It takes double the failed saving throw damage. If pulled free whilst the barbs are intact, at the start of the creature's turn, it takes Xd3 in necrotic damage, where X equals the number of barbed iron spears the creature was freed from. This necrotic damage continues until the bleeding can be stopped with a

DC 10 Intelligence (Medicine) check per barbed spear wound (1 check per round per wound per treating person), the creature gains the benefit of any form of magical healing in hit points equal to the number of barbed spear wounds (1 hit point of healing equals 1 barbed spear wound healed), or the creature dies from blood loss and agonizing pain.

***Necrotic Aura.*** When a creature takes necrotic bleeding damage for the first time, the throne activates and becomes powered with a necrotic aura. Any creature within 15 feet of the throne when the aura activates must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. When a creature enters the aura for the first time on a turn or starts its turn there, it must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. The creature takes 22 (4d10) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. This effect continues whilst the seated creature continues to take necrotic damage from the barbed spears.

***Countermeasures.*** A *detect magic* spell or effect reveals a faint aura of necromancy coming from the throne. This aura greatly amplifies once the necrotic aura activates, diminishing back to its faint aura over time. A successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals small circular holes on the seat of the throne. In addition, this successful Perception check reveals that the seat of the throne is designed to be lifted. To lift the seat, a successful DC 20 Dexterity check with thieves tools is required to first deactivate the initial seat trap. Failing to deactivate the initial seat trap results in the activation of the trap as if the creature deactivating the trap was seated on the throne, as shown under Effect above.

***Within the seat of the throne.*** Lifting the seat reveals a locked iron box roughly 1-foot by 1-foot below the now-exposed iron spears. A successful DC 15 Dexterity check with thieves tools disarms the internal mechanism and destroys the device that causes the damaging necrotic aura, allowing access to the locked iron box. Failing to deactivate the internal mechanism results in the activation of the trap as if the creature trying to deactivate the trap was seated on the throne, as shown under Effect above.

**Author's Note relating to Iron Box:**
You are encouraged to add whatever important item you wish in the box for the party to recover. Personally, I'd leave it empty, but that's me. For example, you may wish to add a container of restorative goo. When this goo is applied to a dead creature (one and one only), that creature is returned to life with 1 hit point. For the life of me, I can't imagine why you'd want to do such a thing, except for the fact that the owner of the dead character may not hate you as much as those others still lying dead on the floor ... unfortunately for you, the owners of those characters are left to you to sort out.

## THRONE OF FLYING

*Simple mechanical trap (level 1-4, deadly threat)*

How about a throne? How about a throne inscribed with inscriptions that read, in a language the characters can understand, "Whoever sits on this chair gains the ability to fly!"?

The throne is found on a dais, under a glass and iron canopy above which is open sky. It actually does bestow the ability to fly, albeit through a powerful spring which launches a creature through the canopy and hundreds of feet into the air.

When a creature approaches the throne, delicately-calibrated instruments record its weight. Unless that weight settles onto the throne's seat, nothing happens. This prevents your cunning players doing something clever like putting a bag of sand on the throne to test if it's safe.

*Trigger.* A creature sits on the throne.

*Effect.* The creature must make a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw. On a success, the creature takes 22 (4d10) bludgeoning damage as the throne's seat batters it and throws it to the floor, where it lands prone. On a failure, the creature is launched through the canopy, taking 22 (4d10) bludgeoning damage, and into the open sky. The creature flies a number of feet straight up equal to 3d10 x 10. Unless it has some means of arresting its fall, it takes that much falling damage as it plummets back to terra firma.

*Countermeasures.* A successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check spots the mechanism under the dais's stairs. A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check connects the mechanism to the throne. An Intelligence (Investigation) check which succeeds by 5 or more correctly identifies the trap and what'll happen when it goes off. A successful DC 20 Dexterity check with thieves tools disables the mechanism.

## TIME BOMB

*Simple trap (level 5- 10, dangerous threat)*

This trap is made with an hourglass. There is a chunk of silvery, white stone (sodium) in the top and a clear liquid in the bottom (water). When the hourglass is inverted, the fun begins.

*Trigger.* A creature that flips the hourglass over triggers the trap.

*Effect.* When a creature flips over the hourglass, the water drains onto the silvery rock and it starts to sizzle. Roll 1d4; any creature within a 10-foot square of the timebomb at the

end of 1d4 rounds must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw, taking 11 (2d10) slashing damage and 11 (2d10) fire damage as the hourglass explodes from the heat and pressure. On a successful save, the creature takes half damage.

*Countermeasures.* A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals the trap, correctly identifying the metal inside. The best way to avoid this trap is not to do anything to it. If timed properly, however, it can be used to decimate even the heartiest of foes.
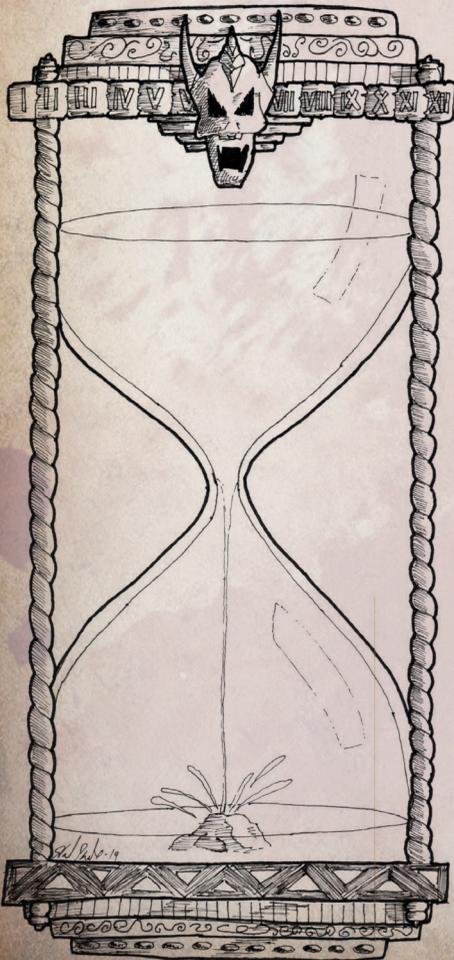
## TEST TRAP, PLEASE IGNORE

A long hallway is filled with very obvious dangers:
- metal circles in the floor between tiles;
- the tops of the tubes scorched black;
- tiles depicting a shifting pattern of pictograms of the moon, sun, stars, and planets;
- holes in the walls which reveal glints from within, arrows or bolts ready to be fired;
- tiny holes in the ceiling, where spikes might emerge.

Finally, every ten feet, there exists a slot that cuts from ceiling to floor and along both walls, threatening a swinging axe if one should step in the wrong location.

Should the characters roll a stone, marble, or other object into the hallway, all the traps explode at once. A successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the stone landed unharmed. Rolling a 30+ on this check indicates only the traps where the stone was located failed to trigger.

If a creature moves confidently down the hallway, the traps go off in a manner perfectly timed to cause no harm to the creature. A creature unaware of the effect must make a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw every 10 feet it travels. On a failure, the creature flinches in fright and is narrowly missed by a trap effect.

# Traps That Aren't Traps

One of the most satisfying things you can do when you're sitting behind the DM screen is to make your players skitter in paranoid mania. You have to keep a straight face, but inside you feel all warm as they spend hours thinking every step is going to turn their beloved characters into paste.

The easiest way to make that happen is to put all the hallmarks of a trap right in front of them but to have there be no trap to find. Do that a couple of times, they'll let their guard down, and then WHAM. You hit them with a sphere of annihilation.

Here are some "set dressing" descriptions that'll have them tearing their hair out and cursing your name.

## Dagger of Backfiring

This is a very ornate *+1 dagger* with a fine gem stuck on the pommel. It works just fine—until you reduce a creature to 0 hit points with it. When that happens, the gem falls off and a cloud of needles fires out at the wielder. The wielder must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the creature takes 18 (6d6) poison damage and is poisoned for 1 minute. On a success, the creature takes half as much damage and isn't poisoned. A poisoned creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.
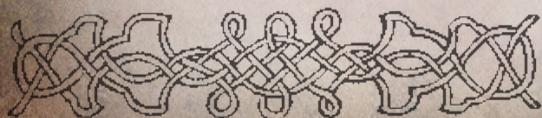
## Labels Are Misleading

Somewhere in a treasure cache before they meet with a Big Bad, put a vial carefully and obviously labeled *poison*. Except it isn't poison. It's a highly-concentrated *potion of speed*. So when the characters "cleverly" dip their weapons in the "poison", the first time they score a hit on a living enemy they essentially cast *haste* on it. Larks.

## Levers of Madness

At the entrance to something juicy is a rusty iron lever set into a wall. It's not trapped. It doesn't do anything at all except make a horrific screeching noise when it's pulled, which attracts the nearest random encounter or wandering monster in 1d6 rounds.

## Sword of Glittery Shattering

This one is particularly nasty, so don't use it unless you're 100% certain your players won't rise up in rebellion when it bites them on the backside.

The heroes find a beautifully-made longsword that radiates strong transmutation magic. When they try to identify it, they think it's a *+2 longsword* that requires attunement and that deals an extra 1d8 lightning damage on a hit.

Whenever the sword comes within 50 feet of an intelligent opponent, it yells the most vile insults at it. The sword makes a Charisma (Performance) check with a +3 bonus. The creature the sword insulted must

make a Wisdom saving throw, the DC of which is equal to the sword's Charisma (Performance) check. On a failure, the creature flies into a rage, attacking the sword's wielder.

Surely the wielder will use the sword against the enraged creature, right? That's exactly what you want to happen.

When the wielder scores a hit with the sword, it explodes into a cloud of golden particles which lasts 1 minute and covers everyone and everything within 10 feet of the wielder. A creature in the area must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or be blinded for the duration. After it leaves the area, an affected creature can repeat the saving throw as an action, ending the effect on itself on a success. In addition, creatures in the area have disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks and can't be invisible.

Now hand this to the player:

**Curse.** This sword is cursed, a fact that is revealed only when an *identify* spell is cast on it or you attune to it. Attuning to the sword curses you until you are targeted by the *remove curse* spell or similar magic. When the sword shatters, it reforms after 1 minute has passed.

## Tiles of Doom

A room where the walls, ceiling, and floor are completely covered with stark white tiles. On the wall opposite the door are three off-color tiles that don't do anything. Ever.

## Tiles of Doom II - More Dooooooom

A corridor stretches at least 50 feet into the gloom. Scattered in an irregular pattern amongst the flagstones on the floor are enameled tiles depicting a flaming fist. The first tile is slightly loose. There is no trap; the builder of the dungeon just thought the design looked boss.

## Five Levers

This chamber has five levers, each set into the floor, each surrounded by a grating. When a creature pulls a lever, an effect occurs. The first creates an uncomfortable heat. The second gives the smell of acrid garbage. The third is a blast of cold air. The fourth causes anyone within 5 feet of the lever to have their hair stand on end and thin bands of lightning to crackle along the length. Finally, the fifth creates a puff of green gas, harmless but pungent.

Each lever is carved into the shape of a dragon's head (red, black, white, blue, and green). The only other feature in this room is a door with the sigil of Tiamat (five dragon heads arranged in a circle) carved into it. The door is not tied to the levers, but it does have a mundane lock hidden in the mouth of each dragon.

## A Simple Button...?

A large, round chamber is lit by magic. In the center of the room, a button sits atop a podium. It can be destroyed but if this happens, a new button appears atop the podium immediately.

If a creature presses the button, the lights go out and noises like a door opening can be heard. Careful exploration of the room shows no such door opening. After 30 seconds, the number 29 appears on the button and if pressed again, the effect lasts for 29 seconds and the number on the button goes down by one.

If the number reaches 15, the light becomes yellow, at 10 it becomes red, and at 5 the light becomes pure white and strobes. At 1, the number on the button becomes a skull. If pressed again, nothing happens and the whole cycle restarts.

This works best in a room where there is only a single way into the room and there are no other doors.

## Tipsy Scales

In a room is a locked door or chest. Before it are two metal platforms. Whenever anything is placed on one platform, that platform descends while the other raises. If something of greater weight is placed on the opposing platform, the positions switch.

The scales will never balance. They've been made specifically to never balance properly, even with objects of perfectly equal weight on both sides. The door or chest is locked via mundane means.

## Menagerie

This hexagonal room is expansive, the stonework delicate and strong. In the center of the room, a bronze wheel centered on a large circular door presumably caps a shaft extending downward. Teal-blue flecks of corrosion show there is a source of water somewhere nearby.

Around the edge of the room upon each of the six walls is a statue of an animal. Above the entryway is an ape and going around the room clockwise there is a long-necked bird (crane), a whale with a horn (a narwhal), a snake with a hood (cobra), a spider coated in thick hairs (tarantula), and a bloated frog.

If the characters interfere with the statues, each one releases something. The ape releases a handful of smashed bananas. The crane drops a dead fish. The narwhale expels a small amount of water, the snake drips blood, the spider drops itchy hairs, and the frog unleashes handfuls of dead flies.

None of those things are harmful at all. In fact, the door opens by spinning the wheel. Unfortunately, the wheel has been corroded and is difficult to open. It requires a DC 25 Strength check to move.

**NB:** This is an excellent place to add The Slicing Wheel Trap from above, which we encourage you to do!

## Trick a Picker

*Simple trap (level 1- 4, moderate threat)*

This trap is set on a door with an internal lock. When a thief tries to pick the lock, they get a nasty surprise.

*Trigger.* A creature attempting to pick the lock triggers the trap.

*Effect.* This trap is the bane of lockpickers as it adds insult to injury. When a thief puts their tools in the

lock and begins to work, they might perforate the pressurized bladder of acid placed inside the lock. The highly corrosive acid sprays out of the keyhole, resulting in horrific burns to their face and neck. To add insult to injury, their tools are corroded and destroyed.

When the creature rolls a Dexterity check with thieves tools to pick the lock, if the result is DC 20 or higher, they manage to pick the lock without rupturing the acid bladder and nothing happens. If the result is less than DC 20, the bladder explodes, and they must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) acid damage on a failed save, and half as much damage on a successful one. Creatures that fail this saving throw by 5 or more are blinded.

At your option, creatures that roll a 1 (critical failure) on this saving throw are blinded and suffer a permanent 2 (1d4) point reduction of their Charisma ability score. These points can be regained by casting *greater restoration* or a similar spell or effect of 5th level or higher. Their thieves' tools are destroyed, as is the lock mechanism. The lock is stuck and the door must be broken down. The door has AC 15 and 18 hit points.

***Countermeasures.*** A successful DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the trap as the creature is looking the lock over and preparing forwork. If the creature is aware of the trap, they may make their Dexterity check with thieves tools with advantage to unlock or disarm.

## Tripwire

*Simple trap (level 1- 4, moderate threat)*

This trap is exactly what it says: it's a wire or cord pulled taut between two anchor points that trips creatures passing through it. Most tripwires are also the trigger to a more dangerous trap.

***Trigger.*** A creature moves through the tripwire's space.

***Effect.*** When a creature passes through the trapped space, it must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On a success, they stumble but are able to continue their movement. On a failure, the creature falls prone and their movement ends.

***Countermeasures.*** A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the trap. A successful DC 12 Dexterity check with thieves tools is disables the trap, as does cutting the cord or wire with a weapon that deals slashing damage. Flying, levitating, and incorporeal creatures are not subject to this effect. Creatures under the effect of a *gaseous form* or similar spell or effect are not subject to this effect.

# Up To Eleven

*Simple magical trap (level 5-10, dangerous threat)*

Lots of parties have bards. Bards can be super annoying. Here's a way to get back at the jerk who gets the party out of every jam with their +27 to Persuasion or Deception.

In the middle of this room is a pedestal. On the pedestal is a musical instrument. What kind is your choice; make it one your bard won't be able to resist. Just make it really, really shiny and radiating enough magic to make it look like it'll be just what they need to send them into super-stardom.

When the bard's towering greed and ego combine to send them pelting into the room, precisely nothing happens. They can pick the instrument up. They can examine it, check it for traps. They find nothing. But when they actually play it, all hell breaks loose. Their lives go from awesome to suck in a microsecond, and if they're really unlucky, the trap will attract any hungry or bored monsters within earshot. Particularly nasty bards often have this trap laid on the priceless instrument they take with them to the grave, just so nobody else can ever use their prized lute, or harp, or tympani, or whatever.

**Trigger.** A creature plays the instrument.

**Effect.** The triggering creature and each creature in a 15-foot cube originating from the instrument must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 6d8 thunder damage, is deafened until they finish a long rest, and is stunned for 1 minute. On a successful save, the creature takes half as much damage, is deafened for 1 hour, and isn't stunned. In addition, unsecured objects that are completely within the area of effect are automatically pushed 10 feet away from the instrument by the trap's effect, and the trap emits a thunderous boom (or power chord, as the case may be) audible out to 300 feet.

**Countermeasures.** The instrument radiates strong evocation magic. A successful DC 18 *dispel magic* destroys the trap.
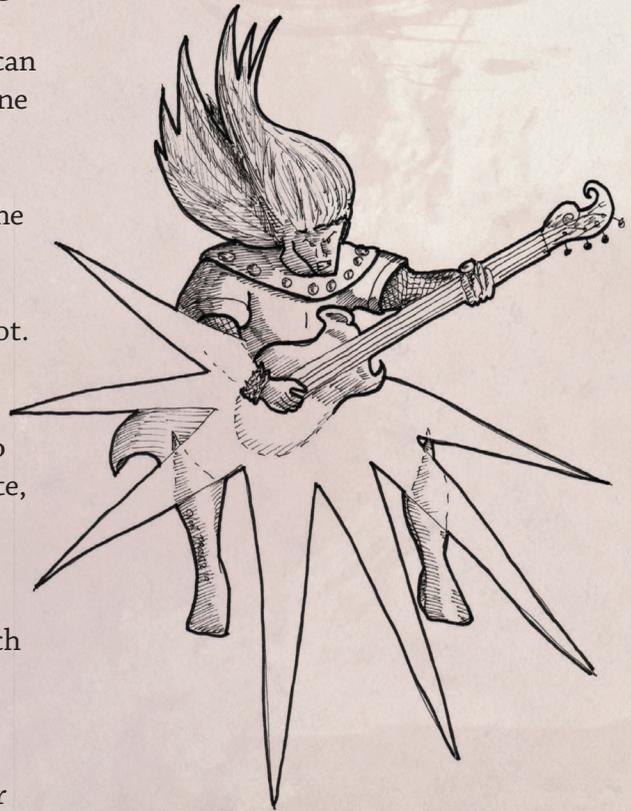
# When You Simply Must Be A Jerk

*Simple mechanical trap (level 5-10, deadly threat)*

The characters find a long corridor along which they find different traps, all plainly visible, all inoperative. Scything blades and pendulum blades hanging still, soot on the walls and floor opposite the dragon's head statue (in which you can still see a faint blue pilot light), drips of acid from spouts that look like they should be firing caustic liquid like a fire hose, spiked pits with open metal lids. Whatever you decide should be there, all in plain sight, all already triggered. In fact, there's plenty of room to just walk around them.

**Trigger.** When the heroes get to the treasure room and start looting, or the instant they slay the villain: The climax of the dungeon is the trigger. Wherever they happen to be and just before they think you're going to hand-wave the trip out of the dungeon and back to town, that sort of thing. That's when the traps in that corridor reset all at once. A character with a passive Perception of 20 hears the faint clicking sounds of the traps resetting. Try sauntering out thinking you've cleared the dungeon NOW, you greedy pricks.

**Effect.** Each stage deals 22 (4d10) damage of the specific trap's type and requires a Medium DC saving throw to avoid for half damage.

**Countermeasures.** Each stage can be disabled with a DC 18 Dexterity check with thieves tools, or by physically preventing the trap from working.

# White Dragon Breath Torrent

*Complex Trap (level 1-4, deadly threat)*

Two small, intricately-carved dragon statues gaze at you menacingly, their mouths wide open. You spot a flickering blue light deep in the back of each throat just moments before a torrent of cold bursts forth, catching you and causing frost to cover you.

The dragon statues are often placed at the entrance to a valuable treasure or secret of a powerful wizard. The trap is two dragon statues placed on either side of an entrance.

**Trigger.** This trap activates when a creature comes within 20 feet of it without speaking the command word.

**Effect.** The dragon heads each make an attack immediately as a reaction. Each creature within a 30-foot cone must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

**Countermeasures.** A creature detects a faint magical rune on the inside of the dragon's mouth on a successful DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check. On a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check, a creature notices a collection of magical glyphs on the floor. With a successful DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana) check, they are able to identify that the glyph has a command word that prevents the trap from triggering.

A creature deduces that the statues are unable to move with a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check, creating a blind safe spot behind or below them to be disabled.

A creature adjacent to the statue can attempt to deactivate the torrent between the bursts of icy torrents. With a successful DC 15 Dexterity check, a creature can attempt to jam the nozzle on the inside of one of the dragon's maw full of rocks or some other similar object, halting its function for 3 rounds, at which point it explodes, dealing its damage in a 20-foot radius.
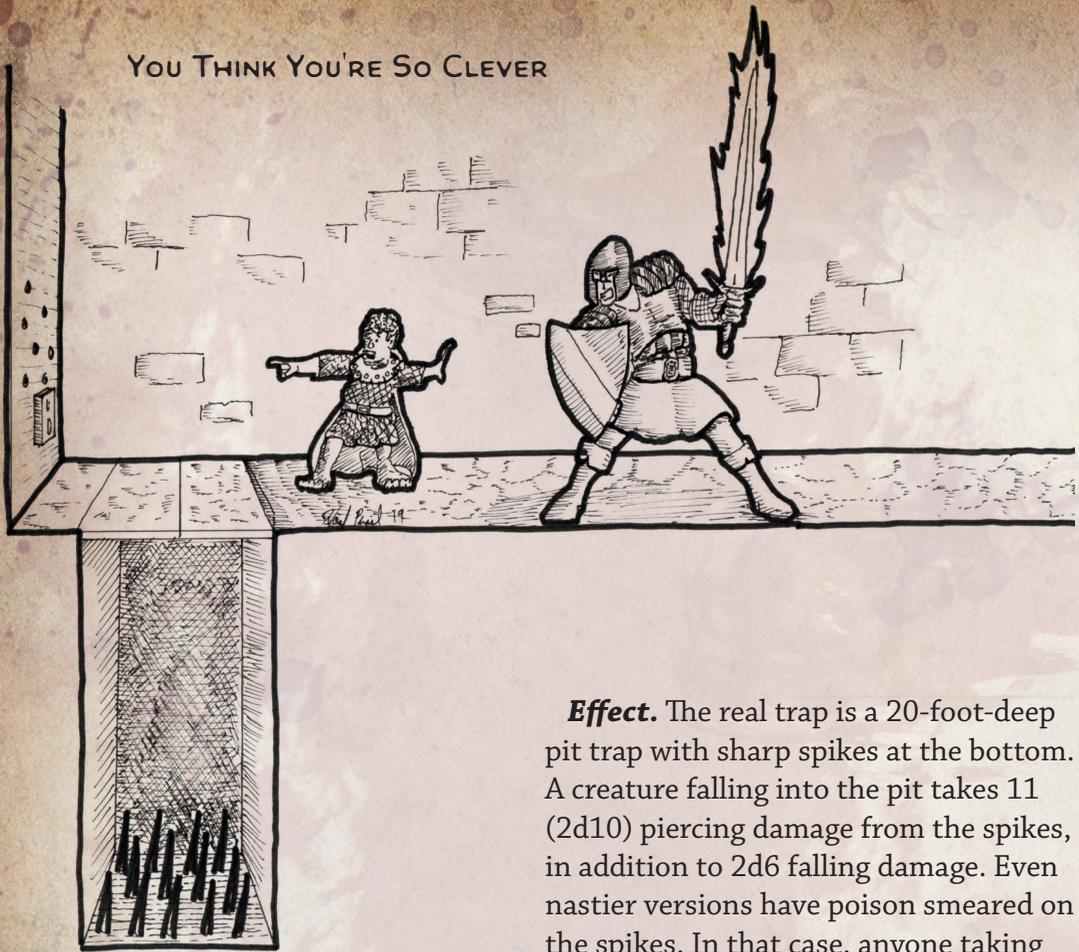
For the purposes of *dispel magic*, the object counts as a 4th level spell.

A creature can discover the command word from an enemy guard or force a hostage to speak it. A spellcasting creature can engage in a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) skill challenge and attempt to re-write the magical glyphs to alter the command word to one of their choosing. A creature succeeds on the challenge if it scores 3 successes before 2 failures. On 3 successes, they change the command word to one of their choosing. On 2 failures, the trap is disabled, but the arcane energy tied to the glyph backlashes into the creature making the check. That creature loses two Hit Dice from its Hit Dice pool. If the creature has no Hit Dice left in its pool, it suffers a level of exhaustion.

## WHITE DRAGON BREATH TORRENT
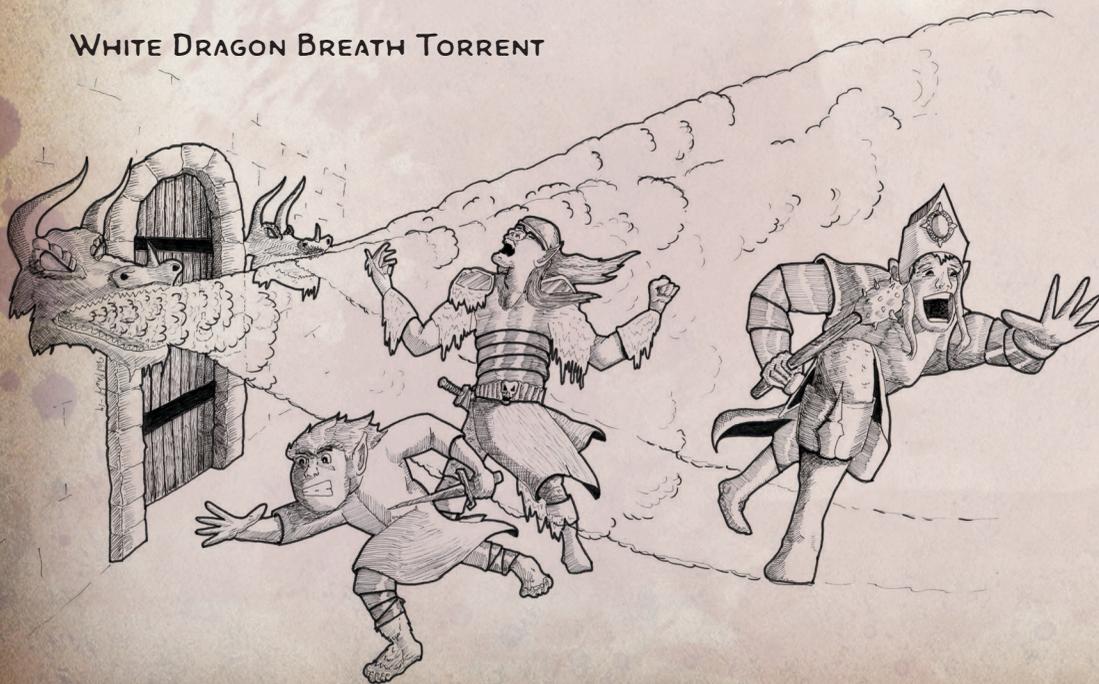
# You Think You're So Clever

*Simple mechanical trap (level 1-4, dangerous threat)*

This trap relies on the hubris of the rogue to work. Thus it works more often than not. It is a series of traps: a false one and a real one. The false one can be whatever you fancy, provided it's a mechanical trap, such as what looks to be a hole in the wall containing a spear. However, the real one is the pit that's directly under where the arrogant rogue must kneel to disable the false trap.

***Trigger.*** A creature that disarms the false trap triggers the real one.

***Effect.*** The real trap is a 20-foot-deep pit trap with sharp spikes at the bottom. A creature falling into the pit takes 11 (2d10) piercing damage from the spikes, in addition to 2d6 falling damage. Even nastier versions have poison smeared on the spikes. In that case, anyone taking piercing damage from the spikes must also make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

***Countermeasures.*** A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the false trap and disarming mechanism. Any result on a Dexterity check using thieves' tools "disarms" the false trap and sends the trapmonkey plummeting onto the spikes. A successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the true trap and its disarming mechanism. A successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools disables it.
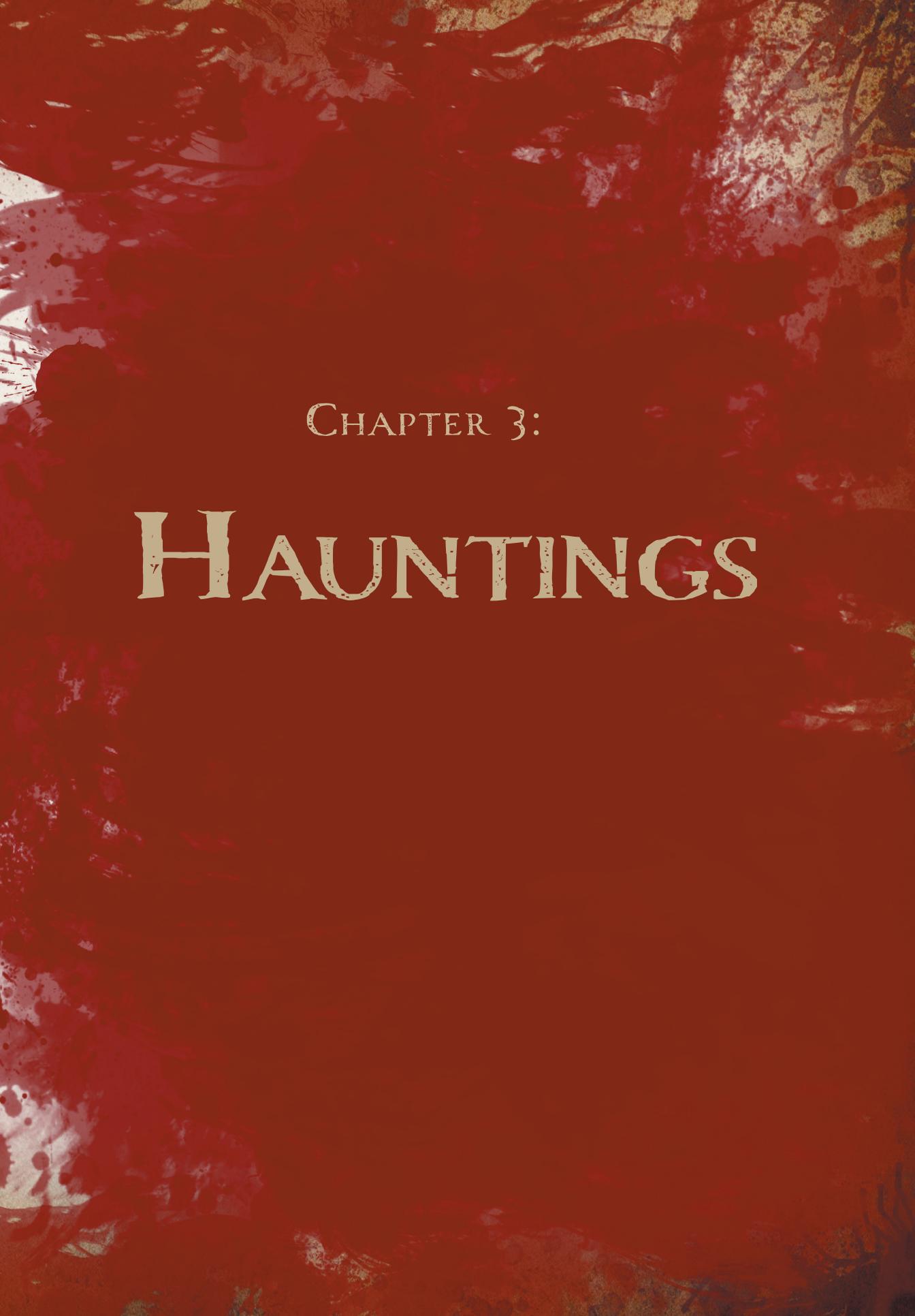
# Chapter 3:

# Hauntings

# What is a Haunting?

Death is usually only a minor inconvenience for heroes in a fantasy world. If a person is wealthy or powerful, they are sure to be resurrected before too long. For some, death is a bit more permanent, and the Ferryman's toll is too steep. These lost souls languish in turmoil and lash out at anything that disturbs them. When emotions run high, souls shed ectoplasm, an invisible film that lays on the affected area like dust. Most living creatures aren't sensitive to this film but those who are, immediately feel the emotions that caused it. It is possible for spirits to manifest their energy and exert their will so strongly that their ripples can affect the Material Plane. These experiences are commonly called **hauntings**.

This chapter deals with three types of hauntings: haunted places, haunted items, and haunted people. In each type, spirits attach themselves to an anchor on the Material Plane as an overboard sailor clings to driftwood. Some spirits are more powerful than others. Those without the ability to sustain a lengthy connection to the Material Plane lie dormant, quiet, until triggered by the actions of living creatures that infuriate the ghost(s) and cause a supernatural event to occur. These types of hauntings are called echoes. Older, more powerful, and malicious specters can maintain that connection much longer and can cause greater effects in our world. They are restless and seldom dormant; they are called manifestations.

## Haunted Places

Haunted places are usually the scenes of a great tragedy or a terrifying event, though sometimes a ghost will haunt a place where they found joy. This could be a former home, a workshop, even a tavern. Cemeteries, temples, theatres, or even woods or roads could be haunted.

Many manifestations are too weak to be more than an echo, but the powerful ones created by anger, sadness, or fear are truly loathsome and are reason enough to avoid a place altogether. A *detect evil and good* spell will determine if an area is haunted and a successful DC 20 Intelligence (Religion) check will determine any countermeasures. Most haunts can be dispelled from an area with holy water and the casting of the *hallow* spell.

## Haunted Items

Most wizards who dabble in magic item creation don't intentionally create cursed items. Cursed items are usually the result of an error on the creator's part rather than an item being haunted. Most laymen who deal in magic items are unable to determine the cause of the item's malfunction, only that it doesn't work the way it was intended.

Haunted items can be identified by making appropriate skill checks or by casting detect evil and good. Most haunted items will radiate evil. Some minor item haunts can be handled with remove curse and discarding the item,

while others require more involved steps. The simplest way to end a haunted item's effect is to discard it. The DM will decide whether the cursed item is haunted or flawed, or they can roll a d100 percentile based on the percentages below.

A character can determine if a cursed item is haunted (20% chance) by making a DC 20 Intelligence (Religion) check while examining the item. The character has advantage on this check if they are attuned to the item. On a success, they know whether or not the item is haunted. If it is haunted, they also glean how to remove the ectoplasm from the item so that it functions as intended.

If the item was created with a flaw (80% chance), there is usually nothing that can be done to repair the item. To determine if an item is flawed, the character must succeed on a DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check. If a character is attuned to the item, they have advantage on this skill check. Success indicates that the character has found a flaw in the item (if any) and what (if anything) can be done to repair the flaw so that the item functions as intended. The DM will determine if and how the item can be repaired.

Most haunted items are haunted by the ghosts of former owners. This item was once their most prized possession, and as is the case with many hauntings, the spirit has a tough time letting go. Some great roleplaying can be done convincing the ghost of an item's former owner to let the new owner use it. It could be an adventure all on its own. As the cosmic wheel turns, so too could this new owner one day be the ghost who can't let go.

## Haunted People

Some people are just cursed. They have done awful things and their aura is dark and ominous. Those sensitive to these auras will take particular note of haunted people.

People can be haunted because of grief, guilt, lust, anger, etc. Very rarely is the emotion causing the haunting a positive one.

Haunted people act as if possessed and often have some form of long-term or indefinite madness (see Chapter 8 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*: "Madness"). Most of these people can be helped in the short term by casting calm emotions or remove curse. Ability score reductions and status ailments can be undone with a casting of greater or lesser restoration. The person's suffering will continue until the haunt causing the effect is dispelled.

A haunted person can be identified by casting detect evil and good, or with a successful DC 20 Intelligence (Religion) check. Once the haunted person is identified, the steps to ending the haunting are also identified. Again, this can be done mechanically with rules and spells or it can be more organic, a great roleplaying opportunity for the characters to convince an angry ghost to forgive.

## Running a Haunting

One may wonder why there is a chapter in a book of traps dedicated to hauntings. Simple: Hauntings as presented here run much like traps. First, determine the type of the haunt (place, item, or person), then determine the severity of the haunt. Is it an echo or the dreaded manifestation? The nasty thing with hauntings is that a creature may not be able to detect the haunting until it is triggered.

Each haunt will operate mechanically as though it was a trap, or part of a trap. They are run like a trap, and when designing them, use the same formatting as a trap.

### Echoes

An echo is a minor haunt that is treated as a simple trap. Once triggered, the effect is usually acute. The haunt can usually be dispelled with one check, one casting, etc. The effect is usually over a smaller area. The effect of the haunt can still be quite dangerous.

### Manifestations

A manifestation is a more potent, ongoing effect similar to a complex trap. The haunt will have multiple effects once it is triggered, often not only hindering characters but doing them great harm as well. There may also be some lasting effects like madness, disease, poison, or even temporarily gaining a monster trait like Horrifying Visage. Dispelling these effects requires more checks (with higher DCs) or magical remedies. The area a manifestation affects is usually larger than

that of an echo. Manifestations can be quite deadly, and some of the effects of a manifestation can even be the hauntings of its previous victims!

# Echoes

**Level and Threat.** Haunts use the same rating system mechanic as traps (see Chapter 2 in *Xanathar's Guide to Everything*: "Designing Simple Traps").

**Description.** Describe the haunting with an overview of effects and a bit of background information about the haunt. Remember to describe sensory details other than sight. Do they hear children laughing, do they smell blood? Does the hair on their nape stand up? These are worn horror tropes but they set the mood and tone nicely.

**Trigger.** Each haunt has a trigger, a condition which triggers the haunt's effects. A trigger can be as simple as a creature enters an area or buys a cursed item. A trigger can be anything; a botched social encounter with a powerful NPC could cause that NPC to curse them with a spectral pest.

**Effects.** Effects are really what give the haunting it's horrific flavor. Where traps are meant to cause physical harm to characters, haunts can be used to damage a character's mental health. Easy-to-use effects can be found under Madness, Chapter 8 of the DMG. These are good mechanics to build on when designing haunting effects.

**Countermeasures.** Instead of the Perception or Investigation skills, as for traps, use another ability check to reveal the haunt, such as an Intelligence (Investigation) or (Religion) check. This gives other characters a shot at finding dangers. Mechanical traps have no agenda or motive, but a sentient magic trap or a haunt might. Consider choosing an alignment for the haunt; a ghost doing the haunting may be evil, or chaotic, and spells or abilities that detect alignment would likely detect the presence of the creature doing the haunting. List the alignment in the countermeasures section.

## Walls of the Abbatoir
*Echo haunting (level 1-4, moderate threat)*

The walls and doors of this room begin oozing blood and the room fills with a cacophony of panicked screams.

**Trigger.** A creature enters the room.

**Effect.** When it enters the room, a creature that can see or hear must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a success, the creature is unsettled but otherwise unaffected by the haunt. A failed saving throw results in the creature making skill checks and attack rolls with disadvantage until it leaves the room. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. Failure by 5 or more on this saving throw indicates the creature runs out of the room shrieking, using its entire movement to move as far from the room as possible.

**Countermeasures.** Creatures notice an unsettling aura as they

enter the room. Spells or abilities that detect evil indicate an evil presence. When the effect is triggered, a creature that succeeds on a DC 12 Intelligence (Religion) check recalls a potent incantation which bolsters the resolve of creatures in the face of threatening spirits. Living creatures who can hear the incantation have advantage on saving throws related to the effects of this haunting. The haunting can be permanently dispelled with a 10-minute ritual requiring a block of incense and a flask of holy water, which are consumed by the ritual. The character performing the ritual must make a DC 15 Intelligence (Religion) check. If at least one other creature assists with the ritual, they make this check with advantage. A successful check means the spirit is forever banished. A failed check indicates that the haunt is still banished but returns after 1d6 days.

## Manifestations

Mechanically, a manifestation works like a complex trap. Many of these ideas can be applied to complex traps as well.

**Level and Threat.** As above, use the trap rating guide. Consider awarding experience points for neutralizing a manifestation as one would for disabling a complex trap. These situations can be as dangerous and as involved as an encounter. Consult the chart in Chapter 2 of *Xanathar's Guide to Everything* for complex trap experience awards.

**Description.** Describe the manifestation. A manifestation, like a complex trap, has many elements. Consider delving into the background of this manifestation to help craft the language of its description to the players. Was the ghost once a wizard? Perhaps the characters catch a whiff of ozone like a spell has been cast. It is not always necessary to share these details with players explicitly but it can make describing the action during play more dynamic.

**Trigger.** As above, be specific with the conditions of the trigger. "When a creature enters a room" is fine. "When the characters enter the area" is not. 'Character' implies that only a player character can trigger the effect. 'Creature' is much broader and more in tune with the wording of the game mechanics. Secondly, what area? How large is it and where is it? What is the area of effect and how is it shaped? Define these parameters specifically, and do the same when describing the elements of the trap later on.

*Initiative.* The manifestation activates on initiative count 10 or 20. Each active element might have a different initiative count or the active element might have a different effect on each count.

*Active Elements.* On a manifestation's turn, it produces specific effects that are detailed in this part of the haunt's description. The more active elements a manifestation has, the more dangerous it is, and the less time the characters have to neutralize the threat or escape (if possible).

*Dynamic Elements.* A dynamic element is a threat that arises or evolves while the trap functions. Usually, changes involving dramatic elements take effect at the end of the trap's turn or in response to the creature's actions. Dynamic elements work to hinder the characters' efforts to neutralize a threat. Perhaps the DC for skill checks and saving throws increases by 1 every 1d4 turns until it reaches 20.

*Constant Elements.* A manifestation poses a threat even when it is not taking its turn. The constant elements describe how these parts of the haunt function. Most make an attack or force a saving throw against any creature that ends its turn within a certain area. Constant elements are a great way to control space and limit time. If every character can work on the threat unfettered, the threat won't be a threat for long. Damage and restricted movement are the two most obvious constant elements to employ. The frightened condition is especially effective here.

*Countermeasures.* Describe how the haunting can be detected. As with echoes, list the alignment of the haunting if it is not evil. In addition to providing a detailed and specific description of each element's function in the manifestation, provide specific conditions that neutralize an element. It may seem cruel but perhaps it may not be possible to disable a certain element of a manifestation. This effect should be minor and once this discovery is made, fleeing might be the better option.

# Theme

Whether you're designing a complex trap or a manifestation, it's wise to develop a theme. A theme helps you to design a more cohesive set of effects. If it seems like the design choices are rolled on a random chart and mashed together, the gestalt is nonsensical. Realistically, everything that was made was designed by someone. Consider the imaginary person who designed the traps in the imaginary dungeon. Consider the creature that is now the ghost terrorizing the characters.

This is why a theme makes for a better design. If the end goal is to draw something, start by drawing the 'box' it came in. The box in this analogy is the theme, which limits the scope and defines the aesthetic. It contains the chaos much like the box contains its contents.

Consider the theme "Revenge". What kinds of effects or elements could be related to the theme of

revenge? Consider how the revenge theme is used to construct this next haunting:.

# FALSEFERN'S FOLLY

*Manifestation haunting (level 1- 4, deadly threat)*

This haunting occurs near a trap. If someone notices the trap, they also notice evidence of the trap killing someone, like a pile of splintered bones and tattered clothes, or a gruesome blood splatter. The ghost of an unlucky rogue haunts the trap.

**Trigger.** Creatures notice their mood and emotions become unstable as they begin to manipulate the trap. A creature that makes a skill check or takes any action in an attempt to disarm the trap, triggers the haunting. Once this action is resolved, the haunting is triggered.

**Initiative.** The haunt activates on initiative count 20 and 10.

**Active Elements.** On the haunt's turn, it resets and triggers the trap it haunts.

Spring Trap (Initiative 20). Resolve the effect of the haunted trap as if it was just triggered. If the trap has already been disabled once (as a mechanical trap) or dispelled (as a magical trap), the creature makes all saving throws related to the trap's effects with advantage and takes only half damage from the trap's effect(s). If the haunted trap is disabled again, the haunt cannot use this element.

**Racking Scream (Initiative 10).** It the haunted trap is disarmed twice, the haunt can no longer use their

Spring Trap element, and howls with rage. All creatures who end their turn within a 30-foot sphere of the haunted trap's trigger mechanism must make a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw, taking 2d4 psychic damage on a failed save, half as much on a successful one.

**Dynamic Elements.** The spirit will use their ghastly influence to 'punish' characters for meddling with their trap. Once the trap is disabled a second time, the ghost becomes enraged and lashes out with their Racking Scream.

**Discharge.** Whenever a creature attempts a skill check related to disarming the haunted trap or takes an action in an effort to destroy the trap, resolve that action and then that character must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 1D6 lightning damage on a failed save, half as much on a successful one. Constant Elements. Creatures within the affected area of the haunted trap that aren't deafened can hear the distant, solemn tolling of a church bell. The echoing doom lingers even after they leave the area or neutralize the threats.

**Knell.** Each creature that enters the affected area of the trap or ends it's turn there must make a DC 12 Intelligence saving throw. On a success, nothing happens. On a failure, the creature has disadvantage on ability checks. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself with a success.

**Countermeasures.** Creatures notice their mood and emotions become unstable as they begin to manipulate the trap. Spells or abilities that detect evil

indicate an evil presence. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Religion) check reveals the haunt and its affinity for the trap. Avoiding the trap entirely prevents the haunt from triggering. Casting calm emotions ends all active, dynamic, and constant elements of the haunt for the spell's duration.

The haunt can only be dispelled by destroying the trap it haunts. For simple mechanical traps, use AC 15 with 10 HP. Use this for each element of a complex mechanical trap. For magical traps (or magical elements of a complex trap) and hazardous terrain, use the conditions outlined within its countermeasures section. Once the trap is destroyed, all of the effects of the haunt end.

Add 400 xp to the Experience reward for the trap if the players destroy the trap and dispel the haunt.

This haunt runs just like a complex trap because, at its core, it **is** one. The revenge theme plays out in the entire haunt. The haunt triggers when the characters mess with the spirit's trap (How dare they?). It continues as the haunt springs the trap on them, shocks them for touching it, screams at them for ruining it, and hinders their concentration with sepulchral bells. Emotion plays a key role in managing the haunt, which is alluded to when the characters first discovered the haunt by triggering it. When the trap is destroyed, so is the haunt, for the spirit no longer has an anchor to the Material Plane.

Another design element is the character that became the haunt. Falseferne was one of Jeromy's first RPG characters.

She was a rogue of the skill-focused variety. Falseferne was killed when she accidentally triggered the trap she was trying to disable, a very likely circumstance for a haunting. Just as a good villain can be the embodiment of taking an emotion too far, a good haunting can simply be regressing the character to a child-like emotional state. Consider the description of the use of the revenge theme in Falseferne's Folly in the paragraph above. The ghost seems petty, immature, and spiteful. One could almost pity the ghost; it's all they have left. Players can empathize. Good horror isn't about the monsters chasing and killing people. It's also about seeing the monsters we find in ourselves.

Use gender-neutral language in the trap's design because the characters are probably too distracted with other problems to discern gender during the encounter and because frankly, it really doesn't matter. It isn't vital to the trap's design, it makes it easier to incorporate the material, and it avoids sexist overtones. A memorable character's death may have inspired the haunt's theme but don't let that character hijack your design. Keep these considerations in mind during the design process and see ***Chapter 1: What is a Trap?*** for further reading on trap design and mechanics.

## Children Laughing

*Echo haunting (level 1- 4, moderate threat)*

Creatures who enter the area (60-foot square) hear children laughing and playing. They hear the footsteps of children running past them.

**Trigger.** A creature that enters the area triggers the haunting.

**Effect.** When a creature that can hear enters the area, it must make a DC 15 Intelligence saving throw. If it succeeds, it remains unaffected by the haunting and is immune to the effects of this haunt for 24 hours. If a creature fails this saving throw, it is unnerved by the sounds and rolls Intelligence and Wisdom checks with disadvantage until it completes a short or long rest.

**Countermeasures.** Creatures may make a DC 15 Intelligence (Religion) check to identify the haunt. The lesser restoration spell ends the effect of the haunting on a creature. The haunting can be destroyed by using the Channel Divinity class feature and a flask of holy water to dispel the spirits.

## Commission of Malice

*Manifestation haunting (level 5- 10, dangerous threat)*

This powerful manifestation looks like a lifesize portrait of a noble. The subject is usually trapped  in some regal pose and dressed in fine garb. These paintings can be found in museums, libraries, temples, homes, or anywhere people gather. The cruel, vain spirit within the painting thrives on the attention it receives and the suffering it causes others. Metaphysicians believe this manifestation to be a more potent but similar haunting found in the Psychic Painting.

**Trigger.** A creature that enters the room where the painting is displayed triggers the haunting.

**Initiative.** The haunting activates on initiative count 10.

**Active Elements.** The manifestation may use both effects once on each of its turns.

**Egress (Initiative 10).** The person in the portrait leaps out of the painting and may make an attack before re-entering the original painting or any other painting, mirror, or window within 60 feet.

Alternatively, it may appear in another painting, mirror, or window within 60 feet and make an attack against a creature that is within 5 feet  of that painting, mirror, or window. This attack has a + 8 attack bonus and deals 5 (1d10) bludgeoning damage. The egress has AC 15 and 22 (4d10) HP. If the egress is reduced to 0 HP, it vanishes and reappears in the original painting.

**Ectoplasmic Burst (Initiative 10).** (Recharge using Misery effect). The manifestation gathers all its malice and rage, unleashing it in a rush of negative energy. All creatures within a 30-foot cone of the original painting must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 21 (6d6) necrotic damage on a failed save, and half as much on a successful one.

**Dynamic Elements.** The manifestation may use this effect once per turn, at the end of its turn. Each turn, the Wisdom

saving throw DC increases until it reaches 20, at which time it then resets to normal.

**Misery.** At the end of each of the manifestations turns, it focuses its malice on one unlucky soul, locking eyes with them and filling them with thoughts of despair. Select a creature the manifestation can see; that creature must make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the creature takes 7 (2d6) psychic damage, and the manifestation regains the use of its Ectoplasmic Burst. If the creature succeeds on this saving throw, they take half the damage and the manifestation does not regain the use of its Ectoplasmic Burst effect.

**Constant Elements.** The manifestation is constantly filling the room with self-promoting chatter, and it will reply to rebukes and hecklers.

**Braggadocio.** All creatures who can hear who end their turn within a 60-foot cube of the original painting must make a DC 13 Charisma saving throw as the spirit's voice prattles on about it's great deeds. Creatures who fail this saving throw take 5 (1d10) psychic damage, or half as much on a successful one.

**Rejuvenation.** If the egress has less than it's maximum hit points when it ends its turn within the original painting, it regains 7 (2d6) hit at the end of its turn. The egress cannot leave its original painting if it is not at maximum hit points.

**Countermeasures.** A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Religion) check reveals the painting as the source of the hauntings power.

**Destroy the Painting.** The painting can be destroyed (AC 11, 10 (3d6) HP). The painting is immune to all damage types except radiant damage and fire damage. Causing radiant or fire damage will cause the painting to automatically fails all saving throws. When the painting is destroyed, the image of the noble is consumed by radiant light or fire and vanishes.

**Cover everything up.** Removing mirrors and paintings from the walls, covering them with cloth, and closing the curtains on windows traps the spirit in the original painting, making it easier to deal with. If the original painting is covered, the spirit will remove the covering when it uses Egress. If taken down, the portrait will right itself at the beginning of its turn on initiative count 20.

**Magic.** Casting *banishment* or similar spells of 4th level or higher causes the manifestation to become dormant for the duration of the spell, during which time other actions can be taken to manage the threat.

**Exorcise.** A cleric, druid, or paladin may use a bonus action to present their holy symbol and roll a DC 13 Intelligence (Religion) check to recite litany and prayers in an attempt to exorcise the spirit. On a success, the creature may select one element to become dormant for 1d8 rounds. On a failure, nothing happens. If the manifestation begins its turn and all elements are disabled, the painting bursts into holy fire and the ashes sublimate.

## CRAFTER'S SPIRIT

*Echo haunting (level 1- 4, moderate threat) (person)*

The character encounters a benevolent spirit of a craftsperson. The spirit feels a kinship with this character and shares their knowledge with them. The character feels the call of home and a life less fraught with danger.

**Trigger.** A creature interacts with the spirit.

**Effect.** When a creature interacts with the spirit, it seems to understand what they are saying or doing. The spirit smiles and nods before fading away. The creature gains proficiency in any one set of tools or supplies, gaining advantage on ability checks when using those tools. The creature feels a strong desire to retire to a life of crafting. The creature cannot gain advantage on any other ability checks, attack rolls, or saving throws while haunted by this spirit.

**Countermeasures.** If a creature doesn't interact with the spirit, nothing happens. A successful DC 17 Intelligence (Religion) check reveals the spirit as a well-meaning yet debilitating personal haunting. The haunting can be dispelled by casting *remove curse* or similar spells of 3rd level or higher. Once dispelled, the haunted creature loses the tool proficiency gained when they were initially haunted.

## DOORS SLAMMING

*Echo haunting (level 1- 4, moderate threat)*

Creatures entering this room are greeted with the cacophony of creaking, slamming doors. They seem to have no physical force acting on them as they open and close randomly and violently.

**Trigger.** A creature that enters the room triggers the haunting.

**Effect.** While a creature is standing in a room affected by this haunting, they have disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing and they have a passive (Perception) of 10 for ability checks that rely on hearing while the haunting is active.

**Countermeasures.** A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Religion) check reveals the haunting, in addition to the following:
- A chant that severs the spirit's link with the area for 2 (1d4) hours.
- A 1-hour ritual requiring a bell, holy water, and 3 candles. The ritual permanently banishes the spirit. There is no check required to perform this ritual but the material components are consumed in the performance of it.

## GHOST WIND

*Echo haunting (level 1- 4, dangerous threat)*

A zephyr carries a chill in the air. It wraps the heart in icy fingers and snuffs certain light sources.

**Trigger.** A creature that enters the 30-foot square area of effect triggers the haunting.

**Effect.** This haunting can occur inside or outdoors. The creature triggering the haunting must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 11 (2d10) cold

damage on a failed save, and half as much on a successful one. A creature wearing *boots of the winterlands*, or under the effect of similar magic, gains advantage on this saving throw. All candles and torches within the area of effect are extinguished when the haunt is triggered.

   ***Countermeasures.*** A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Religion) check reveals the haunt. The haunt can be bypassed by not entering the area of effect. The effect can be destroyed by splashing the affected area with holy water. Only one flask of holy water is needed to dowse the entire area of effect. Once the haunt is triggered and the effect resolved, the haunting is destroyed.



# Glowing Orb

*Echo haunting (level 1- 4, dangerous threat)*

From afar this haunting looks like a Will o' the Wisp or a Dancing Lights spell. Unwary creatures who follow these ominous lights soon find themselves harried by a persistent curse.

   ***Trigger.*** A creature that ends its turn within 60 of the orb triggers the haunting.

   ***Effect.*** If a creature ends its turn within 60' feet of the orb must make a DC 15 Charisma saving throw. A failure means the orb doesn't notice the creature's presence or isn't interested in the creature. Success indicates the orb has chosen them and flies over to that creature. If multiple creatures must make this saving throw, the orb chooses the character with the highest result. Once the orb chooses a creature, the orb dissipates and the chosen creature begins to glow.

That creature is cursed. The orb has an effect similar to the spell *faerie fire*. The creature is outlined in blue light and sheds dim light in a 10-foot radius. Any attack roll against the affected creature has advantage if the attacker can see it and the affected creature can't benefit from being invisible.

   ***Countermeasures.*** A creature who can see the Glowing Orb may make a DC 15 Intelligence (Religion) check. If successful, they know the orb is not a will o' the wisp or *dancing lights* as those would typically have multiple

orbs of light. The haunt can simply be avoided. If a creature is cursed by the orb, a remove curse or dispel magic spell can end the effect of the orb. Similar spells 3rd level or higher will also end the effect of the orb.

## Oleg's Impetus

*Echo haunting (level 1- 4, moderate threat) (magic item, worn)*

The item this spirit haunts continues to function normally, only manifesting itself when the owner of the item chooses to move on.

**Trigger.** A creature that takes a move action while wearing the item, triggers the haunting. If the item requires attunement, the haunt is not triggered until the creature is both attuned to the item and then takes a move action.

**Effect.** A creature that triggers the haunting must make a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw. A creature that succeeds on this saving throw isare unaffected. The creature that fails this saving throw must move their entire walking speed before ending their movement. They cannot take an action or a bonus action until they complete their movement.

**Countermeasures.** A successful DC 17 Intelligence (Religion) check reveals the haunting and the creature succeeding on the check remembers a potent ritual to cleanse the ectoplasm from the item. The ritual requires a block of incense, a flask of holy water, a mixture of gold dust (2 gold pieces worth) and crushed oak ashes, and one hour to complete. The material components are consumed at the conclusion of the ritual. The haunting can also be exorcised by casting a remove curse or similar spells of 3rd level or higher.

## Perimania

*Echo haunting (level 1- 4, moderate threat) (magic weapon that requires attunement)*

This echo attaches itself to a magic weapon. The weapon's magic functions as intended. Though the creature finds the weapon clumsy, they aren't able to determine why. They always have a slight twitch that spoils their aim, or the flash of a figure in their peripheral vision distracts them during a key moment within melee.

**Trigger.** A creature attunes to the weapon.

**Effect.** When a creature triggers the haunting, it is not always apparent that something is wrong. As long as the echo persists, the weapon functions as intended, except that it can't score a critical hit, nor can its wielder add their ability score modifier for damage rolls. You may wish to keep this handicap hidden, letting the character roll the damage for critical hits (halving the damage) and subtracting the ability modifier in secret while telling the player that their character felt "they just didn't feel like that was a good hit".

**Countermeasures.** A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals the echo. A creature attuned to the item gains advantage on this check. Once

revealed, the echo is simple to dispel, requiring a 1-hour ritual using a block of incense, three red candles, and a bell to appease the restless spirit attached to the item. The ritual consumes the material components upon completion. The character performing this ritual must make a successful DC 13 Intelligence (Religion) check. Success indicates that the spirit is permanently dispelled. On a failure, the echo is only appeased for a short time and returns within 1d4 days to continue subtly disrupting and distracting the creature using the haunted item.

## Psychic Painting

*Echo haunting (level 5- 10, dangerous threat) (item, portrait)*

An unnerving portrait found in a museum, an abandoned house, or stashed in a moldy basement begins to undermine the will of those who meet its stare. This haunted item begins as a commissioned portrait of a wealthy noble. After the death of the owner, their spirit manifests through the painting and drives those who look at it mad. The eyes from the portrait seem to return the character's gaze no matter where they stand.

**Trigger.** A creature that makes an ability check related to the painting triggers the haunting.

**Effect.** When a creature makes an ability check related to the painting (trying to identify the person in the portrait, looking behind it for a hidden door or switch, etc.), they must make a DC 17 Charisma saving throw. On a success, they feel an ominous presence attempt to sway their thoughts, but they shake it off. A failed saving throw indicates the creature is possessed by the painting and is highly receptive to suggestion. Until the end of the creatures next long rest, the creature has disadvantage on all saving throws to resist the effects of illusion spells and to avoid the charmed condition. A creature that fails this saving throw by 5 or more is subject to the effect of the *suggestion* spell, with the DM prescribing a task within the parameters of that spells effect.

**Countermeasures.** A successful DC 17 Intelligence (Religion) check reveals the haunting and how to dispel it, but making this check triggers the haunting. If the creature succeeded on the above Charisma saving throw, it may reroll this saving throw with advantage, without triggering the trap, as it contemplates what just happened. The painting cannot possess someone that it cannot see, nor can a creature become possessed if it cannot see the painting. Hiding or covering the painting works just as well as ignoring it. The painting can be destroyed (AC 11, HP 3, vulnerable to fire) but expect any creature already possessed by the painting to fight to the death to prevent the painting from being destroyed, hidden, or covered. A two-hour ritual involving a bell, holy water, a pound of salt, and a block of incense (which are consumed upon completion) can be used to banish the foul spirit anchored to the painting. At the

end of the ritual, the creatures performing the rite must make a DC 17 Charisma (Intimidation) check. On a success, the spirit haunting the painting is convinced that the power of the creature is greater and flees to the Negative Plane. If the check fails, the haunting still flees but returns to the painting within 3 (1d6) days. If the painting has been destroyed, the spirit is banished to the Negative Plane.

## SCRATCHING IN THE WALLS

*Echo haunting (level 1- 4, moderate threat)*

This haunting is only found within buildings. When a creature enters the room for the first time, they hear screeching and scratches coming from inside the walls.

***Trigger.*** A creature enters the room.

***Effect.*** When a creature that can hear begins its turn within the affected room, they must make a DC 13 Intelligence saving throw.

Creatures that fail this saving throw take 5 (1d10) psychic damage and must use their action to attack the walls of the room, smashing them open to "kill the rats inside". Creatures that succeed on this saving throw take half damage, are unaffected by the haunting, and are immune to the haunting's effect for 24 hours. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the start of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. This effect also ends if the haunt is dispelled or the affected creature leaves the room.

***Countermeasures.*** A creature succeeding on a DC 15 Intelligence (Religion) check recalls a potent prayer that grants creatures which can hear and understand the prayer advantage on Intelligence saving throws related to this haunting. The haunting can be bypassed by not entering the room or by not ending a turn in the room. The haunting can be ended permanently by casting *dispel magic*, using the Channel Divinity class feature and a flask of holy water, or by completely destroying all the walls in the room.

# Chapter 4:

# Hazards

# Acoustic Crystals

*Hazard (level 5- 10, dangerous threat)*

These giant crystals grow in deep subterraneous spaces like caverns and abandoned mines. The crystals jut out from the walls and ceilings in rows of nearly-perfect tetrahedrons. They amplify sound and cause it to reverberate.

**Trigger.** A creature makes a noise louder than speaking.

**Effect.** Any sound made in this affected area becomes louder. Creatures who speak find their voices boom and echo as if they shouted. A pitched battle or explosion creates catastrophic cacophony. Creatures that can hear have vulnerability to thunder damage while in this room.

A creature that can hear that ends its turn in this room during combat must make a DC 17 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the creature takes 11 (2d10) thunder damage and is deafened until they complete a short rest. A creature that fails by 5 or more also becomes dizzy and ill from the noise, gaining the poisoned condition for 1 hour. A creature may not choose to fail this saving throw. Creatures that succeed on this saving throw take half damage and aren't deafened. In addition, the noise is audible out to 300 feet, possibly (what am I saying? Definitely) alerting other wandering monsters to the feckless idiot who triggered the crystals.

**Countermeasures.** A successful DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals the hazard. Creatures can traverse the area carefully, in an attempt to make as little noise as possible. Such a creature must make a DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth) check. A creature moving through the area at half speed gains advantage on this check. On a success, the hazard doesn't trigger. A failure triggers the hazard. If a creature fails this check by 5 or more, every creature in the affected area that can hear takes an additional 5 (1d10) thunder damage. Casting a *silence* spell or similar effect negates the hazard.

# Bottles in the Walls

*Hazard (level 1- 4, moderate threat)*

This hazard is created when a building or floor is made of concrete or a similar material. While the concrete is being poured, empty bottles are pushed neck first into the walls, floors, and perhaps ceiling. As the concrete settles, the bottles shatter. Later if there are any unbroken bottles, they are broken as well, creating a minefield of slashing, gouging, slivers of glass sticking
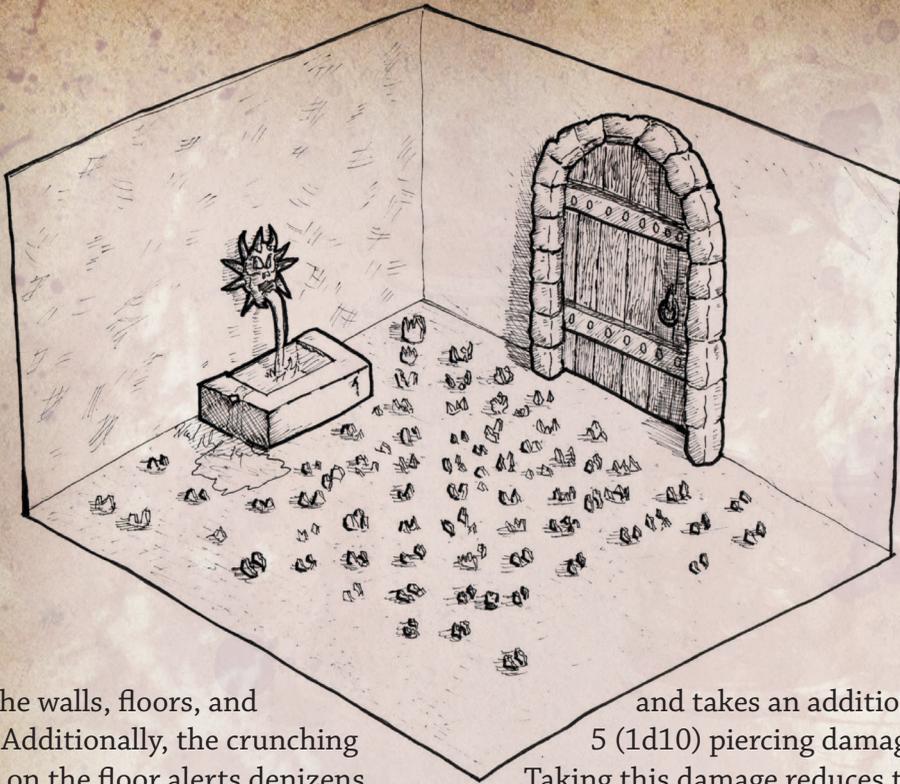
out of the walls, floors, and ceiling. Additionally, the crunching of glass on the floor alerts denizens of intruders.

**Trigger.** A creature entering a space adjacent to an affected wall, a space on the floor, or enters an area with a low-hanging affected ceiling triggers the hazard.

**Effect.** Creatures wearing medium or heavy armor are not affected by this hazard. This hazard has no effect on undead or constructs. Creatures wearing light or no armor, who attempt to move through an affected space, must make a DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check as they leave each affected space. A creature moving through the affected area at half speed gains advantage on this ability check. On a success, nothing happens and they avoid all danger. Creatures that fail this ability check take 3 (1d6) slashing damage and may then continue their move if possible. A creature that fails this check by 5 or more stops moving this turn and takes an additional 5 (1d10) piercing damage. Taking this damage reduces the creature's walking speed by 10 feet until the creature regains at least 1 hit point, or the wound is treated with a successful DC 17 Wisdom (Medicine) check, removing the glass splinters from the affected creature's body.

**Countermeasures.** A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the hazard as it is easy to spot. Characters who are affected by the hazard can carefully and slowly move through the affected areas at half speed. Characters can levitate or fly through the area, careful to avoid walls ceilings and floors. Incorporeal creatures are unaffected, as are creatures under the effect of a *gaseous form* or similar spell.

# CHARON'S BREATH

*Hazard (level 1- 4, dangerous threat)*

A thick gray mist that drifts through graveyards, mausoleums, and derelict churches. This threats sinister power is revealed only when a creature is nearing death.

**Trigger.** A creature that enters the mist triggers the hazard.

**Effect.** This heavy fog, dubbed "Charon's Breath" after the boatman on the River Styx, is the size of a 20-foot cube. Any creature that enters the fog must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a success, nothing happens. Creatures that fail appear to be unaffected except that the pupils of their eyes take on an hourglass shape. Though unsettling, it does not affect a creature's vision. The unapparent side effect is that the creature rolls death saving throws with disadvantage until the effect of this hazard ends.

**Countermeasures.** A successful DC 17 Intelligence (Religion or Nature) check allows a creature to identify the hazard. They also discover that if a creature can pass through the fog without breathing, they will be unaffected. A *lesser restoration* spell ends the effect of the hazard for 1d4 days. A *lesser restoration* or similar spell ends the effect permanently if cast using a 3rd level spell slot or higher. The visual element of the hazard itself cannot be destroyed or dispelled. It can be moved at a rate of 5-foot per round with a gust of wind spell or similar effect.

# CHOKE FROST

*Hazard (level 5-10, dangerous threat)*

This deadly frost is most often found in icy caves or in the lairs of powerful creatures who shroud themselves in the chill of winter, such as yetis, ice devils, ice elementals, or white dragons.

**Description.** This white mist hardens into an icy crystal like form and saps the strength of creatures who stand upon its surface, slowly turning their flesh icy blue as it drains away their warmth.

**Trigger.** Each time a creature enters an area of choke frost, or ends its turn within the hazardous area.

**Effect.** The creature must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or lose 3 Hit Die. The area is difficult terrain.

**Countermeasures.** A creature who has resistance to cold damage has advantage on this saving throw, and creatures immune to cold ignore this effect.

# DEFILED GROUND

*Hazard (setback)*

This is the site of a dark necromancer's powerful ritual, or an area of ceremonial sacrifice. The stench of death fills a bloody area of any size, attracting spirits.

**Description.** This area is a focal point of dark magic and is used to enhance spells from the school of necromancy.

**Trigger.** A creature who is standing on an area of defiled ground casts a spell from the necromancy school of 1st level or higher.

**Effect.** The necromancy spell is empowered, and is the spell is treated as if it was cast using a spell slot one level higher than the expended spell slot, up to 9th level. In addition, saving throws to avoid the spells effects are made with disadvantage.

**Countermeasures.** A vial of holy water purifies a 10-foot-square area of defiled ground when sprinkled on it, and a *hallow* spell purifies unhallowed ground within its area.



Defiled Ground
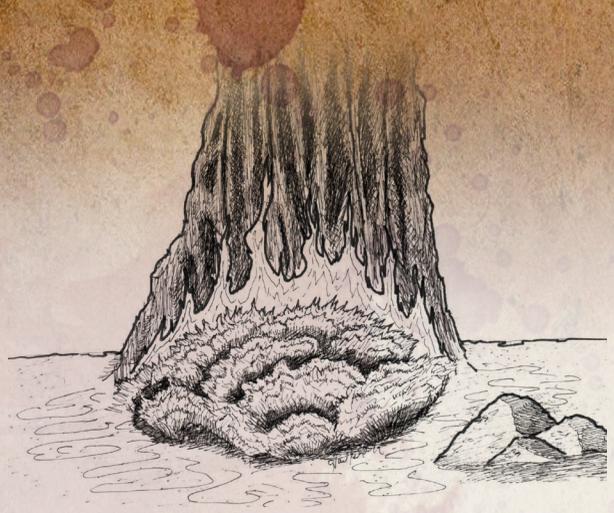
# EMBER MOSS

*Hazard (level 1-4, dangerous threat)*

This moss is abundant in the Underdark. Ember moss is extremely flammable, making it a favored material for creating torches as it burns indefinitely.

**Description.** Its nature to burn hot and bright can make it treacherous terrain. If the area has been ignited by fire, a creature takes on going fire damage when they enter or start their turn in the hazardous area.

**Trigger.** A creature takes fire damage or drops a torch while standing in an area or ember moss.

**Effect.** After the moss catches fire, when a creature enters the area for the first time on a turn or starts its turn there, it takes 5 (1d10) fire damage and has disadvantage on saving throws against fire damage. The fire ignites the area of ember moss and flammable objects in the area that aren't being worn or carried. A creature who enters or starts its turn or in the ember moss flame takes 5 (1d10) fire damage.

**Countermeasures.** Submerging the entire area in water extinguishes the moss.

# Fire Spore Mushrooms

*Hazard  (level 1- 4, dangerous threat)*

These nasty little mushrooms look like puffball mushrooms with bright orange spots. When a creature steps on them, they spray a fine mist of pink spores that are both poisonous and highly flammable.

**Trigger.** A creature that disturbs a mushroom triggers the hazard.

**Effect.** These mushrooms can grow anywhere. They grow in small patches of 10-foot spaces, though it is not uncommon to find a few other colonies nearby. When a creature enters the affected area, they must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed saving throw, the creature takes 11 (2d10) poison damage. If the creature is carrying an open flame, such as a candle or a torch, they take an additional 7 (2d6) fire damage. On a success, the creature was very lucky and did not disturb the area too much, taking half the poison damage and no fire damage. If a creature occupying an affected area takes fire damage, they must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking an additional 7 (2d6) fire damage on a failed save, and half as much on a successful one.

**Countermeasures.** A successful DC 17 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals the hazard. Incorporeal creatures and creatures under the effect of the gaseous form or a similar effect are not affected by this hazard. It the hazard takes 1 point of fire damage, it bursts in a gout of fire, rendering it inert for 2d8 hours. Any creature in the affected area must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) fire damage on a failed save and half as much on a successful one. The hazard can be avoided by avoiding the affected areas.

# GRAB GRASS

*Hazard (setback)*

Grab grass has thick, tough, dark blue and green tendrils, like plants often found in the forests of the Feywild or areas heavily influenced by the Feywild's magic bleeding into the Material Plane.

**Description.** An adventurer who carelessly enters this hazardous area can quickly find a mundane encounter with enemies much more challenging.

**Trigger.** A creature is knocked prone while in the hazardous area.

**Effect.** A large or smaller creature that is knocked prone while in the area is restrained until it is freed. A creature can use its action to make a DC 14 Strength check, freeing itself or another creature within its reach on a success. This area counts as difficult terrain.

**Countermeasures.** The grab grass has no effect on creatures that are formless, or creatures that are size huge or larger. Dealing 10 or more fire damage to a 10-foot-square area of grass destroys it.
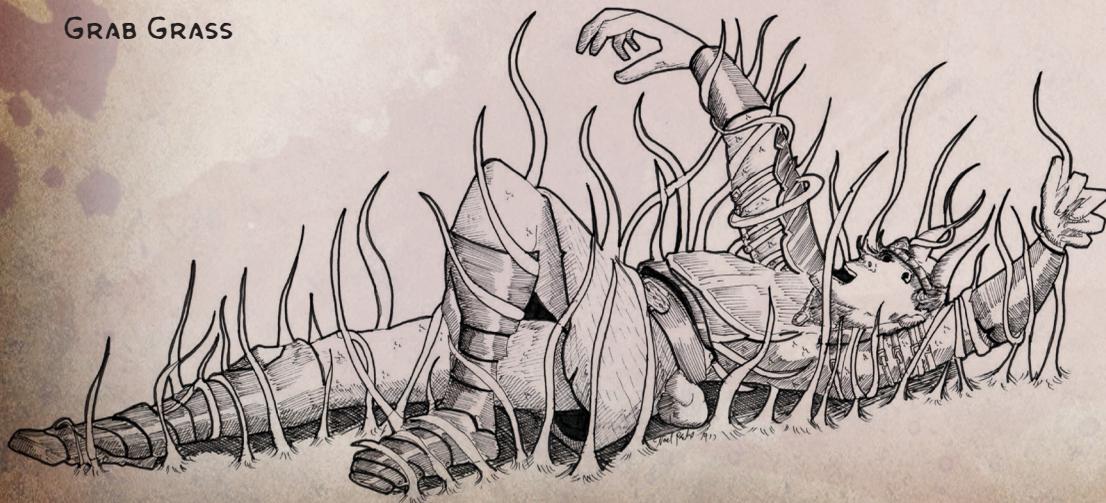
# GRABBING HANDS

*Hazard (level 1- 4, moderate threat)*

This hazard is prevalent in graveyards but can also be found in crypts, burial mounds, potter's fields, and other sepulchral settings. When the character enters the affected area, dozens of rotting hands burst from the ground (or walls) and grab at the character.

**Trigger.** A creature that enters the affected area triggers the hazard.

**Effect.** Designate an area of up to ten 5-foot spaces anywhere on the map. Each space you designate is affected by the hazard and entering one of these spaces triggers the hazard, as does beginning one's turn within a designated area. Each of the affected spaces counts as difficult terrain for the purposes of movement. Any creature beginning their turn in an affected space must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw. On a success, nothing happens. If the creature fails the saving throw, they are knocked prone.

GRAB GRASS

GRABBING HANDS

**Countermeasures.** A passive Wisdom (Perception) of 13 or better results in the character experiencing a strange sensation whilst adjacent to the area, momentarily preventing the characters from entering the area, ending their movement. Characters actively looking for traps or hazards must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check to notice the latent hands hidden the minutiae of the terrain. The hazard can be bypassed by avoiding the affected spaces. If holy water is sprinkled on the ground, the hazard becomes dormant for 1d8 hours. One flask of holy water can be used to cover up to 10 spaces in this way. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Religion) check reveals that any character with the Channel Divinity class feature may use that feature to destroy the hazard by chanting prayers and reciting litanies. Doing so consumes a flask of holy water but dispels the profane magic that created this hazard, rendering it permanently inert.

# OPPOSITES ATTRACT

*Hazard (level 5- 10, deadly threat)*

Iron plates, streaked with rust, line the walls, floor, and ceiling of a long, 10-foot-wide corridor.

**Trigger.** When the first creature in the marching order reaches the far end of the corridor, the trap triggers.

**Effect.** Magical energy surges through the walls, magnetizing them. Creatures in ferrous armor, including studded leather, must make a DC 18 Strength saving throw or be dragged to the nearest wall and restrained there, taking 1d6 bludgeoning damage from slamming into the wall.

Creatures wielding ferrous-metal implements—like weapons—must succeed on a DC 18 Strength saving throw or have the item wrenched from their grasp to slam against the nearest wall.

A creature can use its action to remove itself or a ferrous-metal weapon from the wall. To do so, it must succeed on a DC 18 Strength (Athletics) check.

For every 5 feet it travels through the corridor, the creature must repeat the saving throw.

**Countermeasures.** A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the faint magic rune etched into the floor at either end of the corridor. A spell or other effect that can sense the presence of magic, such as *detect magic*, reveals an aura of transmutation magic on the runes and walls. A successful *dispel magic* (DC 15) cast on each rune destroys the trap. Shattering the stone slab into which the rune is etched destroys the trap. The slab has AC 24, 22 hit points, and is immune to all damage except bludgeoning.

**Variations.** For added vengeance, choose one of the following options:

- When the trap triggers, an alarm bell begins to ring. 1d6 rounds later, monsters of your choice—preferably those without ferrous-metal weapons—arrive to clean up the intruders.
- 1d6 rounds after the trap triggers, oozes—like black puddings or a gelatinous cube—glop out of holes in the ceiling to literally dissolve the hapless characters.

# Radiation Poisoning

*Hazard (level 5- 10, deadly threat)*

Though science has not yet discovered radiation and radioactive elements, the threat is real. The creature enters an area and finds a shiny or glowing thing; creatures within 60 feet of the thing are subject to the radiation's effect. If you're exceptionally cruel, you might choose to place this effect on a magic or other item your players particularly covet.

**Trigger.** A creature moves into the area.

**Effect.** All creatures within 60 feet of the radioactive object are bombarded with high levels of gamma radiation and must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a success, a creature takes 5 (1d10) necrotic damage. On a failure, a creature takes 5 (1d10) necrotic damage and is poisoned, with nausea and headaches, until the end of its next turn.

Each hour a creature remains within range of the radioactive object, they must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the
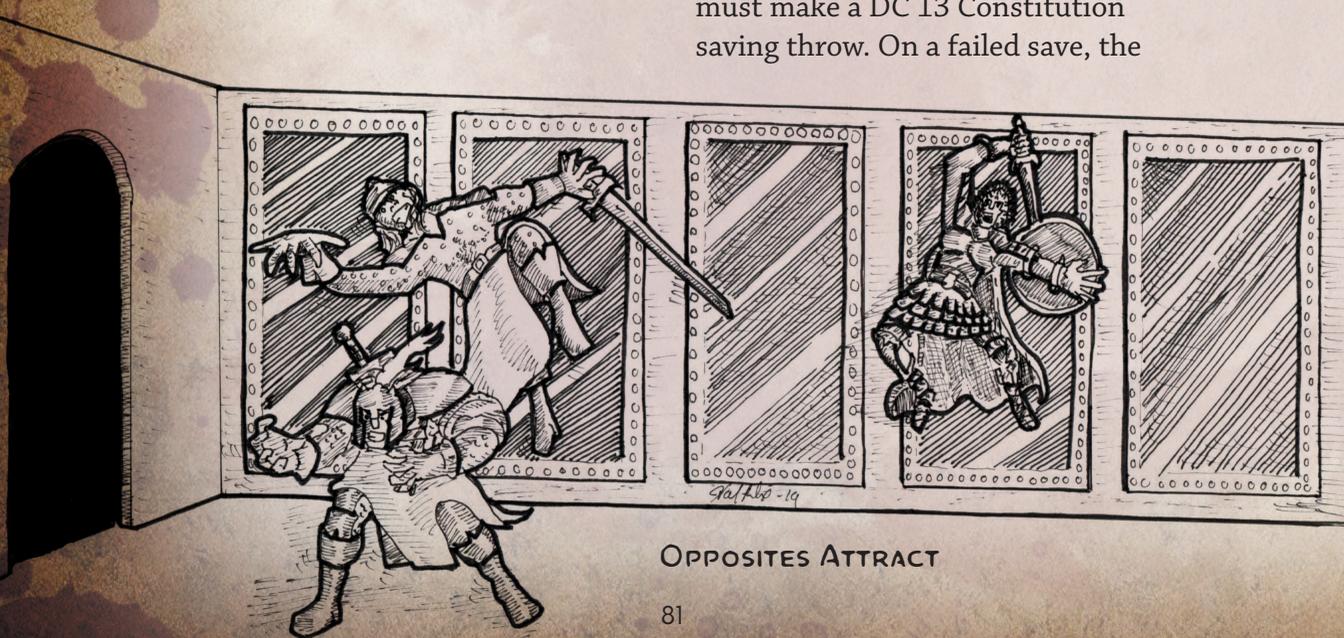


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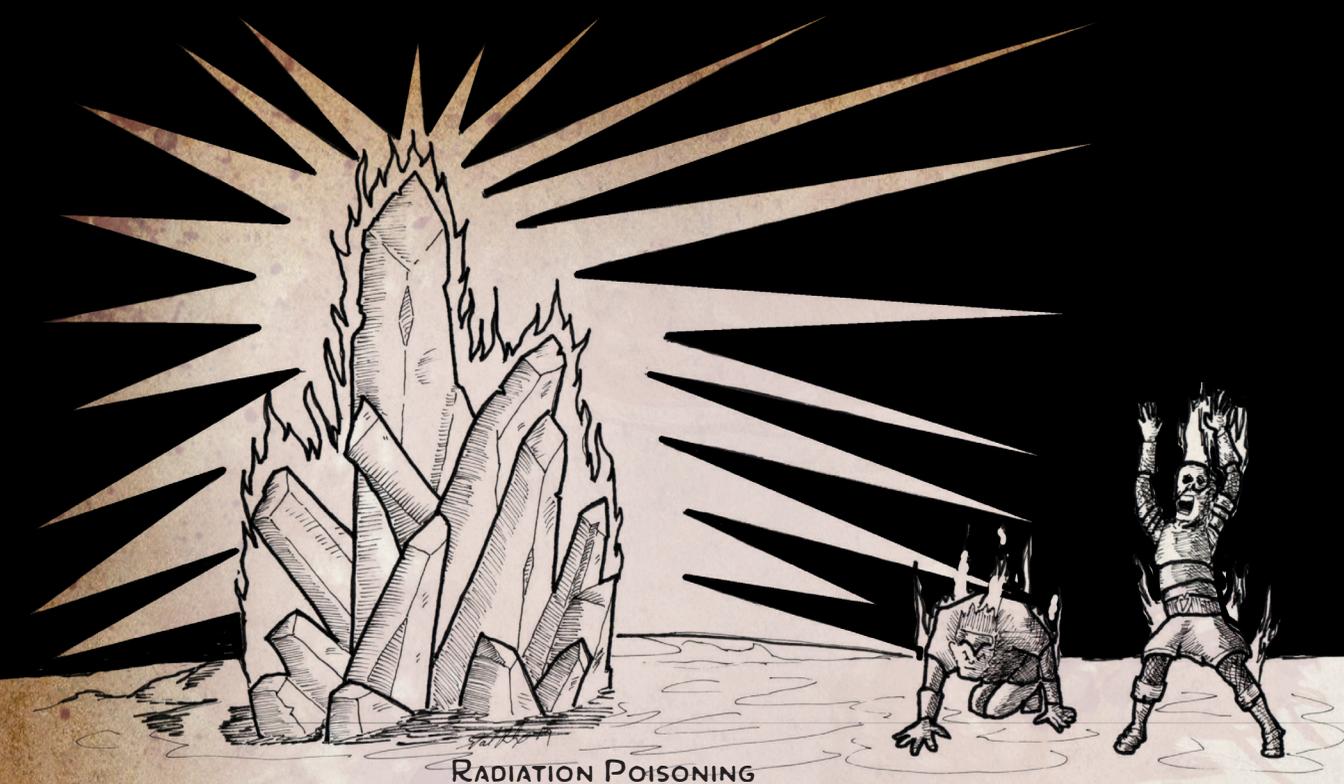
**Radiation Poisoning**

creature loses 1 Hit Die from their Hit Dice pool. These Hit Dice can't be regained at the end of a long rest if the creature is still within range of the radiation. If a creature has no more Hit Dice remaining in their Hit Dice pool, it collapses unconscious and must begin making death saving throws. As usual, three failed saving throws results in the creature dying.

*Countermeasures.* A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check reveals the hazard and that remaining more than 60 feet away from the area or object will end its effect. Undead and constructs are immune to this effect.

# Shadow's Hunger, The

*Hazard (level 5- 10, deadly threat)*

This corridor is riddled with twisted hideous faces and is always at least ninety feet long, though it can be longer.

*Trigger.* A creature moves into the area.

*Effect.* While a creature is in the corridor, at the start of each of its turns it must make a Constitution saving throw DC 14 or take 14(4d6) necrotic damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one. If the saving throw is failed by 5 or more, the creature's hit point maximum is reduced by the same amount until they finish a long rest.

At the end of the corridor is a room in which a shadow demon resides. The demon has hit points equal to the damage suffered by all creatures damaged by the corridor over the last 24 hours. For every 15 hp above 66 increase the demons Dexterity by 2 and its claw attack bonus by 1.

*Countermeasures.* The trap is discovered on a successful DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check, and can be suppressed by *dispel magic* or similar spells. Each 10-foot section of the corridor must be dispelled separately and after 24 hours the magic will return to that section.

# Toxic Gases

*Hazard (level 11-16, deadly threat)*

In certain environments, toxic gases are always present, but above ground, their concentration is usually not high enough to hurt people; in fact, exposure to them may even go unnoticed. Underground or in confined spaces with inadequate air circulation, toxic gases can kill quite quickly. Their effects may go unnoticed until it is too late.

**Trigger.** A creature enters an affected area triggers the hazard.

**Effect.** Pockets of toxic gas can build up over a long time, given the right conditions, so the area of effect could be quite large, encompassing several rooms. Gases take effect slowly, so designate an area of the map (a certain dungeon level for example) that is the area of effect. A creature ending its turn within this area is subject to the effects of the toxic gas and must roll a Constitution saving throw. Refer to the conditions listed for each outcome for the toxic gas affecting the area.

**Gases.** Select one of the common subterranean toxic gases from the list below or create one of your own:

- Carbon Dioxide ($CO_2$): Odorless and colorless; in high enough concentrations, it has a bitter acidic taste that makes the lips and nose tingle. Success: shortness of breath (no effect) Failure: confusion: (disadvantage on Wisdom and Intelligence ability checks)
- Carbon Monoxide (CO) Odorless and colorless, even at extremely high concentrations. Success: headache (no affect) Failure: blurred vision: disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight and disadvantage on all attack rolls.
- Methane ($CH_4$) Odorless and colorless, even at high concentrations. Fortunately, other gases like hydrogen sulfide are present as well. Methane is also extremely flammable; keep that in mind if a creature is carrying torches or lanterns. Creatures who enter affected areas with an open flame must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw, taking 55 (10d10) fire damage on a failed save, half as much on a successful one. Success: dizziness (no effect) Failure: vomiting: creature gains the poisoned condition for as long as they remain within the affected area.
- Hydrogen Sulfide ($H_2S$): This gas is colorless but has the unmistakable smell of sulfur (rotten eggs, but in some cases, feces). Hydrogen sulfide is also extremely flammable; keep that in mind if a creature is carrying torches or lanterns. Creatures who enter affected areas with an open flame must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw, taking 55 (10d10) fire damage on a failed save, half as much on a successful one. Success: coughing (no effect) Failure: fatigue: The creature gains a level of exhaustion.

**Countermeasures.** A successful DC 20 Wisdom (Survival) check reveals the hazard and any countermeasures

they can take to avoid prolonged exposure to the toxic gases. *Gust of wind* and similar spells or effects instantly end the effect of this hazard in every affected space within range (at the discretion of the DM, the effect may return at the end of the spell or effect).

# Washing Pool

This hazard presents as an inviting oasis of cool water, which looks like it's just the thing to soothe aching muscles and quench parched throats. Those drinking or bathing soon feel an incredible urge to never leave this peaceful pool.

**Trigger.** A creature touches the water.

**Effect.** A creature that touches the pool must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a success, the creature feels the effect of the magic in the pool fade, seeing the bottom of the pool littered with bones, tattered clothing, and ruined equipment. The water turns brackish. On a failure, the creature becomes euphoric and has no desire to ever leave the pool. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

If an affected creature attempts to leave the pool or is taken out of the pool by another creature, the affected creature must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the creature takes 22 (4d10) psychic damage and must spend its entire next turn attempting to re-enter the pool. A creature that succeeds this saving throw takes half damage and is no longer affected by the pool's magic.

**Countermeasures.** A successful DC 17 Intelligence (Arcana) check correctly identifies the hazard and how to dispel it. The hazard can be bypassed by simply not touching the water. Casting *remove curse* and similar spells of 3rd level or higher ends the effect of the pool on the affected creature. Casting *dispel magic* using a 5th level spell slot or higher disenchants the pool entirely and renders it an inert pool of fetid, black sludge.
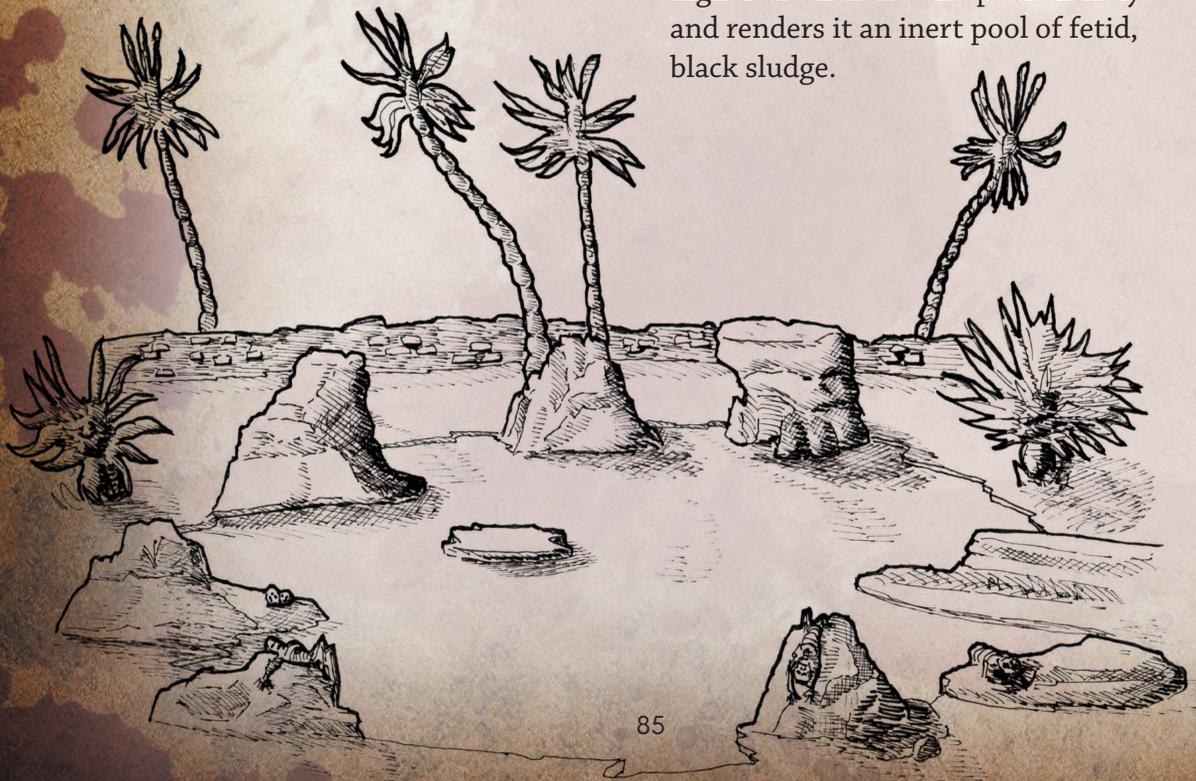
# Appendix

## Elder Mimic

*Large monstrosity (shapechanger), neutral*

**Armor Class** 14 (natural armor)
**Hit Points** 88 (10d8 + 18)
**Speed** 15 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 17 (+3) | 12 (+1) | 15 (+2) | 5 (-3) | 13 (+1) | 8 (-1) |

**Skills** Stealth +5
**Damage Immunities** acid
**Condition Immunities** prone
**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11
**Languages** Common
**Challenge** 4 (1,100 XP)

***Shapechanger.*** The elder mimic can use its action to polymorph into an object or back into its true, amorphous form. Its statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

***Adhesive (Object Form Only).*** The elder mimic adheres to anything that touches it. A Huge or smaller creature adhered to the elder mimic is also grappled by it (escape DC 13). Ability checks made to escape this grapple have disadvantage.

***False Appearance (Object Form Only).*** While the elder mimic remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from an ordinary object.

***Grappler.*** The elder mimic has advantage on attack rolls against any creature grappled by it.

### Actions

***Multiattack.*** The elder mimic makes three attacks: one with its bite and one with each of its magic weapons.

***Halberd.*** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d10 + 4) slashing damage.

***Longsword.*** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage.

***Bite.*** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) acid damage.

# Index

# MEET THE AUTHORS

### JEROMY SCHULZ-ARNOLD

Jeromy has been a writer for a little over ten years. He has been playing tabletop games for over twenty years. Jeromy writes poetry, short stories, and periodicals. He has worked on such Guild books as *Mordenkainen's Lost Notebook* and *Halaster's Hoard*. In his spare time, he enjoys reading and painting miniatures. He lives near Allentown, PA with his wife and three corgis.

### KEN CARCAS

An avid role player for 42yrs, Ken started with D&D Basic (Blue Book) back in 1976. You could say Ken was probably the Guild's original editor and proofreader. Ken hopes you enjoy this publication and he looks forward to seeing what the future holds for the greatest roleplaying game ever.

### D W DAGON

D.W. Dagon is a role-playing game creator with a love for narrative design and weird fantasy. They enjoy adventure writing and designing game mechanics but have been known to dabble in illustration and esoteric rituals.

### R P DAVIS

R P Davis is a best-selling freelance writer, editor, and adventure designer. He has been a tabletop RPG player and referee the entire time he's been sentient, and a role-playing addict for more than 30 years. In that time he's written countless things, from simple spells and effects to complete game worlds to complete roleplaying games. He's led the creation of several books like this, including *Mordenkainen's Lost Notebook* and *Halaster's Hoard*. You can find him on Twitter @WP2XX and on the Guild by *clicking here*.

### JUSTIN HANDLIN

It wasn't enough for Justin to just play D&D, after becoming confident enough in his geekery he decided to to do a podcast about it. The D&D discussion podcast Crit Academy is the result. His *Challenge Accepted!* hit best seller, and now Justin spends most of his free time working on projects for the Guild, improving his show, and working with an amazing D&D community.

### BRYAN HOLMES

Bryan is a father, husband, and nerd. Programmer by day, writer by night, Canadian by birth and choice. Gamer, Artist, and DM when he can find time. His recent works include *Hellbound Heists* and *Blood, Salt, & Bones*.

### HAL HOWARD

Hal has been a playing and dungeon mastering D&D and other RPGs for nearly 40 years. He and his wife Donna began writing community content in late 2018 with *Residents of Trollskull Alley*, a Waterdeep: Dragon Heist supplement. They have several titles in the works and have both contributed to larger collaborative projects. For news about current or upcoming projects, follow him on twitter @HalHowardDM.

### NOEL PROULX

Noel has been playing D&D since 1978. Through every edition, except 4th, he's been a die-hard fan and devoted to storytelling. Having written well over a hundred living campaign modules for conventions, he made the foray into self-publishing with 3rd edition. In early 2018 he decided to take his limited art skills and develop them due to frustration trying to find art for his own projects. He started an art career late in life, but has found he enjoys it immensely. Noel is the author of *The Glass Garden Tavern*.

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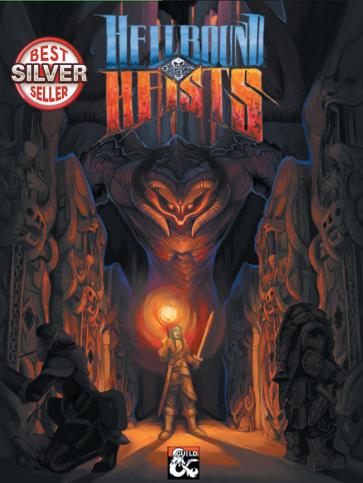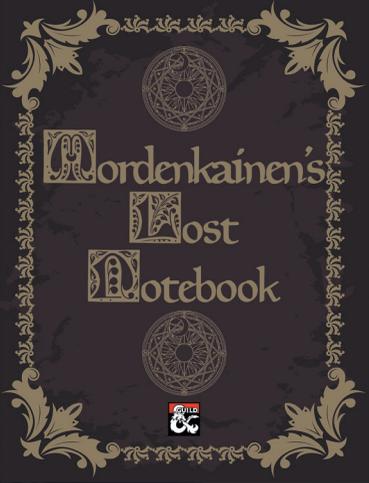
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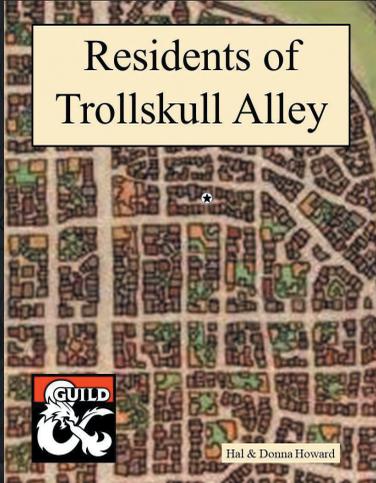by Noel Proulx
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