



a DOZEN DESCRIPTIVE TRAPS

BY PHILIP REED

In many dungeons, the adventurers must deal with wicked, deadly death traps that may be triggered by almost any action. Trapped walls. Trapped doors. Trapped floors. Trapped objects. Anything in the dungeon may be trapped, which forces the GM to describe similar traps in new and entertaining ways. Coming up with a new way to describe the same thing can become tiring, and that's why *A Dozen Descriptive Traps* exists.

As a part of the Kickstarter campaign that led to the creation of this PDF, project backers suggested that I produce a collection of traps. While the mechanical thought behind traps isn't one of my strengths, I did realize that it could be useful to create tables of descriptive text that GMs may use to describe different traps during the game session. I hope that you find the pages that follow useful in your game.

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anatomy OF a TRAP

1. Trap type/name.
2. A basic overview of the trap, giving a broad idea of what it is and how it works.
3. Every trap includes six descriptions that the gamemaster can either read aloud to players or use as inspiration when describing a trap. To select a description you may roll one six-sided die or simply choose one and go with it. Print the trap page and mark the description off with a pen once it is used so that you don't duplicate the descriptions when running your campaign.
4. An illustration to help you to visualize the the type of trap being described.

1 POISON GAS TRAP

The poison gas trap is especially dangerous to a party of dungeoners; those who blindly trip one of these deadly traps may find their delve suddenly at an end as the noxious gas fells the entire group.

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•1• The towering bust of a skeletal creature sits on a pedestal near the entrance to the chamber. The statue is covered in dust and cobwebs, evidence that it has been undisturbed for years. As you lean down the pedestal, checking for secret compartments or levers when the head of the bust hisses, releasing a cloud of gas.

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•2• A thick rope hangs from the ceiling of the chamber, dropping straight down to the floor where it vanishes into a hole that isn't much wider than the thickness of the rope. Tugging at the rope to test its strength, you're confident that it can hold your weight so you start to climb. Roughly ten feet up the rope, the ceiling sprays a heavy cloud of toxic gas directly onto you, covering your flesh and all of your belongings.

•3• In the treasure pile, alongside gems and coins and small items, you spot a wooden staff that has been carved to represent a snake's body and head, the mouth stretched wide. Looking over the staff, your finger trips a button, causing the head to spray a red gas cloud.

•4• A stone fountain in the dungeon bubbles with clear, cool water that is so inviting that you lean down to take a drink. As your hands touch the water, it drains away and is replaced by a cloud of black gas.

•5• As you descend the stairs into the dungeon, you stumble and reach out with one hand to grab the wall and steady yourself. Your unfortunate misstep costs you, though, as your hand grasps at the wall and finds an outcropping of rock that pulls loose and reveals a pocket of thick, greenish gas that fills the stairway and covers you and your friends in a heavy dust.

•6• You push the door wide to reveal a wizard's laboratory. Vials, bottles, burners, small books, and much more are instantly recognizable as the tools of a wizard. You and your companions start to search the room for valuables, pausing frequently to page through a dusty tome or to sniff cautiously at a stoppered bottle. Distracted when one of your friends calls out "I've found something," you accidentally lift the lid of a jar and unleash a heavy, noxious cloud that instantly fills the room.

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USING THE TRAPS

The most important thing to keep in mind that these trap descriptions are designed around adding flavor to your game session. As with the other entries in the **A Dozen . . .** series of PDFs, there are no mechanics specific to any one game. (You will need to turn to your chosen system for statistics.)

Additionally, each of the included trap descriptions are intended for when the adventurers fail to spot a trap. These descriptions are the "what could possibly go wrong?" results of a failed check for traps and they could be, if you choose, lethal.

As with all other PDFs in this series, I've written the trap descriptions in order to give you a starting point for creating new content for use in your campaign.

Every gamemaster, no matter how experienced, has days when they're not at 100%, and these descriptions are meant to inspire you and trigger your own creative ideas. Please rewrite, modify, adapt, and expand every one of the descriptions to suit your personal tastes.

If you do find yourself inspired by these trap description and wish to share with others, please consider posting the descriptions of your own design to this project's Kickstarter comments. Who knows, maybe your ideas will spark another gamemaster's idea for describing a trap and you'll soon be sharing ideas back and forth as you both seek to make traps even more fun than they would have been had you not interacted with other gamemasters.

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STANDARD TRIPWIRE

Regardless of what it activates, a tripwire is a trap trigger that can be set by almost anyone with the most basic understanding of the concept. Tripwires must be set when activated, so they're most often used in places that are inhabited. Even an inexperienced thief can usually spot and disable the simplest of tripwires.

•1• Your foot snags the line and, a second too late, you realize that you've tripped a wire and set off a trap. You hesitate, waiting to see which way to leap, but nothing happens. After a few moments, you kneel down to investigate . . . and that is when the stone block overhead falls and slams you to the ground.

•2• The line snaps suddenly, surprising you and the others. You didn't even see that wire! Almost instantly the floor beneath you swings wide, dropping you and those closest to you into a pit. (**Making it worse.** The pit is filled with chest-deep water and there is something swimming in the dark, foul-smelling water.)

•3• You stumble over a wire in the dungeon and then hear several bells chime, all at once, as you come to rest on your hands and knees. The bells soon stop ringing.

•4• A wire at ankle height snags on your boot and your next step tears it from the wall, pulling with it several blocks of stone that tumble into you. Your friends leap back to safety, avoiding the trap's damaging effect.

•5• As you open the door, a thin line connected to the hinge pulls tight and drops a small mass of slime over your head. The slime is hungry and attacks.

•6• Gears start spinning as you trip over the wire, the mechanical trap activating instantly and launching several small daggers at your head.



“Some traps threaten death and dismemberment, while others are placed as a warning to keep explorers at bay.”
– Bill Slavicsek & Christopher Perkins, **Dungeon Survival Guide**

FOREST TRIPWIRE

Similar to the standard tripwire (see p. 3), what sets this trap apart is what the wire activates once it is triggered.

•1• Thin line runs across the forest floor, concealed by twigs and tufts of grass. You trip the wire, which causes the line to tighten and yank at an overhead nest. Within seconds, a swarm of angry insects surround you, stinging at your exposed skin as they protect their home.

•2• Running through the forest, you catch sight of the vine a second too late and feel it strike your neck. The vine holds, far stronger than you would have thought, but your balance does not. You tumble, dropping to your back and struggling to regain your breath after being struck so hard by the vine.

•3• The trail is clearly marked, trees chopped down and stumps removed to leave behind a narrow passage through the overgrowth. Even the grass and weeds have been tackled; someone has maintained the trail and kept this path clear of large obstructions. As you and your companions follow the path, you keep an eye on the darkness of the forest for any sign of danger. Unfortunately, it is the danger on the path that you failed to spot. You trip and fall, landing on your hands and knees. Looking closely, you spot the thin wire that felled you when behind and before you, trees crash to the ground and block the path. Strange voices follow the sound of the falling trees as an unknown force moves to confront you.

•4• The crash of thunder and flashes of lightning have convinced you to seek shelter in the forest, the storm growing in intensity late in the afternoon. Moving quickly toward a thick copse of trees, your eyes miss the tripwire that your feet easily find. The snap of the line is the only warning that you have before the branches drop, striking you hard in the head.



•5• The skeletal remains of a dwarf lean against the tree, the warrior's gear laying on the ground near the body. You lean down to grab the dwarf's pack and, as you lift it, your action pulls the line tight and causes the branch above to break free. The falling branch strikes your arm, inflicting great pain.

•6• A wire stretched tight between two trees causes you to stumble, though you do not fall as you grab the nearby branch for support. Unfortunately, the branch was the true trap and your touch bends it just enough to unlock the concealed crate near the path . . . a crate that someone has filled with a mass of giant rats who are so very hungry that they're willing to attack a group of experienced dungeoneers. During the battle against the swarming rats, the trap's master – a young goblin – watches from the trees for an opportunity to attack.

SPIKED PIT TRAP

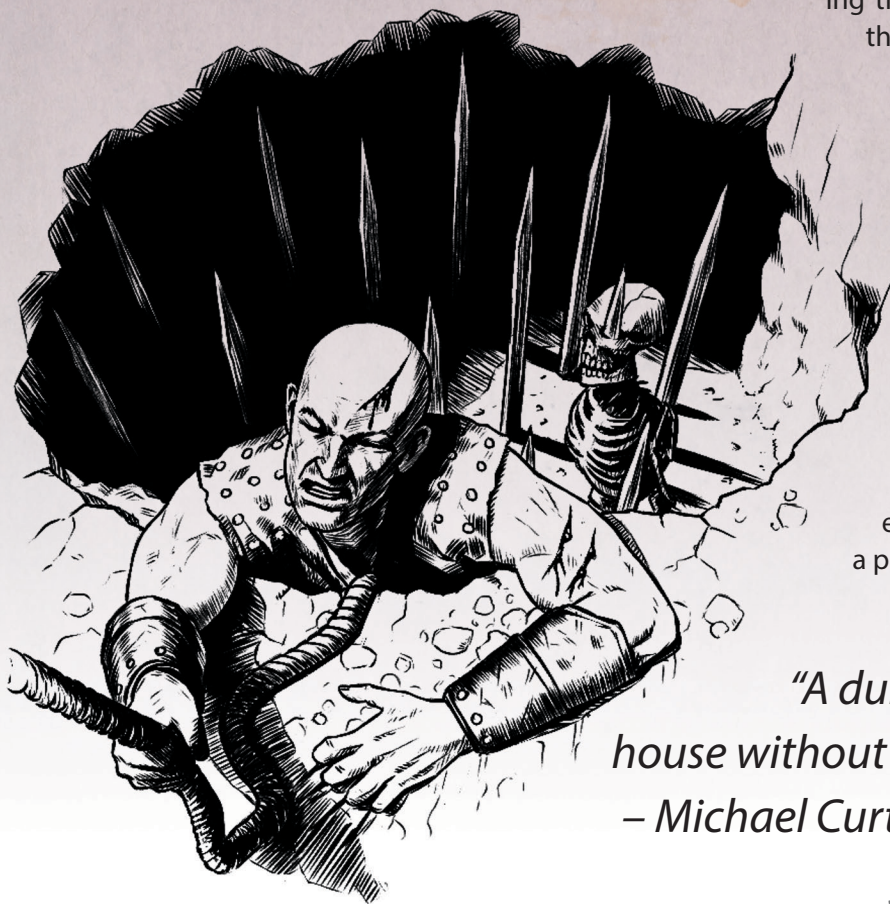
Whether it is a carefully-constructed false floor that swings open or a simple canvas covering a hole in the ground, the pit trap is a minor threat to most experienced adventurers. Add spikes to that same pit, though, and the danger escalates dramatically as a fall can result in instant death when sharpened spikes rip through the victim's body.

- 1• The floor in the center of the chamber gives out the instant it is stepped on as it is nothing but a gray canvas that was painted to look like the surrounding floor. Hidden by the canvas? A traditional spiked pit.
- 2• The steps give way when you're roughly halfway to the next level, dropping you into a spiked pit.
- 3• A trail of coins, a handful every few feet, looks to have been created when someone was fleeing some unknown threat. As if a money purse were torn and spilling coins that the owner was too busy to collect. You start picking up the coins, one by one, and fall for the trap when you step on a false floor and drop into the spiked pit that was concealed by the thin wood.

- 4• Your foot crashes through the thin wooden floor, the break revealing that the "stones" you were stepping on are nothing more than painted wooden sheets that have been assembled to conceal a gaping hole hidden in plain sight. Your foot stuck, the wooden shards digging into your skin, you reach out to steady yourself and unwittingly trigger the second stage of the trap when your fingers touch the stones; the real stone floor swings downward and drops you into the spiked pit.

- 5• Planks of rough lumber have been nailed together and laid across the pit, creating a makeshift bridge that looks to have been here for several years. Below, within the pit, several stalagmites make the risk of a fall even more treacherous as landing on the rocks would be damaging to all but the most graceful of cats. Knowing the danger of putting too much weight on the "bridge" at once, you decide to cross one at a time. Unfortunately for you, the lumber was only glued together, not nailed (close examination shows that the nails were painted on), and the wooden bridge collapses the instant you set foot on it.

- 6• A narrow gap in the corridor is easily jumped, yes? You take the leap, only to find that the floor on the other side of the hole is a false landing pad made up of the thinnest of wood that has been painted to look like stone. The wood crashes down as you land on it, dropping you into a pit that is filled with jagged spikes.



*"A dungeon without traps is like a house without **Books**: it lacks its very soul."*
– Michael Curtis, *The Dungeon Alphabet*

POISON DART TRAP

Often activated when plates on the floor are stepped on, or when a lever somewhere in the dungeon is moved, a dart trap can be devastating to unarmored characters who are foolish enough to venture into the dungeon without first inviting a cleric to join in the adventure.

•1• As the door swings open, you hear the faint clink of a mechanical switch activating a split second before the air is filled with dozens of needle-sharp darts. On the opposite wall from the door, a towering sarcophagus made of metal and wood leans forward, launching the darts directly at the character unlucky enough to have opened the door.

•2• The large statue of a knight stands tall and proud in the center of the room, the figure's shield held before it as if it is defending itself from attack. The statue's other hand, grasping as if it were holding a sword – though no weapon is present – looks to have been recently disturbed. As you reach out to investigate, your hand brushes the stone and the statue's shield erupts in a cloud of dust as tiny darts suddenly fire at you.

•3• The floor shifts beneath your weight, a large stone tilting slightly and then snapping into place. You kneel down to study the floor, being careful not to move from your position, when the ceiling directly above rains down a barrage of needles.

•4• On the far wall of the chamber you spot a rusted, shattered suit of plate armor that looks to have been discarded here many years ago. A gleam of something reflective catches your attention, the promise of treasure leading you to the remains of the armor. Prodding at the suit with your weapon, you dislodge a gauntlet that falls to the floor and clangs hard at the exact instant that several darts spring forth from hidden resting places beneath the armor.

•5• Small rats and bugs scurry out of your way as you and your companions march through the dungeon, the group making more noise than usual because of the metal floor that echoes through the dungeon with every step. Even the steps of your thief, often noiseless in movement, reverberate through the dungeon. Your party is making so much noise that you don't hear the click of the trap . . . but you definitely notice the darts that fire from the walls on either side of the narrow corridor.

•6• The floor is littered with the bones of the dead, an unknown number of humanoid skeletons scattered across the chamber and filling the space ankle deep. Every step causes a terrible crunching sound as the ancient bones turn to dust beneath your feet. Your movement disrupts a smaller pile of bones nearby, causing a skull to roll from the top of the pile and stop in front of you. As you go to walk past the skull, it suddenly opens its mouth and unleashes a single dart directly at your chest.

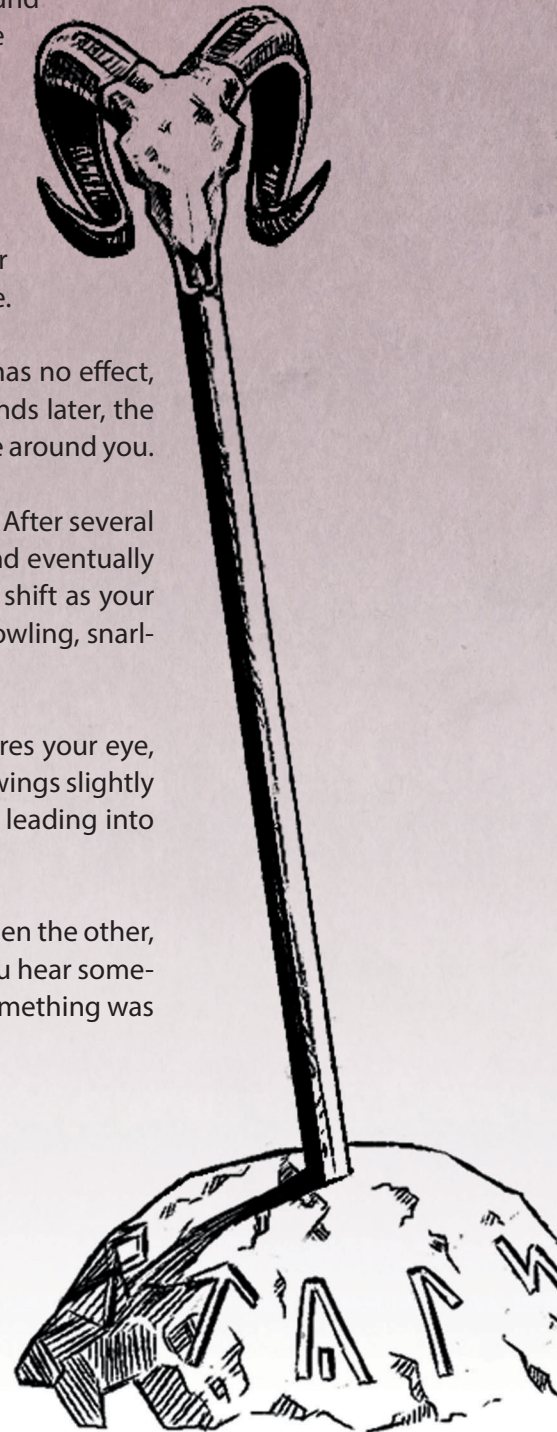


LEVER TRAP

What makes a lever trap especially dangerous is the curiosity of the adventurer who comes across one in the dungeon. In most cases, it is best if the lever is left alone and ignored. Unfortunately for the party, though, there is always someone in the group who simply must know “what that lever does.”

- 1• The lever on the wall slides easily upward and locks into place. Nothing happens. You pull at the lever again, sliding it downward, at which point a clicking sound somewhere inside the wall activates an overhead door that swings open wide and releases a swarm of bats.
- 2• The large stone throne in the center of the room pivots in place when the lever next to it is moved. The movement of the throne reveals stairs leading downward to some chamber hidden beneath the throne. At the same time as the throne swings aside to reveal the stairway, two doors several chambers over unlock and release animated skeletons who begin marching toward the throne.
- 3• The wooden lever on the rail of the bridge is stuck. Pulling and pushing has no effect, until you and a companion work together . . . and snap the lever in two. Seconds later, the broken part in your hand, you feel the bridge shake and then it starts to collapse around you.
- 4• There is a broken dagger stuck in a narrow slot in the wall next to the door. After several moments of trying to open the door, you turn your attention to the dagger and eventually remove it. Inserting your own dagger into the slot, you feel something inside shift as your dagger swings down in the opening. The door raises up into the wall and a growling, snarling beast rushes from the adjacent room.
- 5• A two-handed sword plunged into the rotting corpse of a slain orc captures your eye, drawing you to grasp the weapon’s hilt and pull. The sword remains stuck but swings slightly to one side, the disguised lever activating and slamming shut all of the doors leading into the chamber. The doors are locked.
- 6• Two levers, one on either side of the ladder, beckon. You try to move one, then the other, and nothing happens when either is moved. Only when both are thrown do you hear something above you. The sound is indescribable but growing louder, almost as if something was descending the ladder.

“Intentional and dangerous, traps are created to fool the unwary and stop their progress through a dungeon.”
– Jim Zub with Stacy King and Andrew Wheeler, **Dungeons & Tombs**



TRAPPED DOOR

With the number of doors found in the dungeon, it is no surprise that the makers of those underground complexes sometimes trap the doors. A trapped door is most dangerous when the adventurers are fleeing from a monster and don't take time to check for traps before swinging the door open wide.

- 1• The door is stuck, resisting your every effort to force it open until you and a friend try once more and manage to swing the door wide . . . only to reveal that the corridor beyond the stuck door is flooded. The waters race through the opened doorway.
- 2• The stones around the doorway are crumbling and you stop to investigate before trying to open the door. With your dagger, you pry at one of the loose stones and instantly regret your action as the wall collapses.

- 3• The door is locked, though that is no trouble at all for the party thief. Unfortunately, as soon as the picks touch the lock mechanism, the door swings open as several spiders drop from the ceiling in the next room.

- 4• The hinges on a trapdoor in the dungeon floor indicate that the door swings upward to open, so you and your friends grasp at the handle and pull. Without warning, the handle pulls free from the door and the wooden door – as well as the floor around it – collapses and sends all of you into a pit.

- 5• You can hear voices on the other side of the closed door, but you cannot quite make out what they are saying. Pulling ever so gently to crack the door open and better hear the voices, the magic mouth on the other side of the door screams a warning to the dungeon's inhabitants. You will not be alone for long.

- 6• The metal door throws off bolts of lightning at you the second you touch the handle.



POISON GAS TRAP

The poison gas trap is especially dangerous to a party of dungeoneers; those who blindly trip one of these deadly traps may find their delve suddenly at an end as the noxious gas fells the entire group.



•1• The towering bust of a skeletal creature sits on a pedestal near the entrance to the chamber. The statue is covered in dust and cobwebs, evidence that it has been undisturbed for years. You run your hand down the pedestal, checking for secret compartments or levers when the head of the bust hisses, releasing a cloud of gas.

•2• A thick rope hangs from the ceiling of the chamber, dropping straight down to the floor where it vanishes into a hole that isn't much wider than the thickness of the rope. Tugging at the rope to test its strength, you're confident that it can hold your weight so you start to climb. Roughly ten feet up the rope, the ceiling sprays a heavy cloud of toxic gas directly onto you, covering your flesh and all of your belongings.

•3• In the treasure pile, alongside gems and coins and small items, you spot a wooden staff that has been carved to represent a snake's body and head, the mouth stretched wide. Looking over the staff, your finger trips a button, causing the head to spray a red gas cloud.

•4• A stone fountain in the dungeon bubbles with clear, cool water that is so inviting that you lean down to take a drink. As your hands touch the water, it drains away and is replaced by a cloud of black gas.

•5• As you descend the stairs into the dungeon, you stumble and reach out with one hand to grab the wall and steady yourself. Your unfortunate misstep costs you, though, as your hand grasps at the wall and finds an outcropping of rock that pulls loose and reveals a pocket of thick, greenish gas that fills the stairway and covers you and your friends in a heavy dust.

•6• You push the door wide to reveal a wizard's laboratory. Vials, bottles, burners, small books, and much more are instantly recognizable as the tools of a wizard. You and your companions start to search the room for valuables, pausing frequently to page through a dusty tome or to sniff cautiously at a stoppered bottle. Distracted when one of your friends calls out "I've found something," you accidentally lift the lid of a jar and unleash a heavy, noxious cloud that instantly fills the room.

BEAR TRAP

Mostly used by huntsmen and woodsmen to trap bears and other large creatures, this mechanical trap can be a serious threat to those dungeoneers who foolishly step without first looking. The springs of the trap are often so strong that it takes two or three people to pry the teeth open and free the adventurer who was unlucky enough to be caught in the trap's crushing jaw.

•1• With a loud, metallic snap that every other member of your group hears, you're suddenly doubled over in pain as the heavy claws of the trap lock tight around your leg. The sharp, bladed spikes of the trap cut deep into your flesh, blood flowing fast as you desperately try to pry the trap open and free your wounded leg.

•2• You find the skeletal remains of a dinosaur, the flesh picked free of the body by whatever vermin found and finished off the beast that is held fast by a large bear trap. Stepping closer to investigate, you fail to spot another one of those same traps; you scream in pain as the metal jaws encircle your leg.

•3• Off the traveled road, searching the forest for the source of a strange sound you heard only moments ago, you step into a heavy bear trap and yell out as the metal crunches your leg, shattering the bone. Unlike similar traps, this one has no sharp edges, though the damage caused is plenty terrible. And whatever made the sound is still out there, now moving toward you.

•4• The small trap snaps tight, shredding your flesh and grabbing your leg with razor teeth. The pain is intense, forcing you to scream out. And then the poison hits you.

•5• The floor of the dungeon looks oddly familiar, an unease settling over you as you look down at the pattern of stones that have been perfectly arranged. When you take a step forward, you instantly recognize the pattern as the stones leap up and snap together, locking your leg in place in the trap.

•6• The small trap, hidden beneath leaves and moss, instantly bites into your leg and causes you to stop in your tracks. The trap isn't chained into place, so you're free to continue moving, but it is a terribly painful experience. You easily remove it, though, the trap's springs so weak that it almost falls off you pull at the two sides of the clamping jaws. Tossing the trap to the side, you take another step . . . and are again trapped! Someone worked long and hard to scatter dozens of these traps across the ground.



PENDULUM TRAP

A pendulum trap can be as simple as a dagger tied to a rope or as complicated as heavy, custom blades that swing on rigid poles. These deadly traps can kill without warning.

- 1• You start to inspect a small shelf in the dungeon, searching for valuables when you lift a small chest that releases a brick from above. The brick swings on a rope and strikes your head with a solid clunk.
- 2• Ascending the stairs of the tower, you and your companions are ready for anything. Almost anything, you realize, as one of the steps beneath your feet clicks at your step and releases a swinging blade that slices into your shoulder.
- 3• A wrong step in the hall and you stumble, tripping over a line that is connected to a dozen small wires, each ending in a dagger. The daggers swing from the ceiling and several of them impact your body, each one cutting into your flesh.
- 4• There are spots of dried blood on the floor of the dungeon which distract you just long enough; you step on a pressure plate and release a swinging blade.
- 5• You and your companions force open the door, revealing a small room filled with the battered remains of furniture and several sacks and chests. Poking through the mess of stuff, you find nothing of value; the sacks are filled with rotten food and the chests were clearly ransacked long ago. Pushing one of the larger fragments of a destroyed piece of furniture to the side, you accidentally activate a swinging blade trap.



- 6• You and your companions fail to notice the slots on either side of the corridor's walls, each placed every 3' and in perfect alignment with a matching slot on the opposite wall, a track in the ceiling connecting the two slots. One wrong step triggers the trap, releasing large blades that launch from the wall on one side and swing from a rope, following the track in the ceiling until the blade vanishes in the slot on the opposite wall. The blades continue swinging back and forth, filling the passageway with a series of deadly blades that threaten to slice all of you into ribbons. You search for the mechanism to halt the swinging of the blades, knowing that you will surely never survive the corridor so long as those blades are in motion.

"In a dungeon, adventurers can fall to their deaths, be burned alive, or find themselves peppered with poisoned darts—all without ever having encountered a single monster."

– Monte Cook, **Dungeon Master's Guide** (3.5)

CRUSHING WALL TRAP

A mechanical trap that can kill, the crushing wall is common in deadly dungeons crafted by those skilled with stoneworking and experienced with machinery. Often used in a hall or narrow chamber, once activated the trap slides two walls together in an effort to crush anything unfortunate enough to be between them.

•1• The long hallway stretches ahead and behind when you reach what looks to be the midpoint of the passage. The flickering of your torch makes it difficult to see more than outlines and dark shadows, so the first sign of something going wrong is when you hear a snap and then feel the floor begin to rise toward the ceiling.

•2• The corridor walls seem to be moving slowly inward, but they are moving so slowly that you at first dismiss the motion as an illusion. Then, without warning, the movement speeds up and the walls crash together. Only the fastest of your group will have the time necessary to escape death.

•3• The stairs wind downward, deeper and deeper, curling around themselves as you descend for what feels like hours but could have only been ten or fifteen minutes. Stopping to rest, one of your group points above and shouts. The trapdoor above is falling toward you.

•4• There are several small stools, a single table, and the rotting remains of an uneaten meal in the small room. And nothing else. Taking a moment to rest, you sit down on one of the stools and it instantly breaks beneath your weight, the ancient wood shattering. Dusting yourself off you rise . . . and realize the ceiling is lower than it was a moment ago.

•5• The wide, inviting hallway leads upward at a slight angle, eventually taking you a full level above the previous level of the dungeon. As you walk forward, you notice that in addition to angling upward, the walls of the corridor also angle inward, the hallway getting narrower and narrower as you ascend to confront the unknown. One of your party steps wrong, activating a pressure plate that causes the walls to rush from the sides toward you. You must escape this hallway before the walls crush you flat.

•6• Walking carefully, slowly forward, you and your fellow adventurers are exploring a dungeon corridor when one of you steps wrong and activates a deadly trap. You hold your breath, waiting for the worst to happen, and soon you hear chains and gears grinding, and then the walls of the corridor begin to inch inward, narrowing your space. Do you go forward to escape the threat of the walls, or do you retreat to the already-explored chamber behind you.



CRASHING LOGS TRAP

A primitive trap. Heavy logs are suspended by rope and, once the trap is triggered, the logs swing down and collide at a specific point, crushing whatever is between them. Even the tallest of giants can sometimes be taken down by this simple trap.



•1• You trip the wire, releasing two large logs from their hiding places in the canopy of leaves overhead. The two logs swing fast, gravity pulling them both to the inevitable point of contact: Your skull.

•2• The door to the chamber is unlocked and swings open easily, even if doing so releases the heavy log that has been waiting for this chance to swing down and slam into the first character to step through the open door.

•3• Snagging the line on your boot, you bend down to see what has slowed your pace when the air is filled with several swinging, crashing logs. The logs smack into everyone within 10' of your position, each dealing minor damage that would be manageable . . . if there weren't so many of the swinging logs.

•4• Sharpened logs swing from the ceiling, where they were hidden in the webs of giant spiders. Four of the projectiles, each hanging from a thick rope, force you and your companions to scatter to avoid being impaled on the deadly instruments of destruction. Unfortunately, even though you manage to dodge the logs, your leap to safety has dropped you in a worse situation: you land on a thin sheet of wood that breaks and dumps you into the water-filled pit hidden beneath the carefully painted and positioned wood. You splash into the water, your impact and the noise of your yell disturbing the dungeon ooze that is latched to the slick wall of the pit. The ooze moves toward you.

•5• You spot the log suspended from the tree branches above, easily stepping past the tripwire without triggering the trap. Unfortunately, you missed that this was a decoy and step on the plate that releases the other log.

•6• Deep in the dungeon, after breaking open a locked door, you find a large chest in a side chamber that is so dust-filled and cobweb-covered that the room must have been undisturbed for years. Greed in your eyes and visions of wealth racing through your mind, you kneel down to inspect the chest and find that it is locked tight with a rusting padlock. No problem, you think, as you grab a nearby rock and strike the lock which instantly snaps and falls to the floor. You lift the lid, your action pulling tight a line that was concealed by the cobwebs. The line tugs at a large log overhead, sending it crashing into your body.

MAGICAL TRIPWIRE

What sets a magical tripwire apart from the standard design (see p. 3) are two things: First, the tripwire resets itself once tripped, the sorcery that created the trap also causing the wire – so long as it was not cut – to pull tight and ready. Second, the trap is a magical attack of some sort, usually a spell effect. Magical tripwires, like wands, use charges and will have a limited number of times they can act before they must be re-charged by a mage or other arcane spellcaster.

- 1• The tripwire snaps beneath your boots, unleashing several arcane bolts from the walls on either side of you. Each strikes you hard, inflicting minor damage but the salvo of repeated blasts knocks you from your feet.
- 2• In your effort to avoid an obvious tripwire, you miss the fact that you've dodged an illusory wire and managed to trip over a real line. The wire snaps and a brilliant, blinding light flashes in your face and stuns you.
- 3• Stretching from wall to wall, the torchlight illuminates the tripwire a split second too late. Your step breaks the line and causes small windows on either wall to slide open, revealing flaming jets that fill the corridor and burn all unfortunate enough to be near you.
- 4• You grab the ladder with both hands, preparing to climb downward into the unknown when you realize that your weight on the ladder has pulled a wire tight. A rainbow of light illuminates overhead, opening a portal that drops several giant bugs onto your back.
- 5• Several dozen feet down the darkened corridor, you stop when you feel a wire at your ankle. The line instantly transforms into a snake that winds around your legs.
- 6• You see the wire a second too late as you lift the book to check out its contents. The tug of the line activates a water creation spell in all four corners of the room, releasing thousands of gallons of water that threaten to flood the chamber.

“Traps are an integral part of any dungeon, deadly obstacles that can be defeated only with care and caution rather than recklessness.”

*– Jason Bulmahn
and Rich Burlew,
Dungeonscape*

