

# DUNGEONS™



A GUIDE TO SURVIVAL IN THE REALMS BELOW

# DUNGEONS



**A TOME OF ARCANES KNOWLEDGE  
CONCERNING THOSE MONSTROUS REALMS  
BENEATH THE EARTH**

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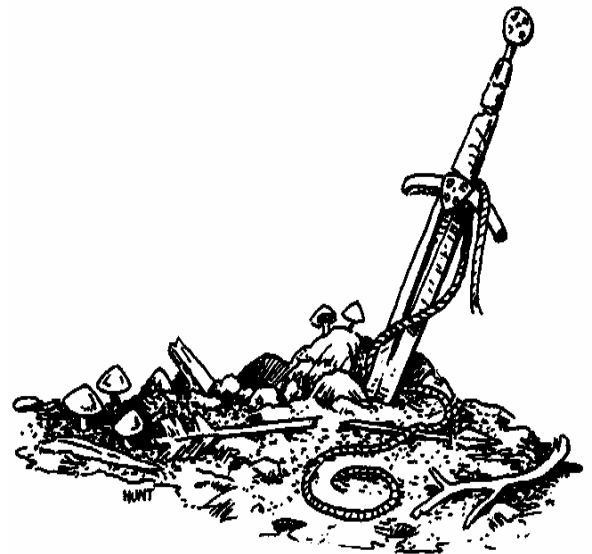
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### DEDICATION

To the memory of John Zinser, Sr. (1938 - 2001).

INTRODUCTION	4
<b>SECTION ONE: TIPS AND TRICKS</b>	<b>5</b>
BEFORE YOU OPEN THAT DOOR...	5
...KNOW WHAT'S BEHIND IT	9
DESIGNING DUNGEONS THAT WORK	13
GIVING YOUR DUNGEON A PAST	20
DUNGEON ECOLOGIES AND CULTURES	24
DUMB ANIMALS	27
SMART MONSTERS	29
HAZARDS AND TRAPS	32
ALL THAT GLITTERS...	40
<b>SECTION TWO: DUNCEON TYPES</b>	<b>44</b>
FORTRESSES	44
MADMAN'S LAIR	47
MINES	51
NATURAL CAVERNS	56
SEWERS	60
SUBTERRANEAN COMMUNITIES	64
TEMPLES	67
TOMBS	75
<b>SECTION THREE: PLAYER</b>	<b>78</b>
NEW SKILLS	78
NEW FEATS	81
NEW MUNDANE ITEMS	83
NEW SPELLS	85
NEW PRESTIGE CLASSES	87
<b>SECTION FOUR: DUNGEON MASTER</b>	<b>94</b>
NEW MONSTERS	94
NEW MAGIC ITEMS	100
NEW TRAPS	103
SAMPLE DUNGEONS	105



## INTRODUCTION

What is it about a gaping hole in the ground that immediately lends itself to fantasy role-playing? Dungeons have been a hallowed part of gaming since its early inception, but why do they continue to hold our attention? Why would a tyrant king build a dungeon beneath his castle to hold prisoners? Why do the dwarves carve into stone and live underground, when there is so much room on the surface? Why do goblins, rats, orcs, and a host of other horrors insist on living in caverns deep beneath the earth?

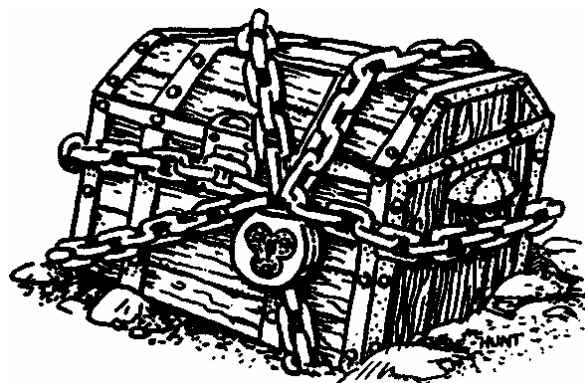
Most gamers, to some degree, understand the desire to journey underground and explore the unknown: the challenge, the excitement, the thrill of entering perilous locales and returning successfully. After all, without the unknown, there is nothing to role-playing but a series of die rolls and witty movie quotes thrown in between game mechanics and the historic significance of the German longspear. Dungeons make a natural setting for the unknown - dark, abandoned, filled with the stuff of nightmares. The challenge of piercing that enigma can be nigh irresistible. But too often, that challenge becomes commonplace. The dark corridors and musty caverns of fantasy dungeons can quickly become repetitive, leading to boring campaigns and endless bouts of pointless mapping. How can players feel challenged if they know what they're in for? Where's the excitement in braving the unknown if the dungeon you're about to enter is pretty much the same as all the other ones you've been through over the years?

This book is intended to help solve that problem. It contains tips, tricks, essays, and rules designed to make dungeons interesting and fun places to game in. Underground lairs are home to any variety of monsters, traps, treasure, and story plots. Why shouldn't they be as clever or as mindless as the people that made them? A necromancer, burying himself alive to awaken in the afterlife is justified in lining his tomb with deadly traps and several false tombs, while an orc compound just needs a simple trip wire to alarm the guards of an intruder. A monster that can see well in the dark would hide in the shadows and attack adventures one by one.

A stalker or lurker that kills and eats its prey leaves behind bones and residue. Details such as these help flesh out an otherwise mundane dungeon crawl, turning a tedious adventure into a fun-filled role-playing session for any party. Hopefully, the guidelines provided in this book will help you make the most of that marvelous potential.

The first part of *Dungeons* contains a series of essays on dungeon-building, from ecology and history to trap design, treasure design, and ways for players to properly prepare themselves to the challenges ahead. The second part covers different types of dungeons, and explains how one should differentiate between, say, a city sewer crawling with giant rats and an abandoned temple haunted by the forces of evil. We've also included an extensive section containing new rules for players and DMs alike: new skills, new feats, and new prestige classes, as well as monsters based specifically around underground encounters and some new magic items to reward your character with. Finally, we've provided a trio of brief dungeons which demonstrate ways of turning a normal "hunt the monster" scenario into something more engaging.

Dungeons form an important part of fantasy gaming: the dangers they represent are an integral element to the heroic tales which role-players thrive on. Canny Dungeon Masters can take these journeys into the dark, and make them a fulfilling part of any role-playing campaign. We hope this book provides you with a few new ideas for your underground adventures, and helps you enhance the thrill of opening that creaky door and stepping into the unknown.



## SECTION ONE:

# TIPS AND TRICKS

## BEFORE YOU OPEN THAT DOOR...

*Transcript of a Lecture from Malekith Ikandron, Summoner Extraordinaire. Recorded at the University of Arcane Arts, Haveloc, by Skree the Accurate*

So, you want to go dungeoneering?

Let me tell you, my friends, it isn't as easy as it looks. A lot of adventurers seek easy gold and quick rewards by investigating the lower realms of the world - hunting creatures in their dens, looking for lost relics in labyrinthine corridors of some forgotten temple. There's money to be made that way, but only if you're clever. After all, if it was easy, someone else would already have found the gold!

First of all, take a moment to consider why you would seriously consider exploring a dungeon. Many of the ancient relics buried in such places were deliberately taken out of the hands of mortals - are you sure you want to undo what someone else has tried so hard to prevent? Assuming that your cause is more noble than thievery, you should spend at least a short amount of time thinking about the sun, your food, and your mother. If you wander off into one of these dungeons, you might find yourself without any of those for a long time. And while you can live without your mother, a few days without any food is going to start hitting where it hurts.

Still, dungeons are to adventurers what an expensive tournament horse is to a noble knight: a method of gaming prestige and acclaim, a way to make money when the times are lean, and most of all, a really fun ride. If you're bound and determined to follow your nose into the ground, here are a few tips to help you find your way back out alive.

Dungeons come in three main types: the cavern, the labyrinth, and the constructed. A cavern dungeon is not formed by the hand of an

intelligent being, but is a series of naturally occurring, interconnected caves. Although the cavern dungeon can have stationary traps (particularly if you are dealing with intelligent residents), the traps are a secondary procedure, built into the walls of an underground fissure that was created by natural causes. These dungeons are most often inhabited by wandering creatures seeking haven, or by primitive societies who do not seek to create their own villages or habitations.

A labyrinth is a planned trap-gauntlet, designed and ornamented with some of the most dangerous perils known to man. It has specifically been tailored to keep you out - or worse, to keep something else in. Nothing truly lives here - they'd all die from the traps! Typically, these dungeons are populated by golems, gargoyles, and undead, creatures which do not need sustenance, and rarely need to move from their designated location. Any creatures who wander about are typically confined by the dungeon to trek through only specific locations, so as not to run afoul of the traps that are supposed to be killing you, the intruder.

The third type of dungeon is commonly called the "constructed design." A constructed dungeon refers to a location where the dungeon was not originally created to be such. However, after centuries of disuse (or a sudden violent ruin), the lovely castle that was once a pleasant living space has now become the residence for a much nastier breed of squatter. Most of these dungeons are only "trapped" by their own state of ruin and disuse - pits are common, as are the dangers of crumbling masonry and the occasional enchanted ward placed by whoever cursed the castle to fall into ruin. Again, you can find nastier traps in the more 'inhabited' areas of such a dungeon, particularly because necromancers and other infernalists are particularly fond of such ruined keeps.

Let's assume you've found your dungeon of the day, and decided to head inside. Before you tack the pitons to the wall and give your rope a good heave-ho, let's check the contents of your backpack. Are you really ready for this trip? I won't mention the massive amounts of food and water you should be carrying - if you haven't figured that part out, you're already done for. Don't eat or drink anything you find in a dungeon. Ever. Even if it looks innocent enough, unless you have a cleric to purify it, you'd better just stay away.

Now, on to the rest of your backpack. First, and most importantly, you'd better be carrying a rope (at least 50', and don't scrimp on quality!) and a good iron grappling hook. Ropes are good for a hundred different things, from tying up the gold at the end of the maze, to stretching across pits or lowering yourself down to another level of the dungeon. Expect to be climbing, especially in constructed or cavern dungeons, where the walls and floors are often unstable, and the area of the dungeon may extend many levels below ground.

Secondly, pitons. A piton is a railroad-spike made of iron or steel, solid and capable of bearing a lot of weight or taking a lot of abuse. As I mentioned, most dungeons have traps. Sliding doors, rolling balls of stone and other moving widgets can be blocked by a simple iron piton, shoved in just the right place. Need a door braced open? Use a piton. Want to prevent that hole in the wall from shooting darts at you? Jam a piton into the opening.

Another good staple is a bow or crossbow. You say you don't use ranged weapons? Think again. A lot of the creatures you will encounter in a dungeon (particularly in a cavern) will know the area a hundred times better than you. Please, don't chase them. If you are going to chase them, just do us all a favor and fall on your own sword. You're going to need ranged weapons, or you're going to end up harassed and eventually killed by creatures that are capable of staying 50 feet away from you... just around the next curve.

Light sources are another staple. Even if you are a dwarf or elf, and you think you don't need a lantern or torch to see, the ability to create fire can save your life in more ways than one. Cold is a common bane of deep-ground dungeons, and many

monsters who choose to reside in caverns can only be harmed by fire - so bring it along. Lastly, fire is a good way to tell if your air source is limited or contaminated. If the torch flickers, the air may be getting thin, or the room you are entering may have been sealed for a long time. Let it air out, or you'll find yourself face down on the floor from asphyxiation. If the torch flame turns bluish, there's natural gas in the area. Put out the torch, and get away from the area.



Fast. If there's an explosion, you won't be coming back up again.

Speaking of fire, a good way to tell if primitive cultures are using these passages for transportation is to take a close look at the ceiling. Unless the creatures have complete vision in the darkness (and few do), there will be tell-tale ash and soot marks on the ceiling, and stains where passing light sources have left smoke marks and other signs of passage. Remember that creatures with no real vision in the darkness make their way through hearing and smell. Don't cook food or start large fires, or they'll be able to track you later by the smell that clings to your clothing and gear. Be cautious when your party is speaking to one another, and don't yell down the corridors. Then again, carry a whistle. Creatures that track through sound can be easily "blinded" by a loud shrieking noise.

Be sure to carry paper, pen, ink, chalk and a little iron box to keep it in. Be ready to be dunked in water, from head to toe, and don't let your maps dissolve just because you didn't protect them. Mapping will save your life. There's a little trick in labyrinth dungeons that you might not know. If you ever get lost, just put your hand against the left wall, and start walking. Eventually, you'll cover every spot in the maze, and you'll find your way back out. The only way this doesn't work is if your maze has an isolated area where the walls make a circle. In that case, you'll end up back where you started - be sure to use the chalk to mark the wall where you began, and you'll know when you get back around. If that happens, do it again, and this time follow your right hand wall. The trick still works.

A lot of the items that should fill out your dungeoneering equipment list seem obvious to the initiated. A pick or shovel is a good idea to have with you, especially for getting into rooms that have been sealed by landslides, natural wreckage, or an unforeseen trap that has sealed you into a room. Crampons — slippers that strap onto the bottom of your shoe and have spikes to hold onto slippery surfaces — are often useful when the dungeon has watery areas, or areas with high growth of moss or mold. Thick bandages, the type you can wet and wrap around your face when you travel through moldy areas is also a good idea - some of those molds are more than they appear!

Crowbars are also a good idea, as are bags (to carry the treasure), lard (to ease passage through tight corridors and as insulation against very cold water), and a pulley. Also, remember that your water bladder, when empty, has the capacity to hold air, so that you can swim through flooded tunnels with more safety, and a greater amount of breathing room.

If the dungeon has water, be sure to note the current flow and mark that on your map. Often, rooms that are inaccessible through passages can be entered with a little swimming or raft use. Take a look at the fish, as well - if they are pale white, and seem blind, you can be sure the river doesn't reach the surface anywhere nearby. However, if the fish are colored normally and have working eyes, the river exits into the sunny lands above at some point near you. Keep that in mind if you need to make a hasty escape from the dungeon.

One unusual item that is often carried into a dungeon is a small cage, with three or four white mice and enough food and water to keep them alive. These small rodents can be invaluable in springing traps that lie ahead - as living beings, and as objects in motion, they often trigger traps that are otherwise invisible to the naked eye (such as magical wards and protections).

Dealing with traps is often more difficult than dealing with monsters, and must be considered as a separate issue from all other dangers of dungeoneering. To successfully navigate a labyrinth, you must have more than a strong swordarm - you must have a keen mind, and an ability to understand logic. Traps in a dungeon don't work by magic (most of the time). They obey common laws of science: gravity, tension, and balance. When you discover a trap, take the time to understand why it works as it does, and then you will have a better means of understanding its creator and any other traps he engineered.

In the end, your best defense against any dungeon is research. Although research tends to be most useful when dealing with a labyrinth, it has advantages even in the most natural cavern setting. There are certain questions that any good adventurer must ask before stepping into any dungeon. Take the time to investigate them - your preliminary studies may just save your life.



Some of the most common questions have been detailed below, to give you a good idea of how to go about researching the dungeon you plan to enter.

### **HOW WAS THE DUNGEON CREATED?**

Perhaps one of the most important questions, this can give you an idea what kind of adventure you are about to experience, and prepare you for one of the three general types of dungeons mentioned above. If the dungeon consists of ruins, seek out someone who knew the area before the keep or tower was ruined. Are there any old maps? Does anyone remember parts of the dungeon well enough to give you an idea of its layout and design? If it was once a public building, are there any records, journal entries, or other written accounts of the building and its history? Sometimes, arcane texts can exist that mention even the oldest crypts and tombs, and information can be gained from studying them. Don't expect all the information about a dungeon to be located within sight of the cavern itself. Often, particularly in older labyrinths, such information can have spread throughout the nation, and can be found in esoteric places, ancient libraries, and the personal collections of powerful mages or churches of knowledge.

### **IF THE DUNGEON WAS DESIGNED, THEN WHO BUILT IT?**

Again, knowing your enemy is a common proverb among adventurers, and understanding the mindset of the dungeon's designer can be critical. Was the dungeon designed by dwarves? If so, expect lots of complex traps. Elves? Sorcery and wards may be the largest protections you will encounter. Can you find information on the specific builder, the materials he gathered to build the dungeon, or any unusual requisitions the dungeon designer may have brought to the creation?

### **WHAT WAS THE DUNGEON'S ORIGINAL PURPOSE?**

Once you know if the dungeon was created to prevent things from entering, or to keep something dangerous safely held inside, you will have another valuable clue as to the type of encounters you can expect.

Has anyone ever gone into the dungeon, and returned? What if the dungeon's already been looted? If it hasn't, can the people who entered the area be contacted for more information on what's inside? If not, what can be discovered about them? Did anyone die while inside? Did the other adventuring party do anything unusual before they entered the dungeon? Their research may have discovered something you missed. Take note of their actions, and if possible, try to determine why they failed.

### **WHAT KINDS OF CREATURES LIVE IN THE DUNGEON?**

Talk to nearby residents of towns, or learn what kinds of sounds come from the dungeon by camping nearby and keeping guard over one of the openings. Anything that lives near the surface will undoubtedly come out to find food. Determining if your enemy is a ravenous troll with little intellect, or an entire encampment of orcs that has built a village within the cavern can make a tremendous difference in your approach. Does the local population know about any rumors of other creatures that come out of the caverns less often?

Lastly, no matter how important the dungeon is, be certain to have established routine times to come back up to the surface. Make friends with the local inhabitants, and inform them of your schedule (this, of course, again assumes that your purpose is more noble than thievery). First of all, this allows you to do research as you discover more about the dungeon from the inside. Write down any unusual runes or writing, and take the time to have it translated before you go back in. It may prove a puzzle or riddle that you will have to solve. Secondly, unless the dungeon is small, you will have to restock your supplies of food and water from time to time. Also, if the local inhabitants know that you didn't come out when you said you intended to, they might mention the fact to other wandering adventurers. Although no adventurer wants to be rescued, the fact remains: it is better to be embarrassed than dead.

Thank you for your time and attention, ladies and gentlemen. I will be available to answer any questions you may have in the foyer behind the main library.

## ... KNOW WHAT'S BEHIND IT.

### AN ESSAY FOR KNOWLEDGEABLE PLAYERS

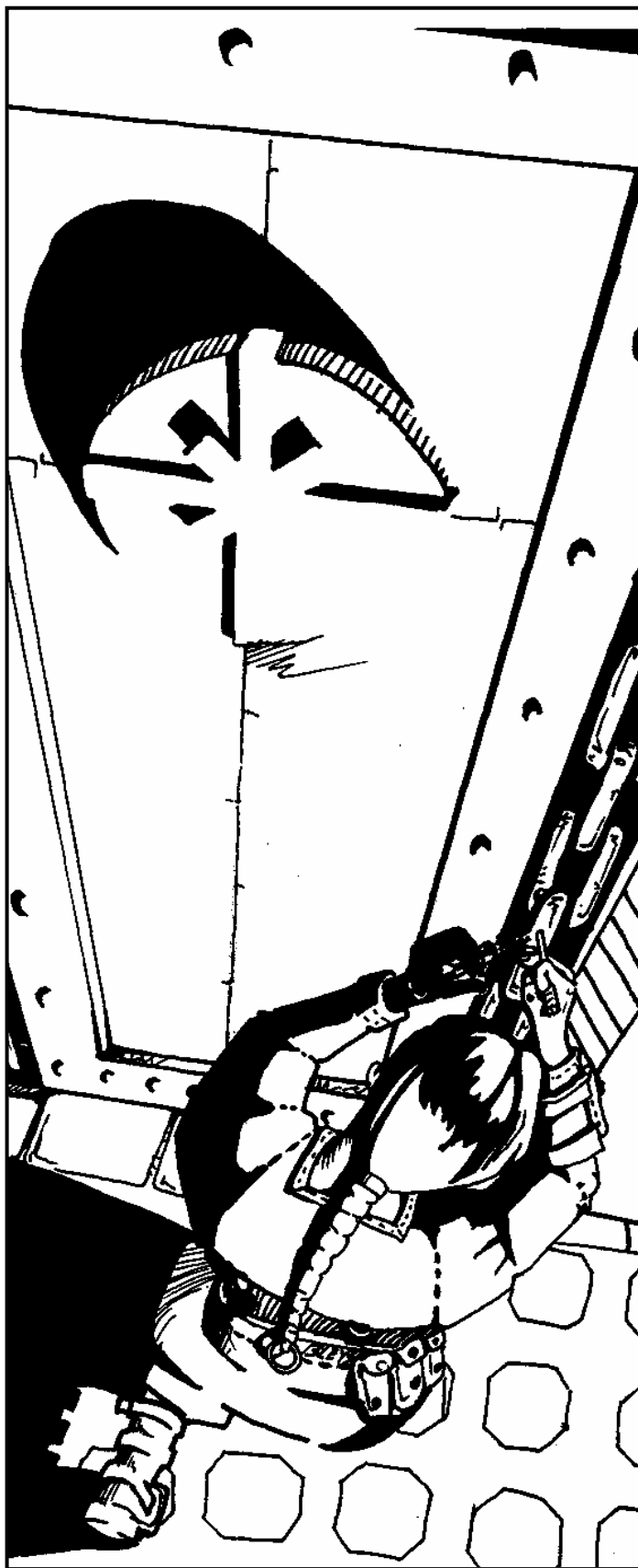
You're sitting at the table on a Friday night, watching as your eager Dungeon Master pulls out sheaf after sheaf of maps detailing his newest dungeon. Traps, monsters, magical wards and ancient artifacts await you... if you can only find a way for your character to survive.

The key to survival can be summed up in three words: Take Your Time.

With most dungeon adventures, there is little pressure to speed through the area. This is an important advantage, and one that most players don't use to their advantage often enough. The Dungeon Master has the easy part: design the traps, tricks and creatures. Now you have to unravel every possibility and select which one is accurate. Does the trap lead to a pit? Spikes out of the walls? Magical wards? Any of them could be lethal. Determining which of them is about to kill your character and then avoiding that trap is your number one task as the player of a dungeoneer.

Normal game play involves plots, plans, and role-playing — but within a dungeon, the primary role-play is actually roll-play. The dice are your ally - and your enemy. A bad roll can be a death sentence, no matter how carefully engineered your plan. Before you go into any dungeon, you should be ready with your next character concept. You may need it.

If you intend to go in and keep your character alive, take some time to use simple logic on the many traps and tricks your DM has designed for you. Every dungeon has a purpose, whether it is the lair of an entire subterranean orc or drow city, or the lost ruins of an ancient city, now fallen to ruin and decay. The creator of the dungeon has put a lot of time into the planning, preparation, and logical design of the area.



With a little work, you may be able to re-trace his steps, and figure out the traps before they strike.

First, look at the dungeon as a role-player. Why is your character willing to risk his life, and spend several months underground, just to investigate this dungeon? Is it a matter of pride? Greed? Does some greater goal impel you to enter the darkness below ground? Have you exhausted every other option? For some races, such as dwarves, a trip beneath the surface of the world is just another day as an adventurer. For some, however, such as elves, it is a matter of giving up everything that you are used to - the open sky, the wind, and all of nature. Your character's attitude toward the dungeon should be a mixture of their past, their nature, and their knowledge and need to enter this dungeon.

Some players enjoy dungeon crawls so much that they design characters who spend most of their lives going on such adventures. These characters certainly would exist in any world where dungeons are common, but creating the concept and fleshing it out can be difficult. A dwarf or gnome would be the most common "freelance dungeoneer," as their abilities beneath ground, and their racial heritage provide good reason for such a career. Plan carefully, and don't forget to take into account that the rest of your party will almost certainly not be as capable as you are. Remember to plan for their survival, as well as your own, and you will have the allies you need for your next great crawl through the earth.

Once you've decided to go, role-playing can still prove a valuable aid in negotiating a dungeon's many challenges. One established practice in dungeon crawling is the time-honored tradition of exposition: an actor's ability to explain to another character exactly what he is doing, thus increasing the chance that the idea is effective. In many cases, a Dungeon Master doesn't understand exactly what a player is trying to discover, and if they are told how the "plan" works, they may be more lenient when allowing for its success. For example, a player character marks the ground with a spiral of chalk. He then turns to another character, and states that the spiral is a sacred design to the orc cultures here (he has often dealt with them, in-character), and that if they see it, they will assume it is the mark of a shaman and not an intruder.

This allows not only for genuine role-playing and use of character knowledge, but also to let the Dungeon Master understand how to have his NPCs react. An extended example of how to approach such a task is detailed below.

When you are faced with a dungeon, be sure to think logically. It is the most effective way to survive, and a good way to look at each challenge as a distinct puzzle to be solved. Of course, as players, you can be fairly certain that there is a way through almost any trap - this is an adventure, after all. Even the harshest Dungeon Master realizes that the fun of the game is in outwitting your opponents, be they animate or inanimate.

Map, map, map. Mapping out a dungeon is imperative. It can both help you find your way in (and out), and it can show you where missed passages or secret chambers can be found. Mark each trap you encounter, as well as how to get past them. Keep a watchful eye for open spaces in between chambers, and be sure to track the course of water flows between rooms. Note any entrances to the dungeon that you find along the way - they may be closer to you, if you should suddenly need to find a hasty exit.

Most importantly, keep a good sense of humor. Dungeoneering is a dangerous sport, and has a high death ratio. You may encounter traps that deal enough damage to kill your character outright, or you may make a fatal error in your plans, and find your character dead because of starvation or exposure. Any player who goes into a dungeon is essentially going to his Dungeon Master and announcing, "I bet I'm smarter than you are, and I can figure out all the puzzles that you can think to throw at me." Remember that your Dungeon Master (or the module designer) had weeks to design this dungeon - and you're going to try to solve it in one night.

Good luck.

#### **EXPOSITION EXAMPLE: TRAPS**

Character exposition - the chance for players to role-play through an intriguing or dangerous scenario - works surprisingly well when applied to complex traps. With proper exposition, the Dungeon Master can understand how you are expecting the trap to respond to your investigation.



Investigating traps, rather than triggering them, is the heart of survival in a labyrinthine dungeon. There are several ways to facilitate such investigation, and some work better under certain circumstances than others.

The first, and most time-honored method, would be the Rogue's find traps skill. Almost any party that goes underground has a Rogue to check ahead, looking for secret chambers, obvious traps and tripwires, and other common pitfalls. This is good for the party - bad for the Rogue, who is using his life to test his skill. Here are some questions to use in testing a trap, once you find it. Of course, your Rogue may not think about physics and scientific principals, but as a player, you are free to use your knowledge of the modern world in order to combat a particularly tricky dungeon scenario. It isn't cheating; your Dungeon Master used that same knowledge to create the trap in the first place.

### **How is the trap triggered?**

Many traps are triggered by tripwires, pressure plates or other mechanical devices. Take a moment to carefully investigate the means by which the trap is set off. Is the trap designed to sense for weight? If so, then you can safely set it off at a distance by throwing things at it. Use stones, or a grappling hook attached to a long rope. Is the trap triggered by living creatures, or by any movement?

If so, then you can use things that roll, such as rocks, or release one of your small white mice into the area, and tie a string around it to ensure it goes in the right direction. If the trap requires breaking a "plane" (such as entering a doorway), it may need to be triggered in many different ways, particularly if the trigger mechanism is mechanical. It may only be triggered by creatures of a certain alignment, or by animals larger than your hand. It may respond only to specific classes, creature types, or weights. Discovering these triggers gives you the option to either avoid the trap, or trigger it from a distance. Given that floor traps are a popular part of a DM's arsenal, a smart player will find ways to avoid touching the floor as much as possible. Flight spells, potions, or magical items that imbue flight are a popular way, but you can also use spider climb and similar effects to traverse the walls and ceiling, thus avoiding the floor and any triggers it might contain.

### **Does the trap rely on the basic principals of physics?**

If so, then you can use physics against it. If it requires tension to activate, find a sticky oil or tar and pour it down the mechanism, to mess up the spring. If the trap is a pit trap, use a rope to safely climb down, walk across the bottom, and then use the grappling hook to secure the rope and climb back up again.

Perhaps the trap is triggered by ropes - if so, then set them on fire. Weight balances can be disrupted with application of certain spells, such as levitate.

### Is the trap magical in nature?

If so, it will be more tricky to deactivate, unless your party wishes to spend several days while the wizard tries repeated *Dispel Magic* applications until it destroys the trap. Magical traps are more difficult to avoid, as some of them are completely invisible. Remember to have the party wizard keeping *detect magic* up at all times. If he can see that there is a large magical emanation up ahead, it might be best to do some research before continuing.

### Does it rely on the senses?

Sight, sound, touch? Often, the nature of a trap is singular. Wards can be avoided if you simply don't touch them. Some sigils are only powerful if you see them, and shrieking sounds meant to deafen don't do much if you have prepared ahead. Also, certain races have unique abilities of low-light vision and the like, which may be able to deal with the trap more effectively.



### If the trap involves a magical guardian (golem or gargoyle), can the creature be deactivated before the trap is triggered?

Many traps aren't traps at all. They are creatures, whether alive or inert, that are just waiting to stomp on the party. In most cases, your best bet is going to be to attack and overcome, but when the creature is too powerful or there is some other hazard, the options become more grim. Can the creature be outsmarted? Many subterranean guardians are unintelligent, and may chase the first person they see - even if that person is an illusion. - Others can be bargained with, or paid in gold and magic to ignore the party's presence. Lastly, inert guardians such as golems may have a weakness, or they may be avoidable before they trigger. If the golem is designed to protect a certain book, for example, the party can easily avoid conflict by simply not molesting the tome.

### Can you just go around it?

Parties often forget this option, and it is an important one. Most dungeons have numerous corridors, thin walls, and other entrances. If you are faced with a trap or a creature that you feel your party has no ability to conquer, try to find a way around it. For example, lots of wizards will magically lock a door, place firetraps, and elaborately rig the lock with poison needles and similar, however, as long as the hinges of the door are on your side, these measures will prove ineffective. Just remove the hinges, and the door will slide open. By thinking "outside the box" in such a manner, you can cleverly avoid numerous dangers. One enterprising dungeoneering party was hired to walk through a pyramid and bring out the treasure within. Realizing that the only entrance to the pyramid was through a lower door, and that the treasure room was at the top of the pyramid, the party simply climbed the outside of the dungeon. Once at the top, the wizard cast *Dig* spells on the pyramid's point until they had reached the treasure room - avoiding the dungeon entirely.

### Are there magical means of protection?

Traps rarely use more than one type of damage. A jet that shoots flame, for example, rarely also fires a bolt of cold. A spring-loaded knife in the wall is almost never combined with a fire trap, and when you see a pit full of spikes,



the odds are that it doesn't also contain a lightning bolt effect. If you can establish what kind of damage the trap will most likely deal to you, then you can use spells and items to ward against that type of damage and just walk through the trap.

### **Will the trap seal the chamber, or destroy anything?**

Will triggering this trap prevent access to a certain area? One of the most devastating traps to be found in a dungeon doesn't actually do anything to the characters, but rather destroys items, or even entire sections of the dungeon itself. If the trap is a carefully balanced avalanche, setting it off may seal corridors, or collapse the entrance to the dungeon beneath tons of stone. In the worst case scenario, the trap may destroy the very item that the party has come to retrieve, making months of labor, research, and travel completely worthless. Can you protect the item if you trigger the trap? Is there a way to remove the item from the trap without triggering it?

### **Does the trap re-activate, or reload itself?**

If so, then you will need to discover how often the trap can be triggered. With many magical traps, the timing is based on movement of the heavens - a single hour, a day, or each night at midnight. With more physical traps, it may require time for the mechanism to reload, or to reset. It is important to know how long the trap will be safe to cross - and when it will not.

## **DESIGNING DUNGEONS THAT WORK**

*"You're walking down a long dark corridor dimly lit with torches sitting in strange ironwork sconces. Somewhere in the distance you hear a strange chilling cry, then all is silent. Up ahead you see a heavy wooden door..."*

These words are familiar to anyone who has ever played fantasy RPGs. The dungeon is the staple of this genre, a maze of twisty turning passages, all alike... no wait, that was a different dungeon. Whether you plunge your adventurers into the 12th level of hell or make them climb to the top of a high tower, the players know that they will be required to open doors, fight monsters, answer riddles and get loot.

A dungeon can be as simple of a set of passageways or as elaborate as a vast forgotten city; what you do with this concept will be determined by the needs of your group and your skill as a Dungeon Master.

Designing a stereotypical pit of traps, treasure, and trolls is an easy business. Simply sketch out a maze onto a piece of graph paper, pack it with several choice horrors from the dark end of evolution, add some pits and sliding walls and *viola!* You have the perfect environment for your players to loot and depopulate.

Unfortunately, as fun as such treasure hunts are initially, most players quickly grow weary of these smash and grab affairs. They begin to ask questions such as "Who built this place?", "Why is all this treasure here?" and "How did the residents construct all of these complex traps?" Since no thought was put to the origins of the dungeon, the DM has no answers, and the very existence of the dungeons goes from being dark and mysterious to silly and cliched.

Many DMs try to add character to their dungeons through diabolical traps and brain twisting riddles, seeking to distract the PCs with paranoia and confusion. Others address the issues by simply branding dungeons as passe, replacing subterranean exploration with adventures in the wilderness and townships where realism is easier to achieve.

Both approaches fail to address a few key issues, however, which are really all that stand between a run of the mill maze and an engrossing roleplaying experience. By considering a handful of simple questions, even the most novice DMs can bring their dungeons to life, and in turn add a depth and color to their campaigns which players will remember for years to come.

The questions, each of which is examined in detail below, are:

- Why does the dungeon exist?
- What are the perils of the dungeon?
- What do the PCs have to gain by exploring the dungeon?
- What do the PCs really know about the dungeon?

Naturally, combinations and variants of the different dungeons can exist. Imagine an ancient temple buried beneath the ice of an encroaching glacier, a crude lizardfolk mine intersecting an abandoned Dwarven prison or an stern elven fortress captured and renovated by the yuan-ti as a base for their pending invasion. A few ideas for unique dungeons include...

- A towering lighthouse long since abandoned by the sea elves.
- The rusting body of an titanic golem, slain by the gods and left to lie in an forgotten valley.
- An semi-abandoned formian hive, half destroyed by a still active volcano.
- A great granite pyramide half-buried in the sands of a remote desert.
- The remains of an asylum overrun by ist insane charges and now run by a mad sorcerer.
- A remote desert mesa, hollowed out earth elementals in the service of an evil priestress.
- The ancient ruin of a wondrous observatory abandoned due to barbarian incursions.
- A vile network of ghoulish burrows connecting the tombs of ancient gnome illusionists.

- The crumbling remnants of a drow necropolis, half sunk in an icy subterranean lake.
- A vast forgotten library, protected and maintained by a scholarly vampire and his countless undead minions.
- The stomach of a gigantic sea serpent, prone to swallowing ships whole.
- The hulk of a gigantic magical airship resting upon the spire of a treacherous mountain peak.
- The secret underground storehouse of a long dead tyrant, now the home of a beholder.
- A bleak chateau, walled up and shunned by local villagers due to a nameless evil within.
- An abandoned subterranean battleground where an army of dwarves and an army of drow annihilated each other decades ago.

The more colorful the reason a dungeon exists the more interesting adventuring within it can be. Learning how the dungeon came to be can provide PCs with insights into all facets of their world, in addition to presenting them with a challenging, atmospheric environment in which to adventure.

The DM who takes a few minutes to ponder these matters before setting pen to paper will be rewarded with *a* honest-to-goodness adventure setting, not just a dark and dangerous hole in the ground.

### WHY DOES THE DUNGEON EXIST?

When you run a role-playing game, what you and your players are actually doing is telling a story communally, and the best campaigns are always the ones that produce the best stories. Without a good story, a campaign is nothing but a random collection of encounters, and will quickly bore the players. Like every other element of a campaign, a dungeon should be designed to contribute to the overall power and drama of the story.

The first question that an incipient dungeon designer needs to ask himself is what is the function of the dungeon in your overall campaign? It isn't enough to simply say, "It's a place for the heroes to go adventure." Think about the role that the dungeon is going to play in your story. Is it the beginning of the campaign, where the heroes are first introduced to work with each other and where they get a sense of the story? Is it the major stumbling block in the middle of the story, through which the heroes must fight their way in order to achieve their goal? Or is it the climax of the story, where the heroes must finally confront (and presumably defeat) their ultimate nemesis? You want to make sure that you design a dungeon that will fill all the needs you have for it.

Without a greater clarity about what its place in your campaign is going to be, your dungeon may very well end up taking your campaign in a direction which neither you nor your players want.

Generally speaking there are three ways in which a dungeon can come into being: it is either formed by the blind forces of nature, constructed by inhuman beings (either mortal or divine) or created when a structure built by humans (or demi-humans) falls into ruin. (There are also structures created by evil humans for some fell purpose, but they tend to fall into the second category.) Many novice DMs render all of their dungeons as either caves or catacombs, but doing so is unnecessarily limiting. The forms which a dungeon can take are as limitless as the spectrum of nature and the imagination of thinking beings.

To begin with, let's look at "natural labyrinths", or those dungeons crafted by natural forces. Natural labyrinths are typically the products of countless millennia, their deep passages carved by the relentless forces of fire, water or ice to create a haunting subterranean world. Filled with twisting passages, weird limestone formations and vast caverns where no light has ever shone, these dungeons need not always be underground. Nature can form similar passages within the melting hearts of great glaciers, the tide worn interiors of coral reefs or even the rotting trunks of monolithic trees.

Natural labyrinths, be they of stone, ice or some more exotic strata, tend to be random in their form. Their passages wander about wildly, making mapping very difficult. When carved by water or magma, passages tend to ascend to constantly varying degrees providing unstable footing and even forcing the PCs to climb rather than walk through certain sections. Likewise passages can vary tremendously in size, which forces PCs to stoop or even crawl in order to make their way forward, only to find themselves in a passage which dwarfs the PCs in its immensity.

In dungeons which are products of nature there is also no guarantee of the stability or safety of any passage. Inexperienced spelunkers can trigger rockslides and cave-ins, fall through seemingly solid walls or be forced to navigate floors spiked with stalagmites. Bottomless pits, fast-flowing subterranean rivers and caverns flooded by the periodic rise of ocean tides all add to the alien atmosphere of the deep earth, as can

forest of crystals, bubbling pools of magma, the twisting roots of great trees and wondrous seams of precious (perhaps even magical) ores and minerals.

While the twisting passages of "natural" dungeons can be exciting, they are only one of the forms that labyrinths can take. Other dungeons are constructed by monsters, excavated over years to provide a dark sanctuary in which they can raise their broods, hoard their treasures and imprison those hapless innocents which they've dragged off into the night. Depending on the attributes and determination of the creatures in question, such lairs can range from crude earthen passages dug into the sides of hills or mountains to inhuman keeps constructed from heavy timbers, quarried stone or even the mammoth bones of great creatures that once roamed the PCs' world.

While the atmosphere of natural caves can be weird, even unsettling, monster-made dungeons present a wonderful opportunity for the PCs to gain insights into the minds of the creatures which they are about to confront. How are the passages constructed? Are they rudimentary in their design or do they demonstrate a malign intelligence? A well excavated lair may mean sophisticated traps and defenses, and that the monsters are likely intelligent and disciplined.

How are the chambers decorated, if at all? Are the skulls of dangerous animals or the remains of defeated opponents displayed as a warning to intruders? Are there any cave paintings, or sculptures or carvings? If so, do they depict the history of the monsters (perhaps giving a clue as to what treasures or magic they may possess), or do the works of art illustrate how the monsters envision themselves or their gods? Does it provide hints as to what nasty plots the monsters are in the midst of hatching, or of a greater evil which stands behind them? Even if the PCs are uninterested in the daily lives of their enemies, presenting such details brings the dungeon to life, giving the characters an opportunity to estimate the strength and sophistication of their enemies in a way other than combat. A well crafted monstrous dungeon can also grant PCs a sense of genuine familiarity, respect and perhaps even sympathy for their enemies.



A third kind of dungeons were originally built by (presumably good-aligned) humans or demi-humans to fulfill a mundane purpose. Fortresses, mines, tombs, prisons and even sewers can fall into this category, as can treasure vaults, secret libraries and subterranean menageries. (More detailed discussions on specific dungeon types can be found in the section of the same name.) The passage of years, and perhaps the forces of war, famine, plague, drought or dark magic may have led to the abandonment of these places. Once in ruins, these neglected sites attract monstrous new occupants, some of which may modify their new homes to suit their malign purposes.

The advantage of ruins is that they are generally the most easily navigated by PCs. Humans tend to build relatively straight passages and uniform chambers which makes for easy mapping and a strangely familiar environment. Ruins can also be littered with all sorts of "junk" which adventurers may find useful, including prybars, torches, crates, pottery, rope, rusted weapons, worm-eaten books and even old magical items.

A ruin's major disadvantage to explorers is that it probably houses many obstacles which primitive monsters would not normally be able to construct. For example, a pack of kobolds probably wouldn't have the skill to construct a reinforced door, but they are intelligent enough to bolt such door to keep intruders at bay. Other features of ruins can include arrow slits, spy holes, false walls and traps, all of which can put PCs at a disadvantage.

A more detailed discussion on designing dungeon histories can be found in *Giving Your Dungeon a Past* on page 20.

### WHAT ARE THE PERILS OF THE DUNGEON?

Obviously the design implications for each dungeon are going to be very different. If the story is about the heroes' pursuit of a high-level monster that they have finally tracked back to its lair, the dungeon will contain clues that this is the right place. It will also contain information dealing with the monster's lower-level minions, then the higher level minions (perhaps its mate) and finally the monster itself.

On the other hand, if the story is about searching a long-lost tomb, then there will be very few (living) inhabitants, and the heroes will mostly be dealing with tricks and traps designed to discourage tomb-raiders. Whatever the case, the threats and dangers placed within a dungeon will define its purpose in your campaign, and probably mean the difference between an exciting adventure and a pointless hack fest

The most common danger that adventurers face in dungeons are, of course, monsters. Indeed monsters are the staple of virtually all dungeons (though they are not by any means the only hazards which can plague PCs) and thought should be given about which types of beasts are wandering your dungeon. Motive is generally a good place to begin. Why have the monsters chosen to inhabit the dungeon, when they could seek out other places to live? Some possible reasons include the dungeon as a source of food, a sanctuary in which to raise young, a site of holy (or unholy) significance to the monsters' religion, a trove to plunder of its treasures or a secure base from which to launch attacks or stage raids. The simple rule of thumb is that if there is no good reason for a monster to be in a dungeon, don't put it there.

Traps are another common source of danger in dungeons, and again a bit of common sense goes a long way when it comes to creating a believable environment. Consider who set each trap you place in your dungeon. Dim-witted creatures do not set traps of any complexity, but such fiends as mind flayers, rakshasa and slaad do. (More on traps can be found in *Hazards and Traps* on page 32).

Yet another peril of dungeon exploration is the natural hazards. These can include everything from rockfalls, flash flooding and precipitous drops to more insidious hazards such as foul gases and plague tainted waters. Treacherous quick sand, scalding steam vents, diseased corpses, bubbling tar pits, shuddering earth tremors and razor-sharp coral are just a small sampling of natural dangers (to say nothing of the darkness itself!) Even if you do not choose to utilize natural hazards in your dungeon, it can add to the tension and excitement if the PCs stumble across the aftermath of natural disasters. If they find the remains of some fell beast crushed beneath a cave-in you can be sure that all eyes will be pointed upwards for the remainder of the game.

Natural hazards, of course, can easily be replaced by some very unnatural ones. Hexes, curses and unholy ground are examples of dark magic which may plague a dungeon, adding a whole new level of danger to an already challenging environment. Imagine a labyrinth where all monsters (or PCs) that are slain rise immediately as undead. Consider a place where all metals, including those used in armor and weapons, rust within a matter of hours. Perhaps those that gaze upon the hideous carvings upon the dungeon walls slowly go blind, become weakened, or even go mad.

Truly evil dungeons may have been constructed in the honor of terrible gods (or maybe even crafted by those deities themselves). Those who seek to plunder such a dungeon may have to face the wrath of immortal beings normally encountered only in nightmares. It will take a strong soul and stronger sword-arm to ever see the light of day again!

Even with all of the above dangers to threaten your player characters with, in some cases danger does not originate from within a labyrinth, but from outside it. Some dungeons, such as tombs and abandoned ruins, may be considered sacred by those living nearby. Adventurers who seek to desecrate such areas may be pursued inside, with the goal of the locals being to make sure the infidels never emerge.

Such dungeon "guardians" may have other reasons for preventing PCs from escaping a dungeon with their lives. Perhaps the dragon that lives in the dungeon goes on a rampage every time someone takes a part of its horde, and thus must not be disturbed. Maybe the local dwarves want the treasure within the dungeon for themselves, and don't take kindly to those violating their "claim". An ancient prophecy could state that the first foreigner to emerge from the dungeon alive will unleash a disaster upon the land, so the neighborhood elves are going to make sure no outlanders escape...

#### **WHAT DO THE PCs HAVE TO GAIN BY EXPLORING THE DUNGEON?**

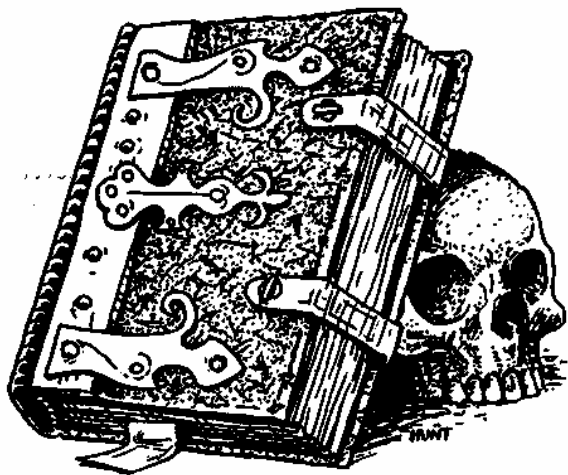
Once you know the role of the dungeon for the heroes, figure out the role of the heroes in the dungeon. What would induce a bunch of otherwise intelligent characters to venture down into a big hole in the ground full of dirt, traps and



creatures who do not have their best interests in mind? The typical reasons an adventurer sets foot in a dungeon are gold, magic and experience. The first two are keys to power and prestige (not to mention a comfortable lifestyle), while the third is a means to acquire more gold, magic and, yes, experience. Sometimes PCs might be presented with less selfish, or at least more subtle reasons for braving a labyrinth. A pit may harbor no mundane or arcane treasure, but something even more valuable to the adventurers.

Knowledge is the holy grail for the more scholarly types of adventurers. Perhaps the ruins they are exploring contain walls upon which ancient histories are inscribed. Maybe the darkness is the rumored home to an ancient sage, the last to practice an art otherwise lost to antiquity. Perhaps the huge ivory sculpture in the heart of a mountain is the most beautiful object ever created by mortal hands, and worth the danger merely to set eyes upon it. The treasure of knowledge can be as great as any other, especially in the cases of wizards and bards who pride themselves upon their worldliness.

Another motive for PCs to descend into a labyrinth may be to atone for a crime or wrongdoing they have committed, or to avenge one committed upon them. A dishonored elf could seek to slay the dragon he once fled in terror. An orphaned dwarf may be bent on exterminating the evil cult which slew his family. A grim paladin could be honor-bound to retrieve the banner of his order from the trophy chamber of an orc warlord. Such personal quests are the true stuff of legend, certainly more than butchering kobolds and carrying off their horde.



They add an epic quality to what might otherwise be just another "dungeon crawl".

Related to missions of honor or vengeance are those which involve the reclaiming of a heritage. The sword which lies in the heart of a dungeon might not have any particular value, except that it once belonged to the greatest hero the world has ever known: a PCs' grandfather. Likewise an ancient ruin might once have been the home to a character's clan, and exploring it is a chance to know the grandeur that her family once possessed.

The most wonderful thing about such dungeon adventures is that they allow the player characters to amass items which hold sentimental, rather than merely commercial value, and to strengthen the connection they have with the history and heritage of your campaign world. Even if a dungeon has nothing but such objects in it, the characters will find their efforts well worth the risks.

The quest for antidotes and cures is yet one more reason to brave a dungeon. All the gold in the world is not going to do a rogue any good if an assassin's poison makes it though his system, and the only antidote lies in the stem of a tiny blue mushroom only known to grow in the depths of a beholder's lair. Likewise a noble cleric might be willing to venture into the darkness to get the cure for the plague which is devastating the kingdom, not to mention killing her husband.

Perhaps the ultimate reward of this kind is the fountain of youth, sought by those past their prime who seek to know once again the vitality of their younger days. The waters of this most magical spring could easily be considered the greatest treasure of all. No other type of dungeon quest has the potential nobility of a mission of mercy, and even if its only their own skins the PCs are trying to save, the desperate search for a cure makes for the ultimate in high-stakes adventuring.

Whatever treasures are to be found in a dungeon, they should make sense in being there. Just as fire giants aren't likely to be wandering around inside of an ancient glacier, and complex traps aren't normally found inside a lair of purple worms, crown jewels shouldn't be laying around an ancient sewer without a very good reason. Invest a little thought into the treasures lying in your dungeon and you can further enhance the

atmosphere and realism of your dungeons. (More on treasures can be found in *All That Glitters...* on page 40.)

Another thing you should think about before beginning to design the dungeon is what game-level requirements you have for it. That is, what do the players (as opposed to the characters) get from this experience? For example, is the dungeon supposed to:

- Get the heroes to a higher experience level, so they can move on to a greater challenge you have for them?
- Get the heroes more money, so they can afford better arms and armor for further adventuring?
- Teach the players adventuring or role-playing skills they need to know, such as how to work together in combat or the appropriate way for their specific characters to deal with a fallen foe?

It is important to consider such issues when sitting down to design your dungeon. Unless you know what your dungeon is supposed to accomplish in your story, and how it's supposed to accomplish it, you can't be sure that you're going to get all you need from it when the time comes. Thinking of the dungeon in terms of your players, not just their characters, will go a long way towards doing that.

### **WHAT DO THE PCs REALLY KNOW ABOUT THE DUNGEON!**

A big part of how PCs react to a dungeon is determined by what they know (or think they know) about the place before they ever set foot inside of it. Typically player characters are told absolutely nothing about the maze they about to wander into except such trite bits such as "it's a dragon's lair" or "there's lots of gold in there".

Let the adventurers know that everyone who ever went into the dungeon came out a gibbering madman, or that the last party which explored the dungeon got chased out by a horde of ghouls seemingly commanded by a lowly goblin, or that the ruins that they are about to explore once served as the ancient temple of an evil god, and watch how their whole approach to the adventure changes. Suddenly the fighters and rogues choose their equipment more carefully, the spell-casters take stock of what magic to have at the ready and

scholars take the time to do a little more research on the history of the place. The end result is that everyone gets a little more involved, which is one more step in making your dungeon something special.

Of course, the light in which player characters view the information they have about the dungeon can also be colored by where that information came from. It's all well and good if the wise old (i.e., completely reliable) town sage told them what they know, but what if word comes from a more dubious source?

Legends are a great way for PCs to learn about a dungeon, as they are by nature inaccurate thanks to the passage of time. "A great black dragon lives within that desert mesa, but none have seen it in ages" might mean that the great black dragon has since died of old age, or that something even nastier has killed it and taken its place, or that there never was a dragon but instead an evil illusionist whose withered corpse is now worshiped by kobolds.

Another, slightly more accurate source of information are ancient documents. Forgotten journals, diaries, maps and chronicles are probably outdated, but at least they let the PCs get the information "from the horse's mouth" rather than from generations of embellished storytelling. Maps (even incomplete ones) are especially valuable to PCs because, even if passages have been added, caved in or walled up, they give the adventures an idea of how the labyrinth was originally laid out.

A final source of information, again more potentially accurate, is that provided by those who have actually been inside the dungeon. These sources can be retired adventures, rescued prisoners, escaped slaves or even captured monsters.

Depending on who is telling the story, the details are likely to change, and the DM can have an amusing time by having the PCs question several people, each of whom provides them with varying (and perhaps contradictory) details based on their recollections. A child who managed to escape the dungeon may describe the resident orcs as "huge" when they are really only average sized, just as a superstitious villager might describe a lowly shaman as "a mighty wizard".

Likewise a rich and arrogant warrior might refer to a pack of rabid trolls as "pushover goblins", and to their stack of gold bars as "petty baubles".

The trick is not to tell the players everything about the dungeon, but just enough to get their imaginations working. Nothing you can throw at your players will get them on the edge of their seats as effectively as that.

### ONE FINAL QUESTION...

Creating believable dungeons helps to bring campaigns to life, and can add much to the history and color of your world. The extra effort makes adventures memorable; the best will still be talked about by your players years later as they think back to how they roleplayed their way through the DM's dungeon rather than merely hacked at monsters and packed bags with gold.

Truth be told it always takes considerably more effort to put together a dungeon that works than one that doesn't; coming up with labyrinth that's at once imaginative and realistic, challenging and fun, suspenseful and satisfying takes time and imagination. So the final question is, is it worth it?

The answer for your players, and for every DM worth their salt, is "yes."

## GIVING YOUR DUNGEON A PAST

A dungeon has to do more than make sense in the context of the story. It also has to make sense to the players who are committing their characters to its depths. No matter how well crafted the story is up to the point at which the heroes enter the dungeon, if the dungeon is clearly just a random assortment of rooms, each filled with random monsters and random treasure, the whole thrust of the story will be lost, and the adventure will grind down to a "go to freezer, get orc" game.

The design of the dungeon should itself provide a puzzle for the heroes. Who built it? Why did they build it? What happened to it? How can the heroes use the information they glean to help them survive in the place? In order for the players to be able to figure all this out, the dungeon needs to have had a history of its own, and its design needs to reflect that history.

## DESIGNING A HISTORY

The origins of any dungeon (except natural formations) rest in the beings which constructed it. Different groups will go about building dungeons in radically different ways. Humans, for example, are generally not comfortable spending long periods of time underground, and so will tend to build only what they absolutely need (note that the term "need" here is highly variable. A temple might "need" a huge, highly decorated space dedicated to the worship of its deity.) Orcs, dwarves and other troglodytic races, on the other hand, are more comfortable underground than above ground, and their living spaces will reflect this, with abundant living, eating and recreational areas. Creatures such as umber hulks, which build their underground lairs based on instinct, will have a design philosophy that humanoid adventurers have difficulty understanding.

A race's philosophy will have an impact on how they construct their dungeons. Dwarves and other highly lawful folk tend to create straight, squared off tunnels which meet at right angles. More chaotic creatures are likely to create more haphazard collections of tunnels that intersect at all kinds of weird angles. Remember also that not all creatures are bound by gravity. Flying monsters (or swimming monsters in underwater complexes) and creatures which can walk on walls may very well build complexes with tunnels which intersect in all three dimensions! It can be a real challenge for a party of humanoids to deal with a dungeon in which the tunnels can intersect from above and below as well as from the sides.

Different races will also decorate their homes differently. Humans rarely want to spend enough time underground to completely decorate an underground complex, using hangings to disguise the cold earth which surrounds them and saving their artistic skills for a few important locations. Dwarves reflect their love of the earth by decorating every square inch of their underground homes (usually with the highly symmetrical patterns derived from their rather limited aesthetic). Orcs, who also love the earth in their own way, typically cover the walls of their homes with crude (and often highly graphic) drawings that reflect the immediate interests of the drawer. (Think of the walls of a New York subway...)

Finally, the height of the race which created the dungeon plays a large role in its final form. Races tend to create hallways and rooms that reflect their own height, so orcs and humans tend to create hallways which are seven to nine feet high, while dwarves and giant ants create hallways which are five to six feet high. Human-sized or larger heroes are going to be at a distinct disadvantage while adventuring in a dungeon created by smaller folk!

### PAST USAGE

Building underground is an enormous challenge. Even the relatively simple dungeon shown in the back of the *Players' Handbook* would require removing just less than 5,000 cubic yards of dirt. If that doesn't sound like a lot, go out in your back yard and dig out a single cubic yard of dirt. It's quite a chore. Now multiply that by 5,000, and add the issues of stability, ceiling support, ventilation, and so on. That is not a job to be undertaken lightly.

So why would someone undertake such a task? It would require an important reason, and one that could only be fulfilled underground. One doesn't remove 5,000 cubic yards of dirt to create a shop or a warehouse, (unless your race can't comfortably live and work on the surface). So underground complexes tend to serve important functions, and those functions have obvious implications for the design of the complex.



Obviously the function that a dungeon is supposed to fulfill is going to have a huge implication for its design, so this is going to be a very important consideration.

When the original creators finished their dungeon, they probably assumed that it would continue to serve its function forever, with only minor changes over the years. However, history has a way of turning such assumptions completely around. Races die out, wars and/or politics may cause a complex to be abandoned, or the original owners may find that their needs have changed, and they need to make significant adjustments to their dungeon. Any or all of these changes can result in an underground complex that is massively different from its original design.

There are essentially four different types of changes that can happen over time to a dungeon: changes in function, changes in design, changes in occupants, and general decay. A change in function occurs when the current occupants of the dungeon decide to use the dungeon for some new purpose. These kinds of changes can be of any type. A mine might be worked by criminals, and then turned into a prison when the ore ran out. A fortress might have been captured by its enemy, and changed into a temple dedicated to the war god who provided the victory. If the high priest of an underground temple died, his followers might consecrate the entire temple as a tomb to his memory. One of the most common changes of function is for any type of complex to be abandoned and then turned into a home by creatures of any sort.

Changes in design will often follow changes in function. If an intelligent race decides that a complex is now going to serve a new function, they may very well make changes to the original design of the complex. This may involve adding new rooms or filling in or expanding old ones, adding or blocking up entrances, adding or removing traps, etc. Unintelligent creatures may simply bore through walls and rooms at whatever angle they find convenient, totally ignoring the original intent of the builders. A band of heroes can learn a lot about the history of a dungeon by examining the way in which a totally smooth, circular tunnel, intersects a squared off, highly decorated tunnel.

Even if the complex still serves its original function, changes will be made. Denizens of a

dungeon may discover that it is more convenient to put a door in between two rooms, rather than walking around, or a room which was originally a monk's cell may be turned into an office for the Head of the Order. The older a complex is, the more likely it is that changes in design will have been made over the years. Note that this can mean major structural changes.

One of the most common reasons for changes in function and design is a change of occupants. The most common causes for these changes are either war, in which an enemy force killed or chased off the original inhabitants and then occupied the dungeon, or abandonment, in which a group (or groups) of intelligent or non-intelligent creatures find a complex which the original inhabitants have abandoned, and make their home there. This type of change can very easily lead to changes in function and/or design, as discussed above.

The last and most often neglected type of change is decay. Things just get old and fall apart. This is particularly true in dungeons which have been uninhabited for a long time, or in which the current denizens are unable or unwilling to keep it in good repair. There are generally two kinds of decay: intentional and unintentional. The best example of intentional decay is war. War will often leave behind broken doors, expended traps, broken weapons, burned furnishings and often heaps of dead bodies.

Unintentional decay is subtler. It will make itself felt in a thick layer of dust over everything, in rotted tapestries or decaying furniture. Anything made of wood, cloth or hemp in fact, will not last terribly long in dungeon terms. In extreme cases the ceiling supports themselves will rot, or seismic shifts will cause them to fail, and cave-ins will occur. Unintentional decay also causes considerable damage to mechanisms of all kinds. Ropes rot, pulleys and gears rust, and springs lose their tension. Imagine, for example, a band of heroes opening a door and finding a crossbow bolt stuck into the other side of it. Facing them is a crossbow with a ruined cocking mechanism and a broken string. By looking carefully at the mechanism the heroes may get an idea of how long the trap was set, and perhaps by whom.

All of these changes which take place over time will have their effect on the dungeon as it exists in the present.



In thinking about how the passing years affect your dungeon, consider that many of these things can happen together, and often more than once. A complex can serve a number of functions, both concurrently and sequentially, and over a long time it wouldn't be surprising for a number of different groups of creatures to inhabit a complex, perhaps with long periods of decay between them. All of these overlapping histories can greatly enrich the history of your dungeon.

It would not be too surprising, for example, for a complex which originally served as a human fortress, to become a mine when gold was discovered during the original excavation. For a while the complex served as both a fortress and a mine, but political considerations caused the original troops to withdraw, and when the gold ran out the mine was turned into a prison. Over the years both the officials who ran the prison and the prisoners incarcerated there made small changes to the design of the place. Eventually an orc tribe, which had been chased out of its original home by the soldiers from the fortress, attacked the prison and slew all of its occupants. They lived there for a while, decorating the walls of their new home with lewd cartoons of elves and dwarves, and then withdrew, leaving the halls abandoned. Over time a number of creatures moved in, living among the remains of all of the previous occupants.

## THE PRESENT DAY

The last thing to consider in concocting the history of your dungeon is its current condition. What is its current function? Who are its current occupants? In thinking about the current occupants, be aware that you aren't designing a zoo here, where a number of vastly different species can live in a relatively tiny space because they are walled off from each other and have their physical needs met by an outside agency (unless you are specifically designing a zoo, of course, but that's a different book). Unless they are undead, they will need access to all of the basic necessities of life, which means that they have to be able to reach food and water without going through enemy-held territory. Also, if they're going to survive very long, they need to be safe from predators.

Give some thought to how and why the various creatures in your dungeon live together. The most typical arrangement for intelligent creatures is for all the representatives of a given race to congregate together in a group of nearby or contiguous rooms. If there are other creatures in the dungeon with whom they are friendly, they may trade with them, act as their masters/slaves, ally with them against a common foe, worship them or simply ignore them. If they are on a less-friendly footing with each other then this relationship will make itself felt through the presence of traps, scouts, lookouts and other military expediencies. Most unintelligent creatures will develop a predator-prey relationship if they are in proximity for very long, although very occasionally creatures will develop a symbiotic relationship in which each fulfills the other's needs in some way and allows them to get along without killing one another.

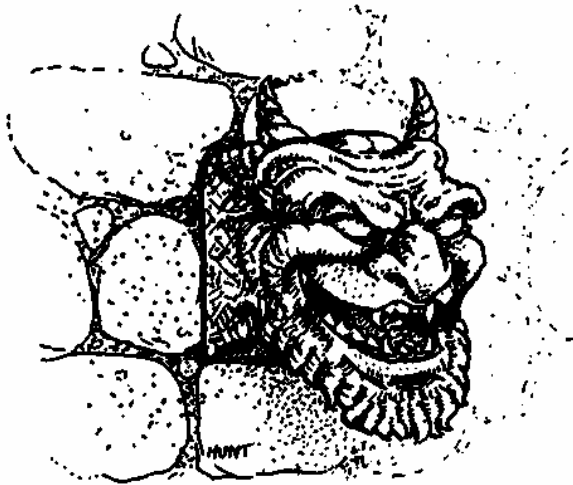
Another thing to consider when thinking about the current state of your dungeon is the presence of traps. If the dungeon is presently occupied by creatures which are moving in and out of it, then any traps which exist along their routes of travel will have been set off or disarmed long ago. It is possible that creatures which are in a state of war with other dungeon denizens (see above) may have set their own traps, but these will only tend to be along expected invasion routes, not in corridors and rooms which are routinely used by the local occupants. If the dungeon is one in which the denizens are either dead or undead and don't move around much, consider the effects of age on the mechanisms involved. Contrary to the experiences of certain cinematic archeologists, very few mechanical traps survive the ravages of time.

Detailed discussions on both dungeon ecologies and traps can be found in the essays which follow this one.

## DRAWING THE DUNGEON

Okay, now it's time to sit down and actually draw out the dungeon. You'll need either sharp pencils, a ruler, graph paper and lined paper, or one of the many good dungeon-mapping programs available out there

First, make up a list of all of the dungeon elements that are required for your story.



For example, the story might be that the heroes (presumably low-level ones) are trying to rescue a local princess from a band of goblins who have temporarily taken refuge in some kind of underground lair where they worship a local troll who has made his home here. Somewhere in the dungeon the players need to find a magic sword and a scroll with a clue as to the whereabouts of a great treasure, not in the dungeon. In that case your list would include:

- A guardpost for the goblins, near the entrance or possibly outside it.
- A sleeping area for the goblins.
- An eating, recreation, torture area for the goblins.
- A guarded room to keep the princess in.
- A large room with access tall enough for a troll, somewhat near the goblins.
- A room with the sword, with some kind of guardian. The guardian should be fierce enough to have kept the troll and the goblins away. It must either not require food/water or have its own entrance/exit from the dungeon.
- Room for the scroll, hidden amongst other treasures, like a library.

Having decided what you absolutely have to have in your dungeon, make some decisions about the kind of complex you want to have. The type of dungeon you choose will mostly depend on two things. The first is the list you just made. Is there anything on the list that suggests on particular type of dungeon?

In our example, the goblins' job of guarding the princess would be facilitated by a room with a door they could lock. So we can probably cross off a complex created by unintelligent creatures, since giant ants are notoriously un-fussy about such things as doorframes, hinges and locks. The most convenient dungeon type would probably be a former prison or fortress with a cellblock. If the dungeon is a fortress it would also presumably have some sort of guardpost at the entrance, another element on the list. So an underground fortress it is. For the comfort of the heroes, it should have been built by humans, so that the corridors are tall enough to suit most characters. The complex would have to be relatively recent, so that the locks on the doors are still functional, but old enough to have been abandoned and re-occupied by its present inhabitants.

The second issue to keep in mind when choosing a dungeon type is your players' preferences. If they are a combat-oriented group then you should choose a type of dungeon that will give them lots of opportunities for bloodshed, such as an active fortress or prison. If, on the other hand, your players prefer to deal with tricks, traps and puzzles, the ancient tomb of a mad wizard may be just the thing for them.

With these requirements in mind, write up a short description of the history of your dungeon. It doesn't need to be a fully written-out novel, just an outline that describes the original function, creators, history and present function/denizens of the dungeon. This will help keep you consistent as you design the dungeon itself. As time goes on, you'll find that such consideration and forethought make for a speedy design phase, as well as turning what could be a random monster hunt into an intriguing and entertaining adventure.

## DUNGEON ECOLOGIES AND CULTURES

Many long-time role-players can recall the scenario from days long past: the PCs had gone into White Plum Mountain (or somewhere similar), and whacked about a third of the monsters. In the process, they'd gotten pretty chewed up. So they just sat down in one of the rooms for two days while the party cleric threw healing spells on 'em.

By now, most of us can see how silly this scenario is. While the PCs rested, the monsters of White Plum Mountain should have been barricading the door and shoving burning rags through the keyhole! They should have just walled the PCs in and hoped they didn't have Create Food and Water! When the beholder in room 14 heard the death throes of the minotaur in room 8, it should have floated down to room 11 and told the hill giant "Hey, I'll get their attention and then you sneak around behind 'em!" Suppose you live in an apartment building and you hear the downstairs neighbor screaming "Aaargh! No, I need that to digest food! Ouuuuuuch!" Are you just going to sit there wondering what happened? Or are you going to:

- 1) Exit stage left.
- 2) Lay an ambush behind the door, just in case the homicidal maniac is about to take a fancy to your good silverware.
- 3) Call the cops. Or if you don't have cops but you do have a big axe, you may go out to see what happened. You might even form a posse with some of your other (unkilled) neighbors.

Any of the three is a reasonable expectation. What you probably wouldn't do is (1) be astonished when Krusk the Barbarian kicks the door in and (2) fight to the death against clearly superior opponents. Even animals rarely fight to the death. Why should dungeon dwellers who are at least smart enough to operate slings and covet gold?

Of course, classic dungeons were simpler in design; they never answered any of the questions like "What are these huge monsters eating when there aren't PCs marching into their mouths?" "How come the villagers nearby never just set the haunted house on fire?" or even "Where's the bathroom?" But in order to function well in a modern campaign, dungeons need a little more to go on. Creatures of any description don't exist in a vacuum. They affect and are affected by their environment. Thinking about this can pay off big for your dungeons. If your creatures react in a realistic sense, it draws realistic reactions out of your players. Instead of "I waste it with my crossbow," your players are forced to be at least as smart as the critters they're hunting.

## WHAT MAKES A HABITAT!

An area where a creature lives is called its *habitat*. If they have any options, creatures tend to stay in areas that suit them. You don't find parrots in the desert or sharks in fresh water. If you want to use a particular monster, or group of monsters, in a specific type of habitat, you have to consider the following factors.

### Food

Your monsters have to eat, and the bigger it is, the more it needs. (You can fudge this a little with magical creatures, but orcs, goblins and other human-shaped critters need plenty of provender.) What are the dietary staples? Human flesh is always a favorite (if you can't get elf), but this implies that they're close enough to settlements that they can raid for food. In that case, they're probably also stealing cattle (who don't fight back with crossbows like people do), grain, vegetables and any other food that hasn't been digested already. So even your maneaters are eating other meat often (unless they're raising humans like cattle; now there's an interesting dungeon concept for you: Showdown at Mind Flayer Ranch).

Raiders leave themselves vulnerable to counterattack. If all the toughest hobgoblins are out catching the humans for dinner, that might just be the perfect time for a small (but tough) group to sneak into their lair, butcher the tribal elders, and lay in wait for the returning warriors. (This does raise the sticky question of what to do with the hobgoblin mummies and children, but no one said war wasn't hell.)

Other dungeons are simply far enough from civilization that the denizens can range out looking for meals on the hoof. A good-sized forest has plenty of squirrels, deer, birds and rabbits for a small band, but a big settlement (or a creature with a big appetite) is going to hunt out the immediate area pretty quick. For permanent settlements of over twenty adults, you're going to need (1) a nearby community to raid, (2) mobility to hunt for long distances in the wilderness or (3) husbandry. The first is the default (and creates an easy conflict to base an adventure around), so let's consider the second and third for a moment.

**EVIL SOCIETY EXAMPLE:****CIRON U'SERET**

The city of Ciron U'Seret was a small and modestly successful trade port before the dragon Mucrost the Murderous attacked it. Big, old and powerful, Mucrost caved in the barracks on most of the army before they even knew they were being attacked. The city had strong walls, but they weren't built to defend against an enemy who could fly straight down out of a cloud and attack from the inside. The city surrendered, offering Mucrost anything he wanted. Surprisingly, his demand was simple: The entire city. Mucrost was tired of living in some manky old dungeon and raiding for cows all the time. Now Ciron U'Seret was going to take care of Mucrost's feeding needs. They could do this by providing a nice fat cow every day, or by being devoured one by one.

It was no surprise that Ciron U'Seret started tithing. What was a surprise was how quickly everyone got used to the reign of Mucrost. Sure, a couple would-be heroes tried to assassinate him, but they didn't succeed, and the city became remarkably prosperous. After all, if you're a barbarian raider, do you really want to attack a city whose king can make most of your troops wet their loincloths with one good roar? If you're a pirate, do you want to get anywhere near Ciron U'Seret's harbor? Mucrost regarded pirate ships the way human kings regard foxes: hunting them down is a fun bit of weekend sport.

No, the threat of draconic retaliation was

enough to secure Ciron U'Seret against outside aggressions.

As for internal dissent, the king's justice was remarkably effective there too. If two neighbours couldn't solve a dispute on their own, all they had to do was bathe thoroughly, anoint themselves with butter, chives and some cracked peppercorn, and state their cases to the king. The king usually only ate one claimant, though it had been noted that justice tended to favor the old and stringy. Most Cironian criminals got eaten, and the king's fondness for human flesh led him to richly reward squealers. This has made Ciron U'Seret a nation of snitches. Few criminals could remain hidden long in that climate, even given Ciron U'Seret's strict (One might say "draconian") laws. No loud noises after sunset (because the king has such sensitive ears and needs his sleep). No new songs or stories may be composed or performed. (What do you need new songs for?) No one but the king may change the city's laws or customs. No study of magical spells above third level. No religion.

Life in Ciron U'Seret is extremely safe, calm and predictable. It's been culturally and politically stagnant for generations, but that may change soon. Ciron U'Seret has a new queen, the great dragon Balia the Baleful. There's much speculation that when her eggs hatch, the king and queen will start looking around for cities their children can rule. Certainly the army has been steadily growing in size for years – something the city's neighbours can't ignore...

Mobility means that the dungeon critters are roving far and wide from their lair. They stay relatively-self sufficient and know how to handle themselves far from home. This means they might spot PCs miles before they kick in that front door, especially if the character are lighting cook fires. If they do, they might be able to harass the PCs with arrows or sneak-attacks before they even get close -after all, they're familiar with the land because they've been hunting there all their lives. And when the PCs do arrive, the dungeon-dwellers are going to be ready.

On the other hand, if they're raising crops and animals, they probably have cleared areas for

acres, or even miles, around their central settlement. This gives them an even better chance of spotting the PCs (though Rangers, Rogues and anybody with a ring of invisibility has a real edge there) and battening down the hatches. It also means that the creatures can support a much larger population. Finally, having cattle and crops on hand means they only spend a few hours a day dealing with food, instead of eight or ten, which leaves much more time to fix that leaky roof - or build a wall and make pit traps.

Water is also an issue, but it's a lot easier to handle without deep thought. Some dungeon-dwellers are lucky enough to have access to an

underground stream, or an aquifer that they can access through a well. Those who don't will have to leave the complex to bring water back, a tedious and backbreaking process. It is unlikely, therefore, that a dungeon intended for living occupants will be built too far away from a water source. Maybe it's a rainy region and wells are plentiful. Maybe there's a spring in the dungeon, or a river nearby. If you want to make water an issue, a lake in an otherwise dry environment makes the perfect explanation for a group of monsters being in one area: it's the only place where they won't die.

Finally, waste disposal is going to be a problem in a dungeon, particularly one with a lot of inhabitants. Unless the occupants are once again blessed with some kind of underground stream that will carry their waste away, they are either going to have to let it pile up somewhere or carry it out of the dungeon and dump it. Since almost no intelligent races like to live near (or deal with) their own waste, most will choose to have somewhere far away from their living quarters for the mess to pile up. This can lead to some bizarre and interesting discoveries as heroes lower themselves into a heretofore-unexplored vault, only to discover that they are landing in the dungeon equivalent of a septic tank.

### Shelter

Some animals have what it takes to survive in bitter cold or deadly monsoons, but most creatures take shelter when the cold winds blow or the lightning starts to fall. This is one reason for the popularity of dungeons among monsters: they keep the rain off. Again, this seems obvious, but on closer examination, the notion of shelter can add some flavor to your dungeon. If it's the middle of winter and the Cursed Temple of Phamadirg is the only building for miles, you instantly have a good reason for monsters - even stupid ones - to flock to it. If the Cursed Temple has high walls from which a kobold tribe can fling rocks at any humans who try to chase down a raiding party, so much the better. Don't underestimate the benefit of defensive structures. There's a military axiom that one man on the wall is better than ten in front of it. If you're wondering why, check out pages 32-33 in the *Player's Handbook*. If I'm Joe Hobgoblin, I'm achin' to take a swing at an adventurer with that +2

"Defender climbing (cannot use shield)" bonus, especially if it's stacked with a +1 "Attacker on higher ground" bonus. It's especially choice if I've first softened him up by firing arrows at him from a position on Table 8-9: Cover.

### Traditional Dungeons

If there's a collection of varied monsters in an area (that is, your typical fun-to-play dungeon), there should be a reason they all hang out there. Some of the typical dungeons can be made to cough up reasons, with a little thoughtful shaking. These reasons, in turn, can make the dungeons more interesting - or perilous.

## DUMB ANIMALS

A lot of DMs stock their dungeons with purple worms and ghastrs and umber hulks because it's high fantasy and what's the point of high fantasy if you're not kacking fantastic creatures? More fantasy equals more fun, right?

Not always.

Natural animals can be scary as hell if you do your research and really play them right. Consider the low-tech campaign discussed on page 162 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Now consider the facts about a plain old, non-magical grizzly bear. It can grow to be about seventeen hundred pounds. Unarmed, there's no reasonable way a single human being should have a chance. Of course, they can run at thirty-five miles an hour, so you're unlikely to get away from one in open terrain. Plus, they can climb trees as fast as a grown man can sprint - assuming they don't just push the damn thing over. That's without considering the teeth and claws, which are affectionately referred to as "chisels of death." And bears are only one kind of perfectly natural threat. Cheetahs can sprint close to seventy miles an hour. A full-grown cobra carries enough venom to kill twenty grown men, and some species can spit it in your eye from eight feet away. If you get your characters to appreciate what a big deal it is to kill a rabid, 23-foot-long crocodile, they'll be even more awed when they fight monsters that are intelligent and use magic.

Rather than starting your characters out on an endless diet of kobolds and orcs, try spicing things up with completely mundane monsters from the normal world.

Played right, they can provide a gripping sense of realism, which provides (in turn) a strong foundation for fantastic elements introduced later.

There are three basic categories of "dumb animals" you can throw at PCs, each with their own quirks. However, they all have some qualities in common.

- 1) At night, they're afraid of fire.
- 2) They run away if they get badly injured.
- 3) They only fight to the death if cornered.

## CARNIVORES

These are animals that live primarily on fresh meat. They are the hunters and killers of the natural world. Carnivores come in all sizes, from the massive lion to the minute spider, but they all have a few general traits in common. First and foremost, they're built to kill. It may be fangs, it may be poison, it may be horns, but they are equipped to take prey down fast.

Lone carnivores tend to be built for sudden bursts of strength and speed. Unless they live in such a lush environment that they can kill constantly, it makes much more sense for a meat-eater to spend fifteen minutes a day nailing an antelope (or a mouse, or whatever) and the rest of the day resting. The harder a carnivore has to work for its kill, the more often it has to kill. This turns into a vicious cycle pretty quick, which is why successful meat-eaters are often surprisingly lazy.

Put yourself in a puma's shoes. Your lunch choices seems to be limited to (1) a tired old deer that's lagging behind the herd or (2) a group of upright mammals with no scent of fear on them, carrying scary bright pointy things. Which are you going to attack?

Carnivores are unlikely to attack PC groups unless they're ravenous, or unless the humans they're used to are unarmored pushovers. (Lone PCs are another matter. Most carnivores love to pick off isolated stragglers. Hey, Mister "I'll use my Move Silently skill to scout out ahead" - this means you.) This doesn't mean you can't set up good fights between PC gangs and meat-eaters: It just means the adventurers are more likely to be aggressors. If you're a village that's

lost valuable cattle to a marauding mountain lion, who else are you going to call to deal with it?

Carnivores tend to be very territorial, and the bigger they are, the wider their territory tends to be. If two carnivores operate on the same scale, they just can't share territory. There's not enough food to go around. So if a puma and a boa are both stalking the same stretch of jungle, pretty soon one is either going to move out or get the drop on the other.

Pack carnivores - like wolves or lion prides - are particularly dangerous. Individually, wolves are nasty but not murderous. But you're rarely going to get into a fight with an individual wolf. If you get attacked by wolves, it's because they outnumber you and figure they can take you. They tend to surround their prey. The wolves in front are baiters, drawing off the target's attacks and dodging them. The wolves in back dart in for flank attacks, trying to bite for the legs and haunches, then darting back out before the prey can turn. (If it does turn, of course, the baiters become the biters.) They don't stand and fight. They constantly give way in front, only to circle behind. They aren't going for a decisive killing shot. Hell, they've got all night. They want to wear their prey down to the point where they can fall on it and go for the throat. Most pack-based carnivores - even fantasy monsters - can be expected to behave in a similar fashion.

## DETRIVORES

Detrivores are animals that eat garbage - scavengers like jackals and vultures. They're unlikely to attack unless they're surprised, their young are threatened, or they're cornered. For every serious carnivore (or carnivore pack) in an area, there can be numerous detrivores. Since they don't have to work as hard or risk as much for their meals, they're able to support more kids than the labor-intensive carnivores.

## OMNIVORES

Omnivores eat anything - plant, animal, carrion, whatever. Often they're detrivores, but not opposed to taking on fresh meat that looks vulnerable. Their varied diet means that omnivores are usually more numerous and sometimes larger than the carnivores in their area.



Because they can survive on plants for a while, they don't need to kill frequently, but this means they have the luxury of stalking prey for a while. It's not unheard of for omnivores to watch clashes between two rival carnivores (or, say, between a carnivore and a PC party) and then close in on the weakened victor. DMs might want to keep that in mind when their wounded and weary characters are hiking back from the dragon's lair. There's nothing that says that grizzly bear won't try to snatch that banged-up wizard and run off with him before his buddies can get it together.

## SMART MONSTERS

### DUNGEON SOCIOLOGY

Ecology isn't the only thing you can use to smarten up a dungeon. If you've got smart monsters, you can do just as well by thinking about its sociology as well. Any time you get a group together, politics kick in. Some people are popular, some aren't. The same thing goes for orcs, and kobolds, and gnolls. Some people have the power or knowledge to get things done, and can get valuable goods or services through exchange (or extortion). If you've got a tough group of PCs, you need to give them a challenge worthy of their powers. The most obvious way to do this is to throw bigger monsters and wiggier spells at them, which works well enough some of the time. But the other way to challenge them is with smarter monsters -monsters who are organized and have enough sense to properly employ their numbers.

### CHAOTIC EVIL SOCIETIES

It might seem that "chaotic evil society" is a contradiction. If it's chaotic, how is it social? With chaotic evil, the unifying factor is "fear of the big guy" (just as with chaotic good, the unifying social factor is "desire to look out for the little guy"). Chaotic evil has a reputation as "the eeeevilest evil" because the big booty-trouncing red dragons and Unspeakable Demons from Hell™ were chaotic evil. Maybe there's a connection, but it works in the other direction. Big Red isn't powerful because he's chaotic evil. He's chaotic evil because he's powerful. When you can win any argument by saying "Hey, talk to

the 14-die breath weapon," there's not a lot of incentive to be organized or reasonable.

Chaotic evil is lazy evil: It gets things done in the simplest possible way. Chaotic evil can also be considered "efficient evil." Coveting your neighbor's house? Conk him over the head and move in! Don't like the adventurers creeping into your dungeon? Waste 'em! Nothing troubling you at the moment? Take a nap! Like every other alignment, chaotic evil types tend to hang out together because they understand one another. These groups don't have a lot of rules or formal structures. The boss is the boss because he gets things done and is strong enough to bend others to his will. The underlings want to be in charge, and one of them will probably get ambitious enough to swallow the leader eventually... assuming the leader doesn't swallow him first

A society based on violence and poor impulse control has some built-in limits to its size. No matter how powerful a leader is, his number of followers is limited to those he can personally awe or bully. If the followers eat to live (as opposed to demons, who only eat for the fun of it), the number is far more limited, because chaotic evil types don't have the patience to farm or the organizational skills to make slaves do it. Basically, chaotic evil groups are like biker gangs in those old 1950s scare flicks. They're tough, they're mean, they're unpredictable, they ride in and seize what they want, but they don't stick around because they really *can't*. Once they've stolen whatever they can carry, there's no reason to stay: They're off to the next town ripe for the picking.

Individually, chaotic evil beings tend to be the toughest because they're more likely to do crazy stuff like fight to the death or meet a massed charge with a massed charge. Their tactics tend to be built around mobility, surprise, and overwhelming offense. But because they burn twice as bright, they only last half as long.



These problems only get amplified in a society where everyone's looking out for number one, and there's no stated or implied punishment if you successfully kill the boss. Chaotic evil gangs tend to scatter when the leader dies, and if you negotiate with the underlings it doesn't take long to find someone who'd love to slit the chiefs throat - if he thought he could get away with it. As individually tough as they are, chaotic evil societies are among the easiest to take apart. Methodical patience and a willingness to play the inevitable factions off against each other can be the party's greatest allies when dealing with such groups.

### LAWFUL EVIL SOCIETIES

All the problems chaotic evil societies have are not problems for lawful evil. Chaotic evil is the cycle gang who kicks down your door, steals your stuff, burns your house and deep-fries your puppy dog - then leaves. Lawful evil is a faceless bureaucracy that seizes your house through Immanent Domain laws, confiscates your property with a court-ordered foreclosure, puts your puppy dog to sleep because he wasn't registered, and then offers to rent your old house back to you at a reasonable rate. Lawful evil is *organized*. Violence is the last resort, after it's tried blackmail, bribery, threats and devious backroom political maneuvering.

Chaotic evil hates to back down from an open fight. Lawful evil hates open fights: It would much rather sneak into your bedroom, cast a Sleep spell on you to make sure you're really out, then put a pillow over your face. So much tidier.

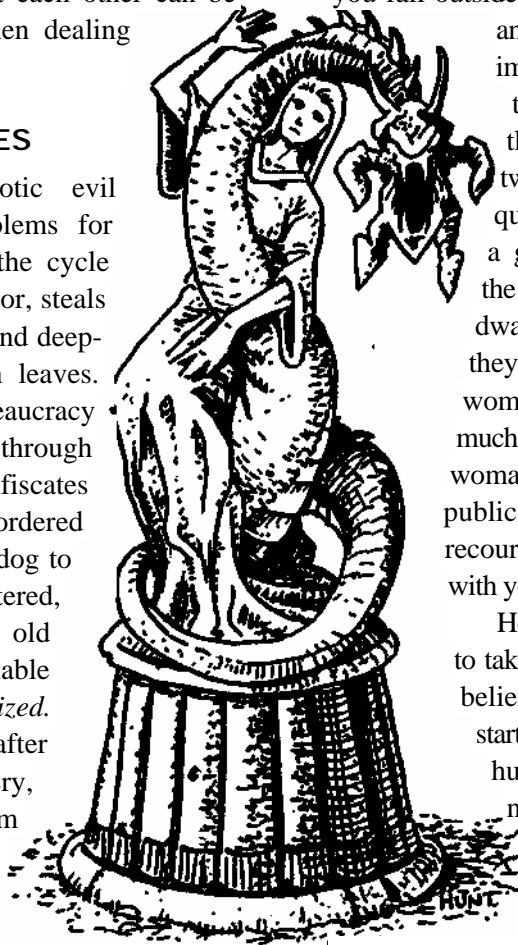
Lawful evil societies have far, far greater potential for longevity and growth because they're based on obedience, order and deferring gratification. Where chaotic evil wants it now, lawful evil wants it *all*, and if it has to wait ten years to wear you down, it's got a clear calendar. It's simple to take down a chaotic evil society: You just kill the boss. (This may not be *easy*, but it's simple.)

Rarely is it that straightforward in a lawful evil society, because the structures of the society are what make it evil. Cut down one corporal in the army and another comes straight out of the military academy to take his place. Lawful evil might have a few noteworthy individuals who serve as champions and leaders, but they don't rely on them the way chaotic evil does. You can hack a few branches off, but the tree is still there.

For instance, imagine a society that holds that "Only old male humans are worthy of respect." If you fall outside those three categories it's okay for any old male human to rob, enslave or imprison you. If you've got one of those traits, you're better off than those with none, and if you've got two you're almost a citizen - but not quite. The old male humans have got a good thing going, so they support the system. The old male elves and dwarves are second class citizens, but they're still better off than young women, so they can't complain too much. But if you're a young halfling woman, you better not show your face in public because you have no legal recourse for anything anyone wants to do with you.

How is a rag-tag group of PCs going to take out evil that's built into a society's beliefs and attitudes? Conquest is a good start, but if you put every white male human to the sword, you're really not much better than lawful evil yourself: you're judging people by the accidents of their birth rather than by their actions.

Conquering a lawful evil society is no picnic because they plan, organize and obey their superiors. Lawful evil societies are built on the idea that individuals are tools. There is nothing unique or special about any particular hobgoblin in the army, so the strategies and tactics of the lawful evil mob are based on the idea that any individual can do it. They tend towards fortifications, siege engines, phalanxes and defensive technologies like shields and armor.



## NEUTRAL EVIL SOCIETIES

Unlike either chaotic or lawful societies, the neutral evil organization both respects laws, and tries to find a way around them. There is structure, but it is loosely created and even less adhered to. The ideal situation for a neutral evil hero is one in which he can convince the opponent to abide by the rules - all the while, breaking them himself. They are hypocrites, two-faced dealers that provide a backdrop for their gains, and then destroy their own rules whenever it becomes troublesome to deal with them.

In many games, the neutral evil character can be rightfully described as 'Neutral Me.' Their number one goal is not simply to acquire power, or riches, but to grasp anything that they desire. After they have gained it, they may well forget about it and move on - once its usefulness is finished, or the thrill of the acquisition is gone. Chaotic evil wants it now. Lawful evil wants it all. Neutral evil simply wants it, and will go to any lengths, including patience, outright bartering, or even working with a good party to get it. The neutral evil villains do occasionally keep their word and stick to contracts - when it is in their best interest.

Where you can trust chaotic evil to rampage, and lawful evil to tyrannize, you just can't trust that the neutral evil monster will do *anything*. They even break their own rules. Unlike chaotic evil, they have no problem with impulse control - they can machinate with the best of them. Unlike lawful evil, on the other hand, they have no desire to organize or conform, and can adapt their plan and their nature as suits the situation.

While this can make for an extremely powerful individual, neutral evil societies are rare and shortlived. Monsters with neutral evil tendencies rarely care enough to gather in groups, unless the pay-off is rich. They almost never create established communities, or form organized and structured government systems - what would be the point? They would all ignore it, machinate the rules, and eventually destroy the society they had created. A neutral evil individual prefers to find an existing society, and abuse its laws and systems for their own gain, all the while pretending to adhere to their structure. This allows the neutral evil to have an advantage over the

indigent residents, who actually do follow the laws and rules, and won't see the neutral evil's plan coming until it is too late.

Then, after the neutral evil individual has taken everything he wanted, he moves on and finds another society to exploit. Good, evil, beneficent or malevolent — it doesn't matter, so long as the neutral evil gets whatever he was searching for.

The occasional small neutral evil society that does form must have some other reason to stay together. Family units, parasitic creatures, or other systems where the group is more powerful than the individual can work, but only so long as all parties know that they would not be better off alone (or if they cannot exist apart). In such circumstances, the leader is often the individual who can manipulate the others into supporting him, or whose personal ability outshines the others. Even so, he should always be aware that the rest of the society is looking for ways around his command, and to "slip the bonds" of his control.

Conquering a neutral evil society is a laughable prospect. First, they aren't organized enough to "conquer". If you march in and claim the area, they will certainly agree with you - and then quietly assassinate your generals, commanders, and whoever else needs to be removed in order for you to leave them alone. Ordering tithe or obeisance from a neutral evil group will bring you a great deal of polite lip service, at least until such time as you realize their shipments of grain were poisoned, and now your peasants are dying by the score. Neutral Evil doesn't need pride, and it doesn't need to be "respected". It isn't going to fight you face-to-face, and it won't burst into a rampage of chaotic slaughter when you trigger its anger. It will smile politely, bow, and then stab you in the back when you least expect it. It will find your weak link, and exploit it. The dagger in your back might be held by your dear wife, convinced that you are a shapechanger, or even from your closest friend. The worst part is that the neutral evil individual has most likely convinced these people that they are doing it "for your own good". All behind the scenes, of course, and carefully ignoring only the rules that would constrict his actions.

## HAZARDS AND TRAPS

*The heavy door creaked open and dust swirled through the air as clods of earth fell from what appeared to be just another wall in the rough corridor. The under-city was riddled with warrens like this, Arnghal thought, some more accessible than others. He couldn't count the times that he'd been down this corridor, on one quiet job or another, and he had never spotted the trick door in the wall. Of course, he hadn't had any help before either. The old man in the Market of the Long Knives had been right about the door, despite Amghal's skepticism. Hopefully he would be right about the rewards waiting beyond it. Then, perhaps, the old man would get his own reward.*

*"Keep going," he commanded, waving his men through the door. He had lured the four mercenaries down here with him with the prospect of easy money. He told them that if they did what he said and didn't ask questions, they'd be amply rewarded before the end of the night. Now, with the hidden door revealed, they moved quickly into the dark side passage and Arnghal followed them, the cool, stale air telling him that no one had been here in a while. Arnghal closed the portal, which on this side had obvious hinges and a latch, then set out after them, following the single lantern shining evenly on the stone. The first man rounded a corner and gasped.*

*"Look at that!" he whispered religiously.*

*The vaulted hall before them had a smooth floor, intricately tiled. On the far side, at the edge of the lantern's glow, stood over a dozen oak chests, most closed, but some open and showing heaps of gold coin inside. The men leapt forward at a run, careless in their greed.*

*"Stop!" Arnghal cried out, grabbing the nearest mercenary by the arm. The other three, including the man with the lantern, made it two thirds of the way across the room before a section of the floor fell out beneath them. Their screams trailed down into the inky blackness, only to be cut off, along with the waning light from the lantern, when the hole in the floor snapped shut. The hall plunged into darkness.*

*Arnghal carefully got out his torch and a striker. When he had made light, he saw the remaining man staring at him, eyes wide with fear. Inwardly, Arnghal shrugged. Good help was hard to find, and bad help was everywhere. At least he hadn't paid them yet. "More for you and me," he said, in what he hoped was a comforting tone. "Let's just take it a little more slowly, shall we?"*

Those who seek treasure, glory and power must face danger. In addition to the expected threats, like bad weather, jealous lovers, and tax collectors, heroes can face a huge range of surprises. An adventurer moves in a world of uncertainty, where what she doesn't know can kill her, occasionally in very gruesome ways. Sometimes the surprise leaps snarling around a corner, teeth glinting in the moonlight. Sometimes the surprise sends you a friendly note on heavy stationery, explaining how it would be in your best interest to leave town before tonight. And sometimes the surprises are built right in to the surroundings, waiting to be sprung by unwary passersby. Many of them can be quite painful, while others act only to conceal or mislead. They are two sides of the same coin, and can be encountered in much the same way. The principles guiding their construction are virtually identical; only their intended effect differs.

We'll refer to the painful surprises as traps. There are a lot of things that could fit the definition. Dangers that come from some aspect of the environment — such as a cave-in or rockslide — could be considered traps, but they always involve the DM playing the role of vengeful deity. Whether the surprise comes from a rockslide after tripping on a hill, an avalanche, or a mine-shaft cave-in, there isn't a lot of room for the player to change her own fate. Certainly, they "can make for exciting encounters, but since missing a dodge roll for a rockslide can be fatal to the average mortal, they're disruptive to game balance. If you run into them more than once or twice, they can become boring as well. What fun is it to pit yourself against the impartial forces of nature? Most times you'll end up losing.

Far more interesting than natural "traps" are surprises deliberately left by other people. Intentional traps, whether designed to damage or merely to restrain the victim, hold far more potential for stimulating role-playing.

Of course, sometimes the trap isn't lethal or even painful. Sometimes you just have to look very hard to find the treasure you know is there. It could be under a rug, behind a painting, through a bookcase, or hidden behind an ornate cornice. We'll refer to these hiding places as *secret doors*, which, like traps, covers a fairly broad range of categories.

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF TRAPS

Traps and secret doors are architectural lies. They embody misdirection. For whatever reason, the building has a function that isn't obvious. Traps and secret doors exist because someone has something valuable and wants to protect it. (We'll refer to that valued item as *treasure*, but it could be anything — even an idea.)

Secret doors, hidden panels, and the like are passive defenses. Owners hide their treasure, then hope the hiding place is good enough to prevent anyone from finding it. The possibilities for what might be hidden are almost limitless. A pile of gold or rare books of knowledge are only the beginning. You might stumble across a meeting place for powerful rulers, or those who plot against them, hidden to keep out the uninitiated. A merchant would hide business dealings from rivals, powerful families might keep their marriageable children from the machinations of the court. A restrictive government could hide a cache of weapons, the very poor might hide food from their neighbors, or the paranoid hide themselves from the world.

A trap, on the other hand, is an active defense. Traps go beyond concealment, striving to restrain or damage those who would take your valued belongings. A trap says some strong things about how much the builder cares about his or her treasure. Since mechanical traps don't have a lot of discretion, they say "I don't care who gets hurt, as long as my stuff is safe." They also say, "I'm powerful enough to get away with it." In some municipalities, that could be the wrong thing to say.

## ACTIVATION

No matter how varied the implementation, at their core these architectural secrets are bound together by a cause and effect relationship. While it might seem like it at the time, traps don't hit you randomly. As much as you would like to believe it, secret doors don't open just because you're a great person. There's always a reason. You take, or avoid, a certain action to get a certain response. In short, every trap or secret door requires something to activate it. There are as many different ways to release a hidden panel or trigger a trap as there are twisted imaginations out there, but they can all be boiled down to one of three broad categories.

## Balance

Archimedes said that with a long enough lever, one could move the Earth. While impractical to implement, the idea of balancing things to make them easier to move has many practical applications. Immense doors can be opened easily if well balanced, the drawbridge and portcullis of your castle are much easier to raise if there are some counterweights to do some of the work. And of course, there are applications for secret devices.

Balance traps are designed to reward consistency. If everything stays the same, if the weight stays balanced, nothing will happen. But if some adventurer changes the balance, adding or removing weight from the system, the trap activates. That weight could be treasure removed by the party or it could be the weight of the adventurers themselves overbalancing the device. The covers of pit traps can be balanced such that moving too far out on the lid causes the floor to give way. It requires good stone masons, but the design is fairly simple. A trap could be arranged in the floor of an entire corridor, so that safety is gained only by hugging one wall, but walking down the middle or the other side would be catastrophic.





This sort of trap would probably reset itself, closing back up once the imbalance is eliminated. A balance trap can be set to swing only one direction or in both, depending upon the effect.

Simple components are one advantage of a balance trap. The basic physical principles that make it work are not subject to change very often. Aside from a little grease every once in awhile, a balance driven system should require very little maintenance — a handy asset in musty tombs.

### Trigger

When a gun is cocked, the hammer is held back by a catch on the trigger. As the trigger is pulled, the catch moves out of the way, and a spring slams the hammer forward, firing the weapon. A trigger in a trap performs the same function. Some effect stands poised to strike the victim, held back by a single pin or other mechanism. When the mechanism is activated (like a pressure plate being stepped on or a trip wire pulled), the pin is withdrawn, releasing the action of the trap. These could be arranged in series, so that one trigger activates another, which activates a third, each one holding back a larger spring or more elaborate effect. Thus a very small, very sensitive touch plate could trigger, through several steps, a massive and catastrophic effect.

### Magic

Fantasy campaigns have a catch-all solution with magic. Magic allows you to do anything you want with your traps. You'll still have some sort of activation and some sort of effect, but they can be more subtle and can even circumvent the laws of physics if you wish. Spells also make trip wires and pressure plates obsolete. If the mage can figure it out, there is no reason why a magic trap cannot be triggered by thoughts, dreams, species or hair color. Clever mages can design traps of endless variety, using whatever arcane and esoteric. The more financially-minded will create magic traps that need periodic renewal. This allows the sale of a support contract rather than a finished product, and makes the mage a steady income. It also maintains the mage's value to the employer. After creating the perfect vault, he may receive a swift knife in the back from a treacherous employer, it pays the independent contractor to be careful and remain useful for an extended period of time.

### EFFECTS

Once the trap or secret door has been activated, you need to determine exactly what happens. The results of a secret door opening are usually pretty obvious. The results of a trap can be among the most dangerous surprises an adventurer ever encounters. Effects, like activation, must adhere to certain principles of physics. They will need proper justification in order to function believably. Most effects can be divided into the following categories:



## Deadfalls

A deadfall is a trap where gravity rolls, swings, or drops the Pain Hammer onto the adventurers. Heavy rocks fall and crush the unwary, or a pile of tree trunks thunder down the hill to sweep away attackers. Alternately, the trap could be a net dropping down to hold the victim until someone can investigate. The only constant is that they use gravity to facilitate their effect. Usually, it works to drop something heavy on the party, but it's also a fine way to fill a room with water or fine sand. The careless intruder causes a valve to open and the small room fills with fluid, causing eventual suffocation.

## Pits

A deadfall uses gravity to drop something on the victims. A pit drops the victim, rather than dropping on the victim. This results in some sort of bad situation, hopefully distracting them from their original goal of plundering the builder's treasure. One nice thing about pits is that they can be made just as lethal or non-lethal as you like. To dispose of the intruders permanently, the pits can be made very deep, with spikes or starving crocodiles lying in the bottom. A non-lethal pit might drop an intruder into a holding cell to wait for the guards, or perhaps dispose of the PCs into a convenient river.

## Spring-loaded devices

Sometimes gravity isn't enough. Anything that needs sudden action can be powered by a spring. *This* includes devices that snap closed on extremities, darts that shoot out of small holes in the wall, or a striker that ignites a trough of volatile liquid. A spring is anything that holds potential kinetic energy, which includes bent-over tree branches and cocked crossbows as well as metal springs. When the trap is triggered, the kinetic energy facilitates the effect, and the party presumably suffers the consequences.

## Extras

Deadfalls, pits, and springs cover the basic trap effects, but there is nothing stopping the serious designer from adding any number of extras. Acids and caustic chemicals burn, dyes identify, and poisons kill. Then there are viruses, glues, fearsome beasts, and various magical effects. The possibilities for elaboration are virtually limitless.

## MOTIVE AND PURPOSE

Traps are ultimately emotional things. Whether that emotion is greed, desperation, or megalomania, the willingness to set a trap rises from intense feelings. Secret doors are quiet and unobtrusive, more a manner of convenience. The emotional state of the owner should be in the back of your mind as you consider the possibilities for an encounter with some hidden device.

Once you've figured out the motive, there are at least six other things to consider. Rigorous answers are not required, but thinking about it will give your installation some internal logic. Since players always do things you don't expect, thinking about the whys and wherefores ahead of time gives DMs.

## Concealment

Whether you are concealing a trap or a treasure, a builder needs to decide what it will take to hide it effectively. A book can be hidden behind a simple sliding panel, or a small sack of gold under a floorboard, but a huge pile of treasure has different requirements. If one is hiding a daughter from unworthy suitors or keeping news of the rebellion from a despotic king, it grows more complex. You also have to consider your target audience. Are you trying to repel professional thieves or merely avoid the curious? Scrolls of knowledge from far away lands can be left lying about in the course of day-to-day business, but must be well hidden when a learned rival comes to call.

The mechanism for a trap needs to be blended as well as possible with the surroundings to maximize its effectiveness. If everyone invading your secret lair can see the tripwires, they aren't going to do any good. On the other hand, there is nothing wrong with putting in a few obvious traps to distract intruders from the more carefully hidden ones. (Edgar Allan Poe's example of the Purloined Letter — the treasure hidden in plain sight — can make an effective hiding place against players used to looking for traps.)

## Resources

What kind of resources can be put into the project? The more serious an NPC is about hiding the treasure or making an effective and deadly trap, the more it will cost him or her in time and money.

If your system has anything more than the most basic moving parts, building it will be the least of your worries. Companies that make elaborate products often sell them below cost, knowing that they'll make it up in regularly scheduled maintenance. The same adage holds for traps. It might cost you a lot, but if your pressure plates get stuck because you didn't oil them, your trap won't work. If your flammable oil evaporates or gums up the dispenser, your fire trap will only click viciously at the smirking mercenaries walking off with your gold.

Resources also includes your available materials. It's hard to find giant chunks of stone for crushing infidels if your temple lies in the middle of the Endless Plain of Krthood. But if you're far enough north, you might be able to substitute a massive chunk of ice. Wood is generally available, as are the services of smiths. If you live near a river, you have flowing water, which can provide power for traps that move, or just sweep intruders downstream. If you are in a jungle, deadly plants and poisonous critters can be valuable additions to your arsenal. And remember, the farther your materials travel to get to the construction site, the more they cost.

### Methods

Simply put, how are you going to build your trap? The technology to create it must be available in your game setting. This includes both traditional mechanical devices and magic. Luckily, most game settings include the same laws of physics that we use in our day-to-day lives, so mechanical systems are a good bet. Even so, not everything you dream up may be available. Copper alloys such as brass and bronze have been around for a long time, and though they are easily worked, they are soft. Iron isn't difficult to obtain, but can still under-perform in high-stress applications. Steel, especially quality steel, requires more skill, and turning that steel into strong, thin wire is no task for a beginner. Be sure your world has the architectural and scientific know-how to construct your trap before you start building.

Magic can get around a lot of pitfalls, but introduces complications of its own. No magic system gives unlimited power to the magician (if it did, your game would consist of a bunch of mage characters sitting around and fantasizing, which would just be creepy).

A magic trap or secret hiding place needs to be consistent with the style of magic, and knowledge, of the mage who creates it.

It doesn't take a whole lot of magic to prepare a death trap for the uninitiated. An illusionist can conceal tripwires or make a rickety catwalk appear solid. Alchemists can prepare a festive cornucopia of toxic surprises or simply fill a low-lying corridor with carbon dioxide. Necromancers only get stronger the more adventurers they kill. If a mage can leave arbitrary effects hanging until triggered, the possibilities are well nigh endless. And parallel dimensions make dandy hiding places, removing treasure from any danger of theft from this plane of reality.

The costs involved in a magical trap are even higher than a mundane trap, since the ingredients for really good long term spells are rarely cheap or morally obtained. Such costs should be factored in during the trap's development. But a reclusive mage good enough to have enemies has probably made enough money to get what he needs without a problem.

### Effects

The results of your trap should be appropriate for the intention. A secret panel concealing a door should look just like the rest of the wall. Good design requires that such a door open into the secret passage, so that the visible floor is not scuffed. A trap that intends to kill should do so as smoothly and effectively as possible. If you don't intend disaster, don't design it in. If you set up your temple so that someone stealing the Idol of the Spider God causes the whole building to collapse on them, you'd better make sure that one clumsy acolyte won't bring the whole thing down. You should also be willing to clean up the mess if the trap is a lethal one, or design your trap so that it cleans itself.

### Access

How often will you or your minions need access to the area protected by your secret? What will it take to disarm the thing safely? If the elder priest of the Temple of the Spider God needs a certain scroll to perform the sacred Ritual of the Eight Hairy Legs every evening an hour after sundown, then it has to be reasonably convenient if you're holding the daughter of one of your vassals hostage, you'll need to bring her food and clothing, or else things will get messy.

On the other hand, if you're guarding a pile of gold and only wish to enter the room once a year to gloat, you can put together a system that takes a week to excavate and disarm properly.

### Trust

Unless you can do all the construction, maintenance, and operation of the system yourself, you'll be required to trust someone. The builders will know how it is put together, servants who maintain the system will know how it works, those who drag the steaming corpses away will know of the results.

The weakest link in a really well-designed mechanical system is the operator. Most thefts are inside jobs, and money is not the best motivator for keeping secrets, because there will usually be someone who wants the secret enough to pay more. The best secrecy springs from the same intense emotions that led to creating the secret in the first place. Conspiracy, religious fervor, or other shared passions are the best reasons for groups of people to keep the same secrets. Alternatively, you can kill everyone else who knows and anyone to whom they might have talked, but unless your trap requires no maintenance, you'll still need to let somebody in on the secret

### EXAMPLES

The following are examples of carefully-assembled traps and secret doors, and the circumstances surrounding them. When developed properly, any such devices can provide as much potential as these do.

### The Well-Off Merchant

The ideal loot for a thief is small and valuable; cash and gems are obvious choices, but in a society where travel is expensive and difficult, spices and well-made foreign handicrafts can have surprising value as well. Contracts, deeds and personal correspondence can also have value all out of proportion to size. Unfortunately for them, many merchants have more than one such tempting target on their premises. Consider our potential victim, a dealer in foreign spices. He'll need to safeguard both his inventory and any uninvested capital he has lying around the office.



Our merchant already has guards standing constant watch on the warehouse and storage area, but he believes that a good enough thief will be able to sneak past them. The merchant cannot afford to pay the municipal death taxes, and lethal traps are pretty expensive anyway, so he must depend on misdirection and noise rather than lethal damage. The hypothetical thief must sneak in and sneak back out, since a clean job is easier. The merchant reasons that lot of noise could make him change plans. So he prepares his "trap" around the carefully locked cabinet in his office, which appears to contain sacks of coins and packages of expensive spice. The first line of defense will be the terrific clatter that goes off if the cabinet door is not opened properly. Should the cabinet be opened successfully, without triggering the alarm, the bags will later be found to be full of tin pieces, and the envelopes of spice are cheap local oregano.

If a couple of hidden catches are manipulated just right, the back of the cabinet opens up and the leal goods are revealed. Again, if the door is opened improperly, a loud clanging of bells draws the attention of the merchant and his guards. This sort of secret within a secret could be repeated until the merchant runs out of wall space, leaving three or four secret layers inside each other.

Most design considerations for this trap are not a problem in a standard fantasy setting. The materials and skill to create such a wall safe will be available in any urban area. But in this case, trust is a major issue. Merchants are not usually fine crafters, so the whole thing will have to be built by someone else. If that someone has a loose tongue, the whole system is spoiled. Hopefully the merchant will be willing to pay enough to keep the crafter's mouth shut. If that doesn't work, the merchant could always salt the secret panels with false merchandise all the way to the bottom and keep the real stuff under his bed.

### Doomsday Cult

The Confraternal Siblinghood of Catastrophe is preparing for the end times. They know that the only way to appease the gods is a massive sacrifice, and plan to do it themselves. They know they need more members before the sacrifice will be worthy, so they launch a massive recruiting drive while simultaneously working on the trapped temple, which will be the site of their final act.

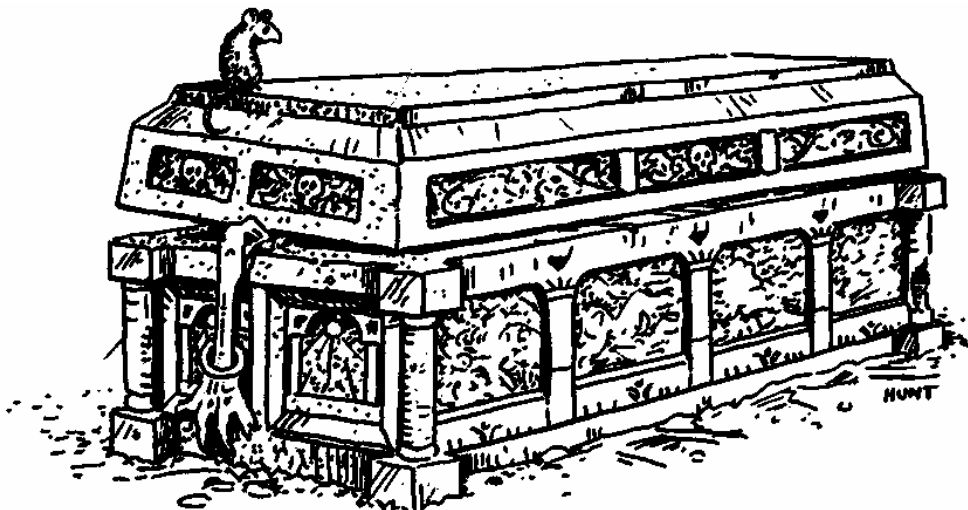
The CSC has two goals for their construction. They would like everyone in the temple to die within seconds of each other, and they also want the immolation to be visible from the land of the gods.

No mere poisoning for them — they want to go out

with a bang. They believe that their gods will be impressed by all this and treat them better in the afterworld than the non-believers, who will have to watch the party through the windows.

From the outside, the temple should be impressive but not foreboding. Hexagonal in shape, it will have six featureless walls stretching between massive pillars. The pillars will reach much higher than the walls, and in fact, the Siblinghood will keep working on the pillars, adding course after course of bricks, until they are ready to destroy themselves. Inside the walls stands a ring of study halls, offices, storerooms, and a well stocked clinic (since the idea is to die together, they keep themselves in excellent health otherwise.) These rooms surround a large inner courtyard, roofed not with stone but with large tilted panels of fabric. The courtyard is floored with wooden planks, and at its center is a low dais with ceremonial materials arranged just so.

The casual visitor will see a plain but serviceable temple. But hidden in the walls and floors of the temple is an elaborate network of devices. When the time comes, the Siblings will all enter the temple and close the heavy doors. One will pull a cable, causing thick bars to drop out of the door frame and into holes drilled in the edge of the door, locking them forever. They will remove the wooden planks from the courtyard, revealing a sturdy grating which lets air flow through the floor into the lower levels, where the planks will be piled carefully in the corners. Then the Siblings will all gather in the courtyard, and the eldest, the



Harbinger of Catastrophe, will raise the ceremonial chalice from the dais, setting in motion an irrevocable chain of destructive events.

When the chalice is lifted, a pin running down through the altar will be pulled up, releasing the tension on six thin wires under the floor. These wires are attached to whippy wooden springs, one in each corner of the temple. When the wooden springs slam forward, each breaks a large clay jug of volatile oil over the planks that have been piled there, and releases the pin on a large steel spring. The tightly wound coils of steel have enough tension to power six rotary fire starters for about 30 seconds, plenty of time to get the wood burning.

The Siblings will chant paeans to their gods as the flames catch quickly. The glorious pillars of the temple are actually chimneys, and their height gives them a powerful draft. As the air inside heats up, the draw becomes stronger. Soon air from over the walls whips down through the tilted panels of the roof, only to be heated by the fires and pulled back out the chimneys. The downward swirl of air keeps the Siblings near the walls comfortable, even as the flames grow hotter.

Eventually it gets hot enough in the chimneys to melt lead blocks holding closed large cisterns of oil at the top of the walls. The valves on the cisterns are linked by wires to each other, so that they all must be straining to open before any of them can (allowing them to release simultaneously). The Siblings shout in triumph as the valves snap open, spraying flammable oil into the courtyard, filling the swirling air with a volatile mist and soaking them with fuel before the fires in the basement ignite a pillar of flames that blow out the roof and let the gods know that the Siblings are on their way.

The end is coming. Soon. Maybe you'll even be there to see it.

### **Hungry Ogres**

In the hell-spawned Gray Forest of Banwee live many tribes of ogres. The largest and most powerful derives much protection, good food and a decent income from their construction of a series of traps along the edge of the forest. The ogres know that there is plenty of meat in the forest, both native and otherwise. Their pit traps help them collect that meat and put it to good use.

Ogres all over the Gray Forest have been constructing simple pits for centuries, concealing the openings with branches and leaves. The pits are useful, but the tribes still have to do a lot of hunting to get their recommended daily allowance of protein. The refinements created by the Tribe of the Really Big Fist have brought them primacy over the other tribes. They place their pit traps along game trails near villages close to the edge of the forest. The openings are lined with stone so they don't collapse. They are deep enough to injure but not kill most creatures, and feature recessed sides to discourage climbing out. The pits are connected by underground tunnels, secured with thick doors hinged and latched from the outside.

The ogres have solid construction skills, having carved homes out of the earth as far back as they can remember. But ogre architecture is rough - it lacks the smooth finish necessary to properly conceal a trap. The pits would not be very effective, but for the minor magic practiced by the tribe's shaman. He hides the openings to the otherwise obvious traps with small illusions. If not enough food falls in, then he adds other illusions, such as easy prey or minor treasures, to try to lure in some dinner.

The pits allow the ogres to store their meat as well as collect it, flattening out the cycle of feast and famine that weakens other tribes. If they catch several meals at the same time, food can be thrown into the pit (the ones who don't die from the fall are taken away first). In this way, the meals can stay fresh for days or weeks. Some ogres, true connoisseurs, provide heavily spiced food to their captives in order to add seasoning to the meat.

The change in pit design in the Tribe of the Really Big Fist sprang up in the last few years. No one has yet figured out whether this is the work of some ogre genius or if they had help. But at the rate the tribe is expanding, with more pits being constructed all the time, they will soon come into conflict with the local human kingdom. After all, one peasant more or less doesn't matter much, but when whole villages disappear, the tax base starts to erode, and it's time to send in the troops.

Hidden tricks in the environment can add flavor to otherwise routine dungeon crawling. Like any spice, if used too much they lose their special qualities

They should not be arbitrarily sprinkled in. Secret doors and traps have an internal logic -they are there for a reason. Every trap, every secret door was constructed and maintained for a purpose. Know the purpose, know the builder, know what resources are available to make the device, and the situation practically designs itself from there.

## ALL THAT GLITTERS...

In theory there are as many reasons to go adventuring as there are player characters. A thirst for fame, honor, vengeance, love or knowledge is drives many heroic characters onward, inspiring them to brave the darkness with sword in hand. There is one reason, however, which supersedes all others in popularity. It was the prime motive of such real-life adventurers as Drake, Pizarro, Cortez, and Columbus, and odds are of your PCs too: Treasure!

Nothing warms the average PCs heart more than loading up with stacks of gold and magical items, but over time it takes more and more to impress characters. Gold that once made the PCs drool starts to get passed over for platinum, magical items get ignored because they're not powerful enough, and the inflation of expectations starts to affect game balance, turning the PCs into virtual gods of wealth and power.

Even if the DM avoids this by being miserly with treasure, boredom with conventional treasure inevitably sets in. Bags of generic gold pieces, valued only for what they can buy, get hefted out of dungeons only to wind up exchanged for such mundane items as rope, swords and lanterns.

There is a way to make riches more exciting, however. A way to have rich rogues treasure a worthless copper coin, powerful wizards hang on to scroll they can't even cast and fighters battle to capture a broken old dagger from terrible monsters. The trick is to give such treasure a worth far beyond mere commercial value.

## THE STUFF OF LEGENDS

One way to make the items that PCs acquire more interesting (and thus more valuable) to them is to make it old. Not a hundred years old. Try a thousand years old. Or ten thousand. Or dating back to a time father than the histories of even the elves and dwarves. Impress upon your characters that these copper coins were minted in antiquity,

and bear the likenesses of gods, kings, heroes all but lost to human memory.

A millennium old sword might date back to great wars in which a fighter's ancestors fought, and been used to slay monsters who are once again threatening the land. Poetry and music inscribed upon an ancient silver vase may be of more value to a bard than diamonds or pearls, especially if the works are of a kind no living person has ever heard. A cryptic scroll could bear the seal of an ancient magical university, and contain the original arcane formula upon which a wizard's magic is based.

If you wish to make an ancient item even more interesting, try tying it directly to the history of the PCs themselves. A tarnished silver coin could bear a likeness uncannily like that of the party's rogue, revealing her unknown ties to an extinct royal lineage. A rusty old dagger might have once belonged to the ranger's great grandfather, a hero still celebrated in song and stories. A flawed and clouded emerald could bear the same mysterious marking tattooed upon the arm of the cleric when he was born.

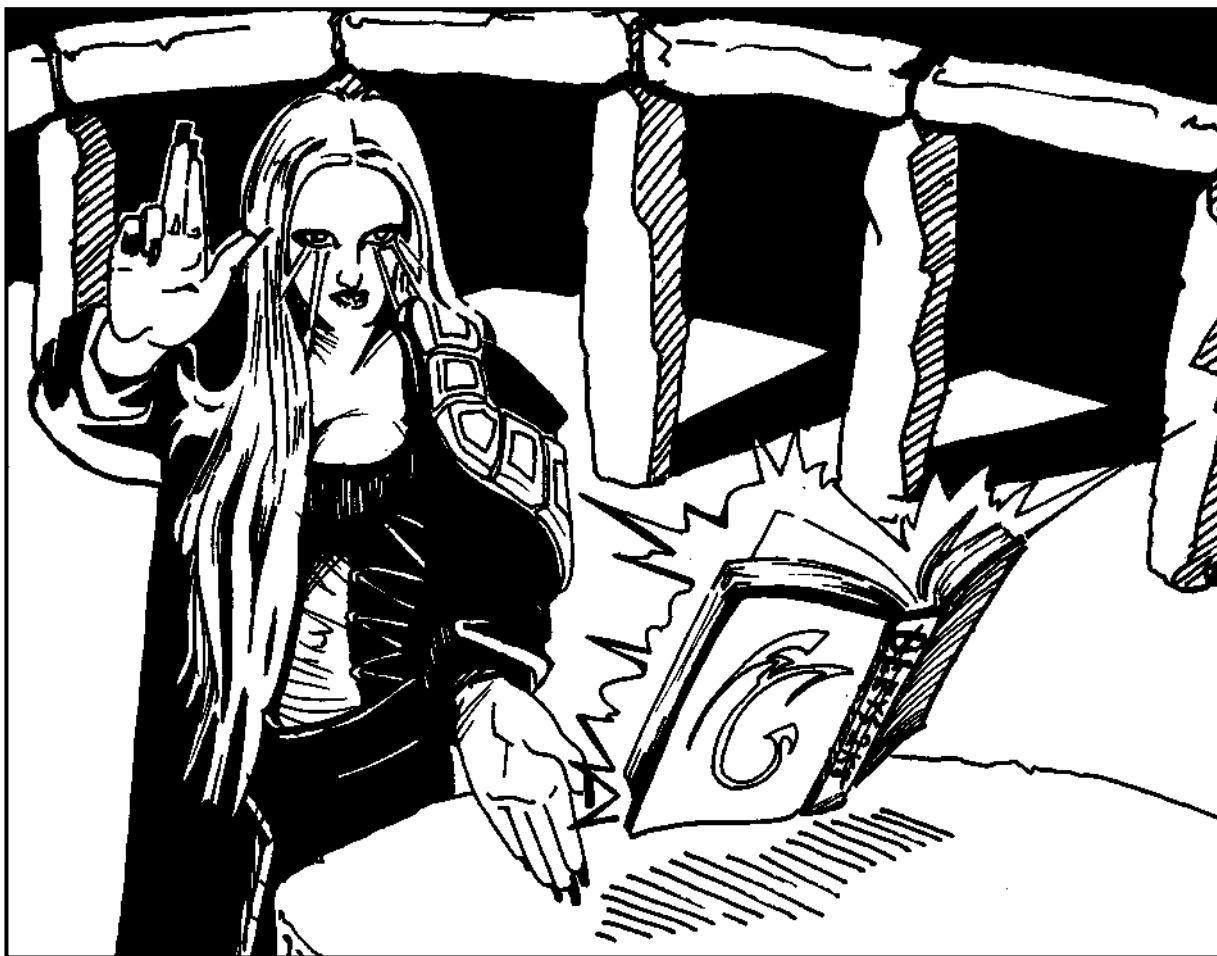
It takes a callous and unimaginative PC to pass over such items, even if they are of little or no value to the ignorant merchants of surrounding towns. Even if the PCs are inconsiderate of the innate historical worth there are other matters to consider. The adventurers can just ignore such trinkets, but if they take the time to find an antiquarian or collector, such items could be worth far more than freshly minted platinum.

## BADGES OF COURAGE

Another way to get PCs to value a particular piece of treasure is to make it a symbol of their bravery and mettle. Such items provide a status which gold alone cannot buy, for they can only be acquired by a select few. Consider the following example: A great black dragon wears a small shield around its neck as a pendant, though nobody knows why this is the case. The shield, though highly recognizable, is of no particular value.

Imagine the status of the thief that could steal that shield. Just carrying that metal disk through the city gates would cause jaws to drop, and over time could become the rogue's trademark symbol of cunning.





Bards who see the shield might want to chronicle the tale of its acquisition. Respectful rogues could request the PC's autograph and buy him drinks at the tavern, while neophytes could beg the player character to take them as apprentices. New adventures would surely follow, as all in need of a rogue's services would seek out "he of the Dragon's Shield".

The value of such badges of courage cannot be underestimated. Would Robin Hood part with his trusty bow for a pile of silver? Would King Arthur have sold Excalibur for a mountain of gold? No, for both were worth far more to their owners than anyone else would ever be willing to pay.

### **BITS N' PIECES**

Age and status are not the only aspects which increase a treasure's status. In fact, sometimes value can be had despite the fact that a treasure isn't even complete! For example, components of a powerful magical artifact will be treasured by their owners greatly, even if they have no power until that artifact is assembled.

The same could be said for pages from a great grimoire, the pommel of a legendary sword, a rare component of the potion of immortality or half the scepter required to claim rule of a kingdom.

PCs who lay their hands on such elements will be loathe to let them go, for they hold inestimable potential value. At the same time, such items don't throw off game balance as the parts in themselves do not increase the power or status of the player characters until they are made whole.

Another version of the bits n' pieces concept are "sets." A queen intent on assembling a new crown for herself might not be particularly interested in a large sapphire. Find her five perfectly matching sapphires, however, and she will happily pay ten times the gems' worth. Likewise the owner of a circus might turn up his nose at a baby hippogriff, but bring him one of each gender and their value skyrockets — because he can now breed them. The thought that patience might bring a much greater return for their efforts is enough to make most PCs think twice before hastily liquidating their loot.



### WEIRD AND WONDERFUL

Yet another way to make treasure more valuable, or at least memorable, is to simply make it strange. The simplest way to do this is just to have it composed of an unusual material. If player characters assume that all coins are made of copper, silver, gold or some other metal of value, throw them something a little more exotic. What about coins carved of rare hardwood or ivory, crystal or coral?

The same goes for any regular type of treasure or equipment. Think of scrolls scribed upon the backs of animal furs, lockpicks made from manticores spikes, swords fashioned from volcanic glass, a necklace of beautifully carved ottyugh teeth, or a lantern fashioned out of a barghest skull. The possibilities for unique items are limitless, and if they are interesting enough players will take notice of them despite their unexceptional material value.

Material is not the only way to make an item exotic, of course. Another means is to give the item special properties. Imagine a crystal sphere which rolls uphill instead of down, a goblet which changes color every time someone drinks from it, a battle axe which roars ferociously in battle or a bottle which only allows gnomes to drink from it. Such treasures are not particularly useful, but they are imaginative enough that PCs will be loath to part with them.

### TREASURES OF THE HEART

Not all treasure comes from hacking apart monsters or dodging deadly traps. Sometimes treasure is given as a reward or token of thanks, and not just by rich nobles or mighty kings. Consider the following scenario: The PCs have just driven off a marauding tribe of minotaurs which were threatening a poor mountain village. The peasants don't have any valuables per se, but they do have a small silver talisman which has always brought good fortune to those who have worn it. It takes a pretty hard-hearted PC to toss away this gift, or to sell it for a few days stay at an inn.

Though the little talisman has no real material or arcane value, nor any social value outside of the village, it does have a sentimental value which denotes the sincere appreciation of those who are too poor to offer anything else. Keeping it will always remind the PCs that their actions made a huge difference in the lives of those people.

Along a similar vein are rewards such as medals and trophies. One who saves a princess from a deadly assassin might be granted a medal, worthless except for the fact that such honors are only awarded to the very bravest defenders of the kingdom. The winner of a jousting contest may only take away a trophy worth a few gold pieces, but it is a symbol of recognition of one's peers and, more importantly, one's betters. Entire adventures can be based around the earning of such baubles, and so long as there is enough pomp and ceremony surrounding the award your players will be thrilled to see their characters thusly honored.

### DANGEROUS RICHES

The lich lies vanquished, its body burned to ash by that last *Incendiary Cloud* spell. All that remains is the indestructible demonic staff the undead sorcerer used to bring plague and famine to the entire kingdom. To the right person such a staff would be worth uncountable riches, for who needs an army when one can bring the wrath of the inferno upon one's enemies? Unless the PCs are evil, however, there is no way they are ever going to fall into the hands of anyone who would care to sample its powers.

Some treasures are simply too dangerous to sell, and equally dangerous to leave laying about unguarded.

The only option for good PCs is to carry it with them, at least until they can find a way to dispose of it once and for all. Such evil treasures can make for interesting roleplaying, especially if the PCs are tempted to use the devilish device from time to time. The lure of evil can be a strong one, and not only will the PCs have to be very careful not to let themselves be corrupted but they will also have to defend their possession from those black-hearted fiends who seek the power for themselves.

Keep in mind that such dangerous riches are not cursed items that yoke hapless characters with some unfortunate magical burden, but rather obligations to those who take up the cause of law and goodness. Great roleplaying can come from such treasures, especially in a party made up of varying alignments.

### MY PAL, TREASURE

Yet another way of making treasure more exciting and unique is to give it personality in the most literal sense. Magical items come in all shapes and forms, so why not grant some of them the ability to think, act and communicate independently?

A magical sword may not add any bonuses to a character's combat or damage rolls, nor have any other magical properties, and still be highly prized because of the warrior spirit it contains. Such a weapon could warn its wielder of backstabbing enemies in combat, provide its owner with wise counsel in troubled times and even help resolve disputes between members of the adventuring party. In effect such treasure has the potential to effectively become an NPC, and more importantly a friend and ally in the adventurers' quest for fame and fortune. Unless the player characters are in the habit of selling their friends, they will not be willing to part with such unique treasure for mere money.

With a little bit of imagination the DM can make such loyalty to a magical object pay off in unexpected ways. That "worthless sword" could actually possess all sorts of powers and spells, which it only reveals once the PCs have proven their genuine honor and goodness. Another possibility is for a magical item to be willing to be sold, but only back to its original owner or their descendants. Attempts to sell the item could be deliberately sabotaged, while all the while the

artifact demands that it be taken "home". Such an undertaking may involve significant travel, but then again the reward may be worth the effort. In this way cashing in on treasure becomes an adventure in itself, and a chance for the Dungeon Master to engage the party in a rather unique quest to reunite the orphaned object with its rightful owners.

### TOO STUPID TO SELL

When all else fails, a treasure can be made memorable (and even valued!) by simply making it really dumb. Who wouldn't want a wand with the magical ability to turn gold to lead, or +3 sword which hurls insults at its wielder every time she misses? How about a scroll which was made by a dragon and is thus the size of a bed sheet, or a mighty staff which attracts nasty stinging insects from miles around?

Such items, though they will likely be discarded in short order by disgusted PCs, can add an element of levity to a harsh campaign — so long as they are used sparingly. Great fun can be had with the less scrupulous members of the party trying to pawn off this "treasure" on unsuspecting merchants or with quirky characters inventing clever ways in which to employ the object's dubious powers in an actually useful manner.

### REAL TREASURE

All roleplaying games are, by nature, games of imagination, and so long as the DM and players exercise their imaginations there is no need for an endless escalation in character power in order to keep things interesting. Contrary to the opinion of many novice DMs and players, characters don't need to be super rich, ultra-powerful wizards and warriors in order for their players to have fun. The riches and power of the party is absolutely irrelevant in a well-run campaign, because no matter how lowly their characters may be, a good DM will challenge her players with a world alive with history, legends, quirks and absurdities, and reward them with more than faceless gold coins and random magical items.

Put a little innovation into your loot, and the enjoyment and memories you generate will be a real treasure for both you and your players.

## SECTION TWO:

# DUNGEON TYPES

When designing a dungeon, most Dungeon Masters immediately begin planning room size, monster content, and trap layout. While there is no question that these elements are important, many equally valuable aspects of a dungeon are often overlooked. Before a pencil ever touches graph paper, many of the most vital parts of a dungeon should already be worked out.

The following essays detail various different types of dungeons, from mines and tombs to madman's lairs. Each one uses a central concept as a starting point, discussing how such an artifice can come to house monsters, traps, and other opportunities for adventure. Many of apply the techniques discussed in the above treatises, applying historical and ecological considerations as well as ways to generate excitement from the concept. They represent just a fraction of the different types of constructions which could be considered a "dungeon." Readers should certainly not feel limited by the samples discussed here.

## FORTRESSES

Fortresses are military compounds designed to house soldiers, defend against attack, and other similar purposes. There are generally two functions that the designer of a fortress has to keep in mind. Most fortresses are built in order to establish control of a particular area. This means that the troops in the fortress need to be able to make their presence felt over a specific area which the fortress is intended to control. For example, a fortress intended to control movement along a road must be built so that the troops within can actually get to the road. If the fortress stands high up on the side of a cliff and it will take the soldiers an hour to reach the road, they really won't be doing much good up there, those inside it.

It needs to stand as proof against any assault or invasion, given the time, materials and terrain available for construction. Most people assume that this is the primary function of fortresses, but it is really secondary to the area control function.

An underground fortress has all of the usual disadvantages associated with creating any kind of underground space, but it has several major advantages. Since it presents a very limited front to the outside world, it is extremely difficult to destroy through bombardment. There are no walls to destroy, no towers to knock down. Only the entrance can be effectively targeted, and the wise dungeon-builder will make that entrance as impregnable as possible. This single entrance, however, makes it very vulnerable to a siege, a relatively small force can hold the entrance and keep the defenders bottled up. Again, a wise dungeon-builder will deal with this by including a number of secret exits/entrances.

Other elements that are commonly found in underground fortresses include:

- **Lookout Posts** - Often outside the dungeon proper, they allow defenders to see an attacker coming. They are very likely to be abandoned if the dungeon changes function, unless it retains a military aspect. Since lookout posts are more exposed to the elements than the rest of the complex, they will often decay faster than other parts of the fortress.
- **Entrance Complex** - Depending on the importance of the fortress, this will sometimes consist of multiple gates, often placed so as to allow the defenders to shoot at enemy creatures trying to attack. Huge gates are really cool if you're trying to keep an enemy out, but by their very nature they are difficult to open and close,

so they are often dismantled or propped open if a dungeon changes to a less military function. They are, on the other hand, relatively impervious to decay, although if the fortress has ever been taken by force they will certainly show clear signs of it.

- **Ready Room** - This is a room near the gates where a squad of defenders can remain on watch. Since this is usually one of the first rooms visited by a party of heroes, it is a good place to put an "introductory" monster to give the heroes an idea of what they're going to face. Remember that all the other creatures in the dungeon will have to pass by it, so the creatures here should be on friendly terms with the rest of the denizens.
- **Reception area** - This is where (friendly) dignitaries visiting the fortress can be greeted, review the troops, etc. This will often be a fairly large room near the entrance, and will have been decorated with unit insignia, weapons, armor, etc., which in later days will be found in various stages of decay.
- **Barracks** - Given the difficulty of putting walls in underground, the sleeping quarters for the troops will probably be very large rooms, rather than many smaller ones. Depending on the number of troops housed in the fortress there may be several of these, usually near each other. Sadly, there is little difference between the sleeping arrangements for troops and prisoners; a barracks can be changed into a cell for holding multiple prisoners merely by putting locks on the doors. Over time the bunks, bedding and chests used by the soldiers will decay into heaps of broken wood, although the chests can often be used to hold interesting items.
- **Officer housing** - Officers will usually have private or semi-private rooms, depending on their rank. Their furnishings, however, are no more proof against the ravages of time than those of their followers, and will usually suffer the same fate.
- **Offices** - These small rooms may often be indistinguishable from officer housing once the furnishings have rotted.

There may, however, have been some provision for storing the troops pay; therefore this room will often be better defended.

- **Recreation/workout area** - While this may not be found in all fortresses, it's a very good idea if the occupants are used to doing a lot of moving around and working out. This too will need to be a largish room or courtyard, with various kinds of workout gear (wooden swords and shields, weights, etc.) which can decay into very weird-looking remnants to puzzle latter-day adventurers.
- **Armory** - Usually placed near the barracks, an armory is usually composed of two parts, representing its two functions. There will be one area for creating and repairing arms and armor, and another for storing them. The workshop area will need a forge, anvil, workbenches, water supply and ventilation.



Since the storage area contains the most valuable objects in the complex, it is often among the best defended, with heavy doors and strong locks. For the same reason the armory will often be the location of the fiercest fighting in an attack, and the site of the most active looting afterwards. Unless the defenses of the room are so strong that they have kept out many determined efforts, it is unlikely that there will be much left worth looting there.



- **Kitchen** - Feeding a large body of soldiers requires a lot of cooking area, so these are usually large rooms. In addition, an underground kitchen has to deal with huge problems of ventilation, waste disposal, and importing fuel. These issues tend to make kitchens highly specialized rooms, which don't change much even the dungeon changes. After all, almost everyone has to eat.
- **Mess** - This is where everyone eats. It is almost always the largest room in the complex, since it usually is built to seat all the troops at once, or in a limited number of shifts. It is usually as close to the kitchen as possible. Depending on the race and preferences of the original builders, the officers may have their own mess.
- **Chapel** - This is a space that has been set aside for the worship of whatever deity is hallowed by the troops and their leaders. Not surprisingly, this is usually the War God of the culture, but it doesn't have to be. Depending on the importance of such worship, this can range from a single tiny altar in a nook to a huge temple complex with its own priests, acolytes, etc. (See *Temples*, below, for more information).
- **Water storage** - A fortress is almost always built to hold a large body of troops, which requires a lot of water. Unless it is one of those rare fortresses that never expects to be attacked, it has to have a reliable internal source for water, or the ability to store enough to last out a siege. The latter requires massive storage capacity, either in a cistern or in barrels. Depending on the sophistication and plumbing ability of the creators, the water may be delivered to various parts of the complex through pipes (which will usually break or rust over time) or in buckets (which will rot quickly). Standing water is an excellent growth medium for slimes and oozes of various sorts, by the way.



- **Food storage** - The same goes for food. Since very few fortresses have the ability to create their own food internally, they are completely dependent on outside agencies for food, and have to store enough food to keep everyone fed throughout a siege. Although military food is usually prepared to last a long time in storage, nothing lasts forever, and strange growths have been reported among the pantries of ancient fortresses...
- **Waste Disposal** - What goes in must come out, and a large body of healthy soldiers is going to produce a *lot* of waste. Since the denizens of a fortress can't always leave to dispose of their ...waste, they will have to make internal arrangements: usually simple seats over huge pits which are either treated with chemicals, disposed of magically or fed to creatures such as dung beetles who thrive on waste. These creatures will often get *very* hungry if they are left for a long time, and may not be terribly discriminating as to their food source after a while.
- **Ceilings** will generally be a bit higher in fortresses than in comparable complexes built by the same race, to allow soldiers to carry spears upright.

Please note that these descriptions are highly lawful-centric. A more chaotic race would take a somewhat different approach to fortress design, probably combining barracks, recreation/workout area, kitchen, mess, water storage, food storage and waste disposal into one big room with a firepit in the middle and a smaller pit off on the side somewhere.

As with most dungeons, the fortress should have a concrete history, which could help explain its *naison d'etre*. You should come up with a specific reason for someone to build the fortress (was it to defend against an invasion? An outpost along a wild frontier? Or did it house a tyrant's troops who used its might to keep his subjects in line?). If the fortress changed hands over the years, evidence of this should be seen (decorations will be torn down and new ones put up, rooms will take on new functions, etc.) Pay close attention to the fortress's age. Recent fortresses can be made on nearly any sturdy material: wood, mud bricks, etc.

Older ones need sturdy construction (i.e., stone), or else they would never have lasted this long.

Once you have a history, you can then determine who lives there now and why. By their very nature, fortresses are hard to penetrate. An active one will be very difficult for a party of adventurers to rampage through. A military force (human or otherwise) will react very strongly to any perceived threat. On the other hand, if the fortress fell to invaders or was otherwise abandoned, then the PCs' exploration may go somewhat better. The inhabitants will most probably be squatters, drawn to the structure's natural protectiveness and ill-equipped to make full use of their surroundings. They may have adapted the rooms to some very non-militaristic purposes (using the training yard as a garbage heap, for example). Abandoned fortresses tend to make for a more "classical" dungeon adventure, but active fortresses can lead to an exciting extended campaign as the PCs (who presumably oppose whatever forces control the fortresses) launch daring raids in an effort to undermine the occupants' morale. The approach to your fortress's background - as opposed to the location and layout, which have different permutations - can go a long way toward determining the nature of your campaign.

## THE MADMAN'S LAIR

Come, wanderers, and see if you can survive - the Maze of Doooom! And if a Maze of Doom isn't to your liking, there's always a Pit of Terror, a Dungeon of Despair, or a Tomb of Fear to lure your heroes to certain death. Who makes up these places? For that matter, who makes up these *names*? Well, the Dungeon Master, of course, but in the world of the dungeon these bizarre-but-deadly places are built by the Crazy Villain.

Crazy Villains aren't as common in fantasy as they are in other genres, but they're still a staple of stories and adventures from all times and places, and they make great excuses to put a hole in the ground filled with incongruous monsters and lethal (or just plain absurd) death traps. How do the monsters stay alive? The Crazy Villain uses magic to provide them with food, or the Maze of Doom is populated entirely by undead, or they're only mostly real.

Even if a hero killed the Crazy Villain a thousand years ago, her magic still keeps alive... the Maze of Dooooom!

Even Crazy Villains have motives, though, and those motives can give a Madman's Lair character. Was a long-dead sorcerer out for revenge? Then the dungeon is probably one enormous, fiendish grinder, designed to wear the initial victims down until they reached the center, where the sorcerer could toy with them at his leisure. (Of course, the heroes will usually have the last laugh, but that wouldn't be a factor taken into account in the maze design.) Is the Lair actually a gigantic sigil devoted to an evil god? If so, then the snares may be intended to subdue and capture rather than kill, and the guardian monsters will drag beaten heroes to certain junctures to finish them off. Whoever came up with this mad scheme is almost certainly a fanatic, but may not personally take an interest until her plans are near completion. Does the master architect who designed the maze have a superiority complex? The maze might exist for one purpose - to prove his ingenuity by luring the best to their deaths in slow, intricate mechanical traps.

### WHOSE MAZE IS IT, ANYWAY!

The heart of any Maze of Doom is the twisted genius behind it. If the villain who designed this huge death trap is still alive, then understanding her motives is important. If the heroes will be facing her, typically as the final confrontation at the end of the dungeon, then knowing the character's abilities and goals is vital.

Crazy Villains are a mixed bag, and all have their own strange quirks and foibles. But a few things are fairly constant for the designer of a Maze of Doom. First, anyone capable of coming up with a dungeon designed to lure adventurers to their deaths has to be pretty intelligent and imaginative, not to mention more than a little twisted. (Sane Villains usually have much more pedestrian ways of killing their enemies, after all.) For the mastermind who designs dozens of horrible ways to be mutilated and stocks a labyrinth with hundreds of monsters of every size and shape, just killing a rival clearly isn't enough. He either wants his victims to appreciate his genius, die a slower death than the one an assassin's dagger brings, know at the end just who's killing them, or any combination of the above.

A villain who wants the heroes to know who's killing them will have his name, symbol, or standard all over the dungeon. The wall that inexorably slides towards them might have the villain's sigil covering its entire side. The spikes below the drop-away floor could be in a pattern that spells out his initials. And if the villain wants you to know *why* you have to die a horrible death, expect a *magic mouth* to provide exposition as the whirling blades close in on you, or for long corridors to have murals from end to end telling the tale from his point of view. Sure, he's luring you to a slow and painful death, but at least there was loving detail crafted into every poison dart.

Another common trait of Crazy Villains who build Mazes of Doom is money. There are any number of ways that the gold can flow into a brilliant lunatic's coffers, but it has to get there somehow. Even if it's built with slave labor, someone has to run the project. Besides, metal for spinning blades, stone for crushing walls, and spell components for inscribing death sigils are all expensive. And only the most dedicated (and insane) mastermind is going to personally build every trap in a dungeon. Most likely, some sort of authority goes along with the money, but sudden wealth could always turn mere resentment into fullblown Crazy Villainy.

A common but not absolutely necessary trait of the Crazy Villain is mastery of some part of the design process. Someone with the wealth to create a monstrosity like the Maze of Doom is perfectly capable of hiring others to actually come up with the nasty bits, but most lunatics who want something like this usually have the skills necessary to make their murderous vision come to life. Presumably, coming up with a white elephant like the Maze of Doom is a lot easier when you can figure out how to make it work.

Finally, a Crazy Villain has to have a *target*. The target doesn't have to be anyone specific - the villain may just want anyone she can lure into her clutches. But most sensible people stay away from holes in the ground that eat people. This means that the villain wants victims who are at least a cut above the rest - people for whom going into a Maze of Doom isn't an automatic death sentence.

More likely, though, the villain is after someone or something more specific. This breaks down into two basic categories - either the maze is meant to lure a type of person (usually some subset of adventurer) or a specific person or group. This is central to the lure - one of the most important features of a Maze of Doom.

### SO WHY ARE WE WALKING INTO THIS THING AGAIN!

The difference between a Maze of Doom and other dungeons is the problem of getting the heroes to walk into one willingly. This isn't really difficult, but if the heroes know that they're facing a Maze of Doom rather than a more standard dungeon, they'll be understandably reluctant to dive in simply for the looting possibilities.

There are three primary reasons for the heroes to enter a Madman's Lair. The standard reason, of course, is something valuable at the end. This lunatic has something that the adventurers want badly enough to risk being mangled in a thousand different ways to get. It could be absurd amounts of treasure, a powerful artifact, or the ubiquitous kidnap victim. Treasure is most commonly used as a more generic lure, while a kidnapping (traditionally but not universally a damsel in distress) is usually targeted at a specific person or group. Artifacts and magic items can go either way, though the type of artifact can determine the class of victim desired. However, any type of lure can be used in either fashion; a crown that is the legal symbol of royalty in a kingdom is more than a treasure to its rightful owner, while a powerful wizard kept in suspended animation for centuries would be greatly desired by any magic user in the modern age, especially if the magic of the past is believed to have been stronger.

Of course, just because the villain has something that someone else wants doesn't mean that the *adventurers* are the intended victims. While capturing the spouse of a settled hero is a great way to get the old group back together for one last glorious crusade, most adventurers don't have many ties during their wandering years. Just because they have no idea who the princess is doesn't mean they won't be interested in rescuing her. Any king worth his crown will have a reward posted to have the most cynical traveling dungeon-looter chomping at the bit to get started.



The wrong victims can easily mean a disappointed Crazy Villain. Disappointed Crazy Villains become unpredictable, which can give a Dungeon Master an excuse to add or remove things at the last moment. Of course, the whole point of the Maze may be to grind up foolish adventurers as a warning to others. (A few tales of famous heroes going in and not coming out can give a party something to think about.) And of course, just because the Engine of Eradication doesn't belong to them doesn't mean they want some psychopath blowing up half the world with it.

Finally, how does a hero know a Maze of Doom from a normal dungeon? Generally, the only way to tell the lair of a maniac from any other ruin or fortress is the advertising. Sure, the villain probably *will* have everything but a sign saying "Maze of Doom here," for the express intention of getting the intended victim (s) to it, but if he hasn't made the maze's nature clear, then heroes may assume that it's just another dungeon for the taking. In fact, that may be exactly what the villain wants. And if adventurers never return from a dungeon, well, that's been known to happen to careless would-be plunderers before...



### THE MAZE OF DOOOOM

Once you know how and why this particular Maze of Doom was built, you're ready to start work on it yourself. This is where all the preliminary design comes in to play. Of course, you could always design the dungeon first and then figure out what sort of twisted mind would have a purpose for such a murderous funhouse. It might be easier or more difficult that way, depending on one's approach to dungeon design.

Designing the layout of a Maze of Doom affords a Dungeon Master more leeway than most ordinary dungeons. The Maze can have doors to nowhere, corridors that warp around each other like an Escher painting, traps to rival the most bizarre cartoon hunter's, and of course the most bizarre specialty monsters imaginable.

However, the point of devising the purpose of the Crazy Villain and a motivation for a Maze of Doom is that they provide a *reason* for the strange features. Is the villain a sadist? Perhaps that door to nowhere has a wall behind it - with a *symbol of pain* inscribed on it that goes off as soon as it's seen. Does the villain want to keep victims from escaping? Corridors that pass through each other magically might be able to "turn" characters around in the junction, confusing anyone mapping the maze and destroy an adventurer's sense of direction.

If ritual sacrifices are needed, blunted spears could be dropped on characters, which lock into place as a makeshift puzzle-cage as they land. And bizarre monsters are the perfect killers for a villain who wants victims to die particularly strange, "poetic," or gruesome deaths.

While most dungeons were originally designed with a fairly standard layout (intended to serve their original purpose), a Madman's Lair can seem completely pointless. (In fact, if the villain is insane enough, parts of the dungeon may be completely pointless.) A long, winding corridor could lead to a completely empty room. (No death trap this time -it's just there to make intruders paranoid.) An entire section might be a literal maze... under a *darkness* spell... populated with monsters that hunt by hearing or scent. The adventurers could walk up a spiral staircase in the middle of the room, but when they reach the top, they find they've climbed back into the same room.

(Each time they traverse the staircase, they become a little more edgy; all those doing so receive a cumulative -1 penalty to their Wisdom modifier to Will for 3d6 turns, though the modifier can't be reduced to below -5. Roll for duration only after all climbing or descending has stopped or every party

Roll for duration only after all climbing or descending has stopped or every party. Of course, if the DM wanted to be a little less sadistic, he could make the lair centuries old, its crazed creator long since dead. Some of the traps might no longer function and the non-magical monsters will have definitely headed for greener pastures, but the remainder could still pose an interesting challenge. Of all the potential dungeon designs, the Madman's Lair is the most arbitrary, requiring neither rhyme nor reason to justify. It allows for any sort of weirdness the DM wishes, and the imagination can run wild -although should be some sort of consistency in intent, if not in design.

## MINES

Mines are among the easiest dungeons to create, due to their inherent simplicity, lack of necessary background, and size. The simplicity lies in the fact that mines, as opposed to abandoned temples or castles, do not need a wide variety of rooms. While other types of dungeons' corridors and rooms serve a specific purpose, the advantage of mines lies in that they tend to sprawl in whichever direction ore seems likely to be. While other types of dungeons tend to require a lot of frills and "flavor" furnishings, like doors and windows, mines are pretty much rock. While this does make for a relatively boring view, a good mine makes up in contents what it lacks in scenery.

One of the other advantages to mines is that they usually need less complicated reasons for existence. While most other dungeons have good, solid reasons for their presence, mines are usually there because somebody thought that they would be able to mine something there. Finally, many mines are often sprawling, huge affairs, as they are not limited by real estate restrictions or building materials. Many real-life mines often spread out for miles, and go thousands of feet deep.

While mines probably don't need the same level of development as say, a prison or a temple, a DM basing a dungeon on one should still begin by determining how it originated and who built it. Most fantasy-era mines were run by a local government, oftentimes established purely for the purpose of bringing money to municipal coffers. The idea of having an individual claim to a stake is rather absurd; no peasant would ever have

enough money to seize a particular mine, and no self-respecting noble would ever be caught dead digging holes in the ground.

In most cases, the construction of mines depends upon the race which built it. Let's take a look at the major candidates.

Humans tend to mine as often as any other race, sometimes moreso. While they don't thrive underground the way dwarves and gnomes do, their natural industriousness (and unquestionable greed) more than makes up for their lack of underground savvy. A human mine will probably have relatively humble origins, such as one person stumbling across some ore in a cave or stream and reporting it to his lord. The lord then sends a mining expedition, which sets up a permanent facility to exploit the resource. Human mines have certain specific characteristics, such as the necessity for light and ventilation. Since humans are incapable of seeing in the dark, there will probably be lantern or torch sconces on the walls. Furthermore, since humans are generally shortsighted and lack the engineering skills of most other races, a human-built mine is likely to be unstable. Mine collapses were common during medieval times, and unless great leaps of engineering have been achieved in your game, things wouldn't be any different in a typical fantasy world.

Elves tend to avoid tasks like mining, preferring the open sky to a closed ceiling. However, they are by no means incapable of such a job. Elven mines tend to be very simple affairs; clean and narrow. By their nature, elves are adept at using magic to aid in any endeavor, and mining is no exception. *Transmute Rock to Mud* and *Move Earth* are merely two of the most obvious ways magic can be applied to mining. Furthermore, due to their patience, elves tend to build mines more solidly than humans, and thus decrease the chances of an accident. In turn, elven mines produce less per year than other mines. Elven mines also tend to focus on gems (diamonds, emeralds, etc.) rather than baser metals (gold, copper, etc.)

Gnomes, despite their tendency towards engineering, prefer to restrict their digging to the soft earth and soil that surrounds their woodland homes. A gnomish mine is not unheard of, and most are very enthusiastic and interesting endeavors.

Gnomish mines are likely to be filled to the brim with pranks and amusing side passages that turn in on each other, purely for the joy gnomes receive from such antics.

Halflings, as a rule, almost never dig mines. While their size makes them quite valuable in a group of miners, their inability to see in the dark makes them most likely to work hand in hand with humans. Halflings working mines are probably there as messengers and couriers, leaving the heavy labor to the stronger humans.

Naturally, the most likely race to dig mines are dwarves. By their nature, dwarves are at home within and working the earth, and so mining comes as second nature to them. Dwarven mines should be readily identifiable - clean, efficient, sturdy, and profitable. Dwarven mines should almost never suffer a natural collapse; dwarven engineering skill is far too advanced for that kind of mistake. Dwarves, due to their distaste for magic, probably pride themselves on their entirely hand-worked mines, shunning any assistance by lesser races.

Furthermore, in tribute to dwarves legendary lust for precious metals, dwarven mines likely contain traps guarding large veins of ore. Dwarven mines are also significantly larger on the average than those of any other races, because of the dwarves' natural ability to deal with underground passages: their height (allowing them to dig functional passages quicker), their natural darkvision, and of course, their stonemasonry. Stonemasonry especially allows dwarves to dig mines that tunnel deep into the earth, as a dwarf has no fear of losing his direction and being unable to find the surface again.

With some idea who built the mine, take a brief look its location. Naturally, a mine is going to be where precious metals or gems are. Most mines can be found in the mountains, as it is easier to dig into the side of a mountain than the ground of a valley. Furthermore, mountains have few resources other than minerals or metal to exploit, whereas arable farmland is always a valuable commodity. Often, a river or stream will be one of the first indicators that a particular area is rich in precious metals, and many miners might be perfectly content merely to pan for gold or silver. Also remember that operational mines require headquarters, as well as living areas for the miners and attendant businesses.

If this mine is still operational, there is probably some sort of community located nearby, or at the very least a campsite. Unless they're dwarves, these people are going to be relatively adverse to spending all their time in a mine, so be sure to have evidence of their presence in the surroundings. Attendant businesses, such as taverns and dry goods stores, will doubtless be there as well (assuming the mine is large enough to support such fringe businesses).

If this mine is not operational, take that into account. Why is it no longer being used? Has it just run out? One of the unfortunate downsides to mining is the inevitable fact that eventually, the metals run out. However, running out of material to excavate is not the only reason for abandoning a mine. Consider the most famous example of a mine dungeon: the mines of Moria in *The Lord of the Rings*. The mines were wonderfully productive, and quite stable, until the dwarves dug too deep, unleashing a power far beyond their capacity to control. Since imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, there is no reason why your mine cannot be derelict for the same reason. If your game world has a form of Underdark, and the mine is deep enough to reach there, many creatures exist that would find human or demi-human miners easy to overcome.

The mine could also have been abandoned for natural reasons. As we discussed before, human-dug mines are prone to collapse, and if a large portion caved in, with many people killed, the mine could have just been shut down and abandoned. Alternatively, such mine could be rich in ore, and exploited heavily, only to provoke another cave-in or worse. If a natural disaster destroys the nearby town, but leaves the mine and entrance intact, then it could be ripe for re-exploitation, even if not by the original owners.

Other reasons for abandoning the mine are usually social ones. If this is primarily a precious metal or gem mine, and war breaks out, the miners might be forced to vacate in favor of opening an iron mine somewhere. If a government is paying to keep the mine open, and the government changes hands (peacefully or otherwise), and decides that the mine is not worthwhile, then the miners will leave because they are no longer being paid.



Finally, economics might make a particular mine superfluous: a decrease in the value of gold, for example, or a surplus of emeralds, might make it inefficient to continue mining.

One last thing about a mine's background: when was the mine established, and if it is abandoned, how long has it been? If this is a relatively new mine, it is likely to be pretty sturdy, with all the supports quite functional. If it has been in disuse for a long time, the mine itself could be a very threatening proposition, aside from any monsters or traps. Unstable supports, thin floors, sudden drops, and malfunctioning mine carts can all lead to a very dangerous expedition. Furthermore, the length of disuse can determine how large the mine is, how well explored it is (useful for determining how much the characters know about it), and how much (if any) valuable material is left there. Finally, if the mine has not been in use in a long time, other creatures besides the original miners might have taken up residence; whereas, if the mine has only been inactive a short while, it would not have had the chance to acquire squatters. The age of the mine could play an important role in determining the nature of the "dungeon" it has become.

With a solid background for the mine, let us look at what it is like in its present state. What is in there? Rock, of course. Quite a bit of it. It is a pretty good bet that your mine is going to be somewhat stable, with cave-ins only occurring after a good bit of agitation. If this is the case, you need to make sure the dungeon follows certain guidelines.

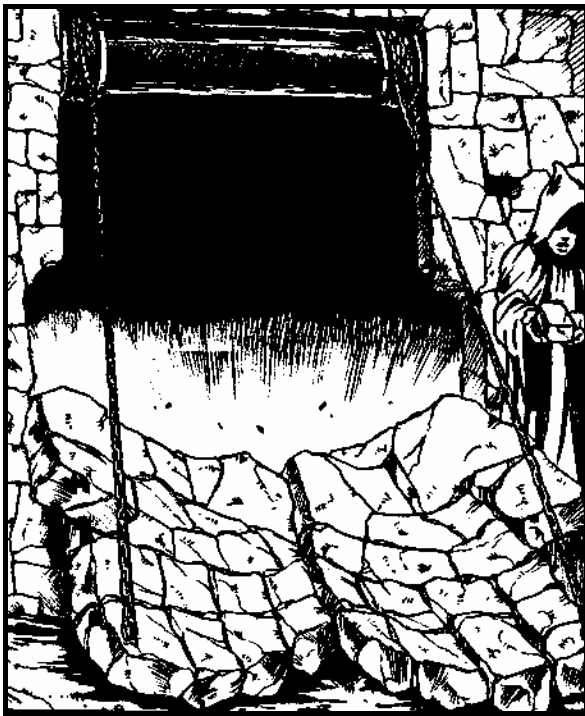
First of all, the walls should be thick. The original object was to take minerals and metals out of the earth, and so there should be as much wall as possible, to maximize mining potential. Because all mining is done by hand in fantasy-era worlds, engineers would want a high surface-area-to-volume ratio, because that means you can have more area being mined at once. Thus, it makes far more sense to have many small rooms, separated by tunnels, instead of a few big ones.

Next, you need to establish which parts of the mine are hand-hewn, and which (if any) are naturally-occurring caverns. There is no problem with placing a mine within a set of natural caverns, particularly one expanded by human (or demi-human) hands, which allows some variety in the scenery.



Keeping all of this in mind, let us examine some layout schemes. We know what kind of variations we want in our scenery, and generally what kind of cavern setup we are going to use. The largest cavern is probably going to be just inside the entrance, where the ore and gems would arrive to be processed. From here, the miners would proceed into the depths. Thus, in a functional mine, this area would be easily the busiest, as mine carts arrive and depart, people enter and exit the mine, and caravans pull in with supplies and labor, and leave with raw ore and gems. Next, there would likely be a long, narrow corridor proceeding into the depths of the mine, probably lined with a track for ore carts. This cavern is most likely either very long, very steep, or both (the better veins are usually deeper in). Finally, we get into the main shaft, where most of the levels will intersect. The main shaft should really be the heart and center of the mine. Here is where most of the action is likely to take place.

If the technology is advanced enough, the main shaft will probably have a lift of some sort. While elves would likely use magic to run the lift, humans and dwarves will probably use more mundane methods.



Remember that pulleys, cranks, and winches are really all that you need to build a functional hand-powered lift. It is likely that while this mine was operational, somebody had a full-time job running the lift. If the mine is abandoned, the need for somebody to operate the lift could force the party to do that most heinous of deeds: split up.

One other thing to consider about layout is the possibility of multiple entrances to the mine. Before, we briefly touched on the possibility of underground inhabitants invading and forcing out the surface miners. If this is the case, it means that our mine is going to have to connect into a larger underground complex at some point. This point may be the lowest level of the mine, but it does not have to be. Remember that mines tend to go down as much or more as they spread out, and so the shaft may have gone right through another tunnel without ever stopping. But, wherever our mine connects, if it does somehow attach to the underworld, that entrance is going to probably be heavily guarded, either by creatures protecting their homes, or invaders coming in to take the mine.

Regardless of whether it connects to the underworld or not, our mine could still have multiple surface entrances. The mine could even be a point of traffic, if it is the only way through a particular mountain range (such as in *The Lord of the Rings*), and the characters are only passing through.

If this is the case, then the emphasis on the adventure should be focused less on searching the mine (although it is certainly an option) than on getting out the other side in one piece. A mine set up for this purpose should have a sort of "gauntlet" effect, in which the characters must get through as safely as possible, while the inhabitants of the mine oppose them.

Now that we have covered the rock, let us move on to somewhat more interesting features of the mine. We should probably figure out what exactly is being mined, and put it in the appropriate spots. Metals and gems tend to be found in veins, which can vary greatly in length and width, from tiny little hairlines, to great rivers of metal (this is a fantasy world, after all). Furthermore, take into account that gems in their natural forms look quite different from cut and polished ones. Characters looking for stray faceted diamonds and emeralds on the ground are going to be in for quite a letdown. However, while the presence of precious material should not be overlooked, unless the characters are here to reopen the mine, you really don't need to dwell upon it excessively.

Unfortunately, now that the rock, metal, and gems are established, there is not really a whole lot else to place here. Underground lakes and streams are always a possibility, and a source for interesting creatures. However, unless the mine connects to some other type of underground area or dungeon (dwarves tend to do this a great deal - putting temples and cities in the middle of their mines), there is not much opportunity for any other types of objects. Treasure in this type of dungeon will belong primarily to the denizens of this place.

Speaking of the denizens, what sorts of creatures are likely to hang around in a mine? It is possible to find nearly any subterranean-dwelling creature in a mine, and if this mine connects at one end to a larger underworld complex, then the potential becomes that much greater. If a decent amount of the mine is natural, it can support an entire underground ecosystem. If there is a good-sized lake or river running through it, then it is capable of supporting fish (fungus and insect feeders), which can in turn feed other animals, which are food for the kind of creatures that heroes like to fight. Orcs and goblins are the obvious choice for mine inhabitants, either using the lower levels of the mine as a home to protect

themselves from more powerful monsters, or using the upper levels as a base from which to stage raids of the surrounding areas on the outside. On the upper levels, the mine probably functions primarily as a hideaway for groups that interact with the surface, such as the aforementioned orcs and goblins, human or demi-human raiders, or even hunting packs of animals. On the lower levels, the possibilities are limitless. Many of the more interesting and dangerous creatures are subterranean, and if these mines lead into any kind of underground civilization — like a mind flayer, drow, or deep dwarf city — then the lower levels could become crowded indeed.

If the mine has not been used up or abandoned, then the characters could be present in order to protect the miners. A good supply of valuable metals or gems is a very precious commodity, and many different factions could be scheming to take the mine. Imagine a mine with two separate entrances, each controlled by one of two warring parties. They regularly clash and dispute over who has rights to what areas. The characters could be working for one of these two factions, and must delicately weave their way between hostile rivals, paranoid commanders, and worse. To make things even more interesting, you could make the lower levels of these very mines another battleground, this time between two underground races, such as drow and duergar. Imagine the surprise on all sides when the two conflicts merge, and four separate factions start fighting for control of the same mines. Traps would definitely become much more common, and any intelligent creatures would be constantly recruited by one of the different sides, or killed to prevent an enemy from recruiting them. Imagine an entire campaign centered around the capture of one particular mine !

We have covered a lot of the structure and habitation of our mine, but let us touch briefly on some of the details we can put there. Does it have lantern or torch sconces? If it is a human mine, it probably will. If it is dwarven, it probably will not. Does it have mine carts and tracks? If it primarily contains ore, then the mine will probably need them. If it were a gemstone mine, then it would not need any sort of cart, since the amount of material mined is much smaller.

Finally, if its original occupants have abandoned this place, what kind of state did they leave it in? Was it an orderly withdrawal, meaning that they took salvageable material such as ore, gems, tools, and carts? Or was it a frantic retreat? In this case, a great deal of useful items might still be lying around, unused. There might still even be carts full of ore, ripe for the taking. This is assuming, of course, that any new occupants have no interest in such things. Did the miners leave, or were they killed? If they were all killed, then there may be evidence of the slaughter remaining, especially if there are no carrion eaters in this dungeon. These are just some of the details you can place in your mine to make it realistic and interesting.

Keep in mind that active mines are not quiet places, so take a moment to examine some of the sounds you may hear coming from your mine. Picks and hammers are, of course, a staple sound of any working mine, but they are not the only ones. Carts make noises, as do lifts. Miners generally have people in charge of them, foremen barking orders and ensuring that everything is run smoothly. Depending on the thickness of your walls and ceilings, any or all of these sounds may very well be audible from the entrance to the mine, or the darkest depths.

Even if the place is no longer being mined, resident creatures might still make sounds, which can carry quite a way underground. From the flap of bat wings (or something more sinister), to the deep rumble of a delver, if any creatures living in this mine are likely to make some noise at some point. Mines have much less inherent background noise than the surface, however, so emphasize at times the eerie silence associated with being miles deep in the earth. Creatures comfortable underground are likely to be much more adept at staying quiet than surface-dwellers, so keep that in mind also. If the characters are hunting a party of dark elves, and the drow lead them underground, they are going to have to be legendary trackers to find their quarry, and to avoid an ambush from the underworld-savvy dark elves.

Alongside sound, examine smell for a brief moment. Smell in a mine is a pretty flexible thing. Rock generally has no particular odor, unless you are dealing with sulfur or dwarf connoisseurs.

The occupants of the dungeon, however, might have a particular scent to them or their lairs. We know how badly goblins stink, to name one example, and if they stay in a lair long enough, it is going to acquire their aroma. So, while it only has a small part, be sure to give smell a thought when creating your mine.

Finally, let's use what we have covered here to create a relatively small sample mine, which you are welcome to flesh out and expand.

### SAMPLE MINE

The mines of Karas'Gar were built by a clan of dwarven refugees over two hundred years ago. Having left due to religious differences (this group believed that the mining god is left-handed instead of right), the Loran'dum (literally, "left-handers" in Dwarven) found an ideal home in the Dragonspine Mountains. Under the wise rule of the young King Damon, the mines prospered, and as the upper levels were expanded and eventually exhausted, the dwarves turned them into the beginnings of a city. They opened up trade relations with the nearby races (primarily gnomes, humans, and halflings), and Karas'Gar flourished.

Fifty years ago, almost overnight, the dwarves of Karas'Gar closed their doors and stopped interacting with the world around them. Their trading caravans stopped visiting their neighbors, and any who came to Karas'Gar were left knocking at the massive iron doors. Since that time, contact with the Loran'dum has ceased, much to the detriment of the surrounding towns and cities.

What the neighbors do not know about the Loran'dum is that they are no longer acting under their own free will. Fifty years ago, the dwarves sent out a team to explore a newly found lake at the bottom of the mines, and report back on any valuable ore in or around the lake. The team stayed at the lake for several days, and while they found no ore or gems, they did find something of interest. Ulolulquaha, an aboleth residing at the bottom of the lake, took over the minds of the team leader and several of his subordinates, as a precursor to taking over the entire mine. Then, under the aboleth's influence, the mining team returned to the city and brought King Damon back to the lake. The fate of Karas'Gar was sealed.

The upper levels of the mines of Karas'Gar consist of a dwarven city, which has become a far dourer and more depressed place than it once was. While the aboleth has not taken over the minds of everybody in the city, it has dominated all of the important people, such as the king, the clergy, and the leaders of all of the craft guilds. Over the past fifty years, many townsfolk have gotten somewhat suspicious, but are afraid to act. They have seen that anybody who mentions anything out of the ordinary is taken away, and when they return are completely docile. Because of this, the dwarves of Karas'Gar will not do anything to help strangers, but may not necessarily turn them in to the authorities right away either, especially if the strangers offer to help bring reason back to the town.

The double doors of the city are six inches thick, and made of solid iron. They only open from the inside, and the dwarves do not open them anymore. They are still decorated with the holy symbol of the Loran'dum, a left hand holding a hammer. The doors have no keyholes, nor any other indication that someone on the outside can open them.

The only way into the city besides the main doors are a secret passage that several dwarven children created long ago. The passage is unused at the moment, since the current generation of children is far too afraid of the consequences to risk leaving the city. Like most dwarven hidden doors, it has a hidden key required to open it. The door is only visible as a slight crack in the mountainside, and is far too sturdy to be forced open. There is a small slot off to the side of the crack, above which are carved the words "Losch di borrol." This translates into "Pay the toll," and is the key to opening the secret door. The children who built this passage charged their friends for using it; in order to open the door from either end, a coin must be placed in the slot. If this is done, the door will swing wide, opening into a narrow tunnel that leads to the upper mines.

The city itself is typically dwarven, which means that it is created from exhausted mines. As the mines were used up, the city expanded into them. At least, this was the case until fifty years ago. When the aboleth came, progress pretty much ended. Only a token amount of mining has been going on, and expansion of the city has ground to a halt.

The central mineshaft is a very large affair, complete with the pride of dwarven engineering, the mechanical lift. Using a complex system of pulleys, friction-locks, and counterweights, a person need only pull the correct series of levers to operate the lift. The lift has access to all eight levels of the mine. The top three levels consist of the city, which can be designed using the tips in *Subterranean Communities* on page 64. The fourth level was almost entirely exhausted by the miners when the aboleth was discovered, and so very little dwarven activity takes place here. The level is not deserted, however. A tribe of troglodytes has moved in on the fourth level, and is using it as a home until they can attack the town above them.

The fifth level holds the secret passage leading to the surface mentioned before. This floor of the mine still has a moderate amount of ore and gems left on it, and opportunistic adventurers could make a decent profit by scavenging a few rough gemstones. Furthermore, one of the dwarven mining teams ran across a delver around this area of the mountain, and worked out a deal with it. It would get one out of every ten gems they found, in exchange for opening up more of the mine (delves are the only creatures that can out-dig dwarves). The arrangement worked out nicely for both parties,

as the delver allowed the dwarves to mine at a rapid rate, and he earned a nice kickback from it. Unfortunately, when the aboleth came onto the scene, the deal abruptly ended. If any heroes could convince it what is going on, they might have an ally against the aboleth.

The sixth and seventh levels are the largest, due to the natural caverns that the dwarves encountered here. These areas are part of the larger underground world, and the dwarves went out of their way to avoid exploring "dangerous parts". It is rather ironic that the aboleth's first set of victims, a small community of Duergar (deep dwarves), were living in this vicinity, and the remains of their habitation could be ripe for the picking. The majority of creatures around here now are non-sentient, and thus beneath the aboleth's notice.

The eighth level of the mine is dominated almost entirely by the lake, and of course the aboleth that lies within. Several of the dwarves from the city have disappeared, and are now serving the aboleth directly as its mutated slaves. The aboleth has a rather sizeable treasure holding on an island in the center of the lake, predominantly bars of precious metal, gems, and dwarven-made weapons and armor, given in tribute by its willing slaves. Needless to say, there is no boat, and anybody intending to take the aboleth's hoard must cross the lake some other way, and deal with the other fearsome inhabitants of the dark waters.

## NATURAL CAVERNS

Natural caverns are defined as those areas created solely by the forces of nature, not shaped by intelligent hands. Caves are formed by the action of water eroding soft stone over the course of many thousands of years. They are usually unevenly shaped, very damp, and extremely dark. They can go on underground for miles. They're cold. They're wet. They're dark. In general, they don't have a lot of gold in them, and master villains tend to choose more impressive locales from which to conquer the realm or imprison the attractive royal heir. So why in the name of the Outer Planes would any hero go spelunking when there's real adventure to be had elsewhere?

Because in a fantasy world, *things* live in these caverns. Typically things with teeth and scales and a nasty disposition.





These unpleasant things often emerge from the caverns to wreak havoc on an innocent countryside... and may need a band of stout adventurers to put them back in their place.

Caves have several attractive features to dungeon tenants. They almost always have water in them - if not an actual underground stream, then pools where water reliably collects after seeping through the rocks. Most importantly, however, they're *just there*. You don't have to build, you don't have to worry about someone else burning it down, you just walk in and set up camp.

The disadvantage is, they're unformed. The cave floors are generally uneven unless you go to a lot of trouble chipping them flat or filling in the crevasses. There's no way to guarantee that the passage between chambers is going to be comfortably wide, and there's no structural guarantee against the ceiling falling or the floor giving way. All these problems can be fixed with some hard work, but people who like hard work tend to build their own homes instead of settling in some dank hole in the ground.

For the experienced adventurer, cleaning out a bunch of vermin-ridden caves might seem like a waste of time. Caverns can make a good start for a dungeon-looter's career: a simple, easy to

understand complex with straightforward threats to face. But there's no reason that a cavern can't be as dangerous as the most meticulously-crafted subterranean complex.

First of all, caverns can get big. Really big. Lost city big. Underground *civilization* big. Some fantasy worlds have entire inner realms beneath the surface, and they're rarely pleasant. A standard theme is the evil race that was "driven out of the light" ages ago, which has only grown more corrupt as the centuries (or even millennia) passed. Typically, they're also quite powerful, with ancient magic or strange powers available to them. Drow elves, mind flayers, duergar, and other forces lie in wait just under the surface of many fantasy worlds. Any cave could hold an outpost of these dangerous creatures... or lead to their subterranean world. Powerful but dangerous wonders await the adventurers who can overcome these strange adversaries, but death may be preferable to what might happen to heroes captured by mind flayers...

It doesn't take an army of Slimy Ones to challenge powerful heroes, either. It's a rare group of adventurers who won't quail at the sight of a single red dragon larger than their home village. And dragons, as canny and intelligent beings, could easily convince some local humanoids to live in smaller caves leading up to their lairs. Sure, they won't stop determined and powerful adventurers, but they'll keep away the riff-raff and make a passable early warning system. With powerful magic, a dragon could also turn ordinary caverns into a series of deadly encounters. Finally, a dragon is a dangerous foe, even if all a band of adventurers has done to reach one is fight their way through "ordinary" caves. The good news, of course, is that should the party emerge triumphant, dragons almost always have large amounts of treasure. (Gold is a very soft metal; it's probably the equivalent of a feather mattress to a creature with a furnace for a belly.)

Don't forget the less glamorous pests, either. A purple worm may not know an elvish princess from a goblin raider, but it can devastate a village just as thoroughly as a dragon can. They may not have much in the way of gold (though you never know), but an annoyed baron will probably offer some sort of reward to anyone who rids his land of the pesky monster.



Even here, though, adventurers should keep their wits about them. Even the most mindless of monsters sometimes hunt in packs, and the definition of "natural" cavern can include some unpleasant surprises in a world with creatures the size of a killer whale tunneling through the earth.

Caverns also make great homes for the (ahem) self-employed entrepreneur on a budget. Raiders, brigands, and goblinoids of all types can find uses for large, secluded, easily defended areas. Caves with bolt holes are even more popular, just in case the royal guard shows up on your doorstep with half the army. These sorts of adversaries usually have treasure *and* prices on their heads, making bounty hunting a lucrative prospect for less experienced heroes. Adventurers shouldn't assume that cleaning out a cavern full of muggers will be easy, however. Anyone driven to the life of a brigand is likely to be both cunning and more than a little desperate. And to humanoids, the *adventurers* might be the marauding monsters. Evil or not, those caves are their homes. Never underestimate any creature defending its lair.

Once you know what lives in a cavern, the question of why is usually easy. Unlike the denizens of man-made dungeons, most cave-bound humanoids and monsters ended up there through expedient means. They don't have to build anything, there's no planning involved, they just find a spot and set up their tents. If it's not native to the underground world, then it's probably using the cave for temporary shelter. The real question is, how temporary is the shelter? Brigands and refugees will probably have some kind of watch most of the time, but other than that, the only important difference between fighting outlaws in the open and fighting them in a cave is light (this can be an important difference, but with magical light so easy to come by in most fantasy worlds, it probably won't be a factor). In general, this sort of desperation-choice hideout means little time for preparing unpleasant surprises. For that matter, any monsters that find their way into the cavern will become a "third force" that may be as great a help to the heroes as a hindrance.

Contrary to some early dungeon designs, extensive natural caves may have more than one entrance. This is especially important if you've got a society of monsters (like goblins), because they're

probably not spending all their time in the caves. During the day, at least half of them are outside hunting, fishing or raiding. If a gang of PCs charges in the front door of a multi-opening cave, the non-combatants are probably going to go charging out the side and back doors, looking for their hunter-warriors to come back and reclaim their home. On the other hand, if you *do* have a single exit cave, then there's a lot more incentive for the denizens to get together in one big mob and push the PCs out. This is where you get orcs fighting to the death: They have nothing to lose if there's nowhere to flee.

The more permanent the cavern settlement, the more likely that the residents have a nasty welcome in store for intruders. Monsters of animal intelligence will sense all but the most careful parties, and probably swarm over the heroes at the most opportune moment. More intelligent beings will prepare ambushes, sometimes getting ambitious enough to prepare traps. Cavern traps usually involve dropping things onto intruders, and the sort of trap-makers heroic adventurers will be facing rarely have capture in mind.

No matter how clever the inhabitants, however, there's only so much work that can be done in a cave to prepare mundane traps. (Dwarves can work wonders with rock, but it doesn't take long for a natural cavern to become a dwarf hold that way.) Most cave-based encounters will involve fighting things that come out of the stonework to try and kill the adventurers. Generally, this will be identical to combat anywhere else. But depending on the heroes' opponents, they might find themselves being outmaneuvered in ways they hadn't expected. Aside from the rough terrain, caverns have all sorts of protrusions, like stalactites (the ones hanging down from the ceiling) and stalagmites (the ones pointing up from the floor). Creatures native to caves may be adept at climbing and crawling around this natural stonework, something that typical humanoid adventurers are unlikely to be skilled at. This provides cover, as explained on pages 132-133 of the *Dungeons & Dragons Player's Handbook* (in fact, the drawing on page 133 is a perfect example of the problems that arise in a cavern fight). Such creatures might also benefit from the *evasion* or *improved evasion* abilities as listed for rogues, only good while fighting in a cave.

Note that anyone can find cover in a cavern under the right circumstances. In addition, giants small enough to fit in a cavern are difficult to disarm, as a new club is only a stalactite away.

Magic traps are another matter. While it's unlikely that surface wizards would bother using caves as a base of operations, goblinoid sorcerers and intelligent races native to the underground world could easily have many traps in place to warn them of intruders and discourage looters. That strange pattern on the stalagmite ahead could be worn away by water and time, or it might be a *Glyph of Warding*. Jets of fire coming out of plain rock and hordes of zombies appearing out of thin air will be a warning to the densest adventurer, of course, but that would most likely be part of the deterrent.

While caves can occasionally provide a serious challenge to high-level adventurers, they are primarily "dungeons" for low-level adventurers to cut their teeth on (dragon's lairs aside). They can face humanoid creatures and smaller monsters for decent pay and salvage rights. If high-level adventurers go in to a cave to clean out a nest of gnolls or kobolds, it might be best to simply roleplay the encounter, perhaps using it as a prologue to the main adventure now and then.

Once the party grows complacent, *then* you hit them with the mind flayers.

## SEWERS

The sewer system of any city is designed with a single purpose: to carry away waste water from the city through a system of tunnels that extend out beyond the city walls. On the face of it, this does not seem like a place where intrepid adventurers would really go in search of excitement, adventure, and really wild things, but the sewer, while not necessarily the most glamorous of locales for an adventure, still contains its own charms.

The first consideration to put in mind when designing your sewer is, "Is the sewer system active?" If your PCs are investigating the sewers of a ruined city, or if the sewers have been built over (as in Terry Pratchett's novel, *Men At Arms*), it means that you have an abandoned sewer, which provides slightly different challenges than if the PCs descend into an active sewer.

Active sewers are accessible through storm drains (usually placed at the corner of streets) and access tunnels designed for maintenance workers. In both cases, special tools will probably be required to gain access - as you might have noticed, manhole covers are usually bolted down, and storm gratings are designed to prevent large objects from floating into them. The party will probably need crowbars to gain entry. (Incidentally, especially observant characters might be able to grab a small amount of treasure before they even get into the sewer, if they enter via a storm drain. If the water flow becomes partially clogged, the resultant eddy of water can create a conglomeration of mud and coins called a *tosheroon*. Since people usually don't chase into the storm drains after coins, these can get quite large, containing twenty to thirty coins along with assorted debris.)

Once inside an active sewer, the PCs will find that they can get about with a relative degree of ease, assuming the weather's been good. Most sewers have ways for maintenance workers to get around, in the form of elevated walkways along the edge of the water. These will probably not have guard rails, unless the city is advanced enough to have a worker safety program, so PCs will want to be careful about keeping their balance on what is very slippery footing. (DMs can be as kind or malicious about this as they want to be about such matters).

The main source of danger will probably come from the water; any amount of effluvia, debris, and decaying matter is washed into a sewer, and as such, this becomes a perfect feeding ground for all sorts of aquatic monsters. They will be able to feed off of these things at first, and later, as an ecosystem develops, off of each other, allowing larger and larger predators into the mix. Sooner or later, something will come along that's able to snag people right off of the walkways and into the water...

Of course, that's not to say that the walkways are safe under normal conditions. Since the sewers are concealed from the main vision of the town, any humanoids who wish to live in the area undetected would eventually migrate to the walkways. (As we all know from modern media, the sewers of any major city are filled with a population of strange-looking homeless people

who have managed to carve out an advanced civilization for themselves. One would think that the main purpose of a sewer was to provide low-rent housing.) These humanoids are probably going to be quite angry at people for intruding on their homes.

In addition, the damp environment makes a perfect breeding ground for fungi, slimes, molds, jellies, puddings, and all of the disgusting monsters that your party hates because they can't stab them in the vulnerables. Feel free to sprinkle these liberally throughout your sewer as you see fit. The damn things grow everywhere.

Aside from these inhabitants, there's one other major danger facing sewer divers. Thankfully, it isn't traps; even the most bored and sadistic civic planning council rarely includes a deathtrap in its sewer system. Unfortunately, the danger of flooding actually outranks any deathtrap you can come up with. Have you ever walked by a storm drain in the middle of a big storm, and seen it filled to the point where water backs up into the street? Now imagine being in the sewer when that happens. If a sudden thunderstorm occurs, or if the party enters during a rainy season, it's likely that the following will occur (in this order). First, the waters will move more rapidly. Anyone falling in will be carried a good distance, even if a strong swimmer. Second, the walkways will become covered with moving water, making footing treacherous or impossible. Third, as the waters deepen further, the only means of movement will be swimming, and movement against the current will be a virtual impossibility. The fourth and final stage of flooding, which is rarely reached, is that of total saturation. The tunnels become entirely filled with water. Unless the characters have some way of breathing underwater or reaching the surface in short order, their lifespans are likely to be limited to how long they can hold their breath. (This is why, in the real world, sewers do not make great low-rent housing.)

Abandoned sewers in ruined cities will have some minor differences to them. The first, of course, is that they're probably in the same condition as the city above, if not worse; damp walls crumble easily, and damp ceilings collapse with depressing regularity. On the other hand, they won't have the same risks of flooding; without regular cleaning and maintenance, the





storm drains will probably have silted over in all but a few places, creating a more self-contained environment. It also means that the water in the sewers is stagnant and swampy, and an even better breeding ground for aquatic monsters.

Sewers that have been built over are a peculiarity of very old cities; in these cities, as fire, flood, war and famine make their visits, layers are destroyed and built over with a certain historic regularity. (Archaeologists studying ancient Troy, for example, discovered no less than seven cities, with each one built right on top of the ruins of the old.) If this is the case, it might be difficult to tell where the city stops and the sewers start; they will have little, if any standing water, and even finding them will require a little creative excavating (not to mention knowledge of their existence; it's more likely that the PCs will stumble onto them while in the midst of some other adventure.)

All types of sewers, though, share about the same level of treasure. This is surprisingly high, in many ways; very few people are willing to go after things that fall into the sewer, no matter how valuable they are. The persistent adventurer will be able to find a reasonable amount of gold and gems if they are willing to work at it. However, it's the last part of that sentence - "if they are willing to work at it" - that might become a stumbling block. These little treasures are not heaped up by hoarding dragons, or stacked in vaults; they're just lying around haphazardly — sometimes at the bottom of the muck — and require a good deal of patience and hard work to scrape up. Your average adventurer is probably a little too used to having their gold in convenient chest form to want to rake through the sludge for it all.

So with little treasure, nasty monsters, and the risk of drowning, why would your party want to even enter a sewer? The answer is simple; sewers go everywhere in a city, and they do so in a way that allows your party to travel without being seen. In a city with an early curfew and patrolling guards, the sewers can become a thoroughfare for an enterprising party, allowing them to slip from one place to another right under the noses of the Watch. (This is even more true of the third kind of sewer, which might, due to the vagaries of its construction, pass directly under important buildings.) The PCs will be sure to see the advantages of this. In addition, there's always the possibility that they're hired to exterminate nasty monsters that have been eating the sewer workers... or to get rid of some of those humanoids that have been coming up and terrorizing the townspeople... there's always work in this line for civic-minded parties, and they may even get paid by the city, as well.

## DESIGNING YOUR OWN SEWER SYSTEM

It is remarkably easy for you, as a DM, to come up with a sewer system for your fantasy city. Sewers are almost always built underneath the streets; therefore, all you need to do is take the map you are already using for the city, and use it as a guideline for drawing up the sewer system. Place storm drains at each corner, and access hatches approximately every two to three blocks.

(If you are designing a sewer system that has been built over, then you can actually deviate as much as you want from the city plans; in fact, for the sake of authenticity, you might want to draw up the plans for the sewer using a different city entirely, and map it onto the city you're using.)

Very few of the monsters in a sewer will have a specific "lair"; it's more likely that they'll have a territory, or possibly that they'll simply wander with no set area. Hence, it's probably best that you use a random encounter table. The exact frequency with which you roll will determine how monster-infested your sewer is, of course, but a good guideline is to roll once every two or three blocks of progression

**Random Sewer Monster Encounter Table (suitable for levels 1-5)**

01-15	No Encounter
16-21	Stirges
22-27	Group of Kobolds (1d12)
28-36	Dire Rat
37-43	Band of Goblins (1d10)
44-49	Giant Hellgrammite (see <i>New Monsters</i> section)
50-57	Lizardfolk
58-63	Carrion Crawler
64-70	Gray Ooze
71-74	Hungry Waters (see <i>New Monsters</i> section)
75-79	Group of Kuo-Toa (1d6)
80-85	Gelatinous Cube
86-90	Ogre
90-95	Black Pudding
96-00	Giant Leech

If you have a higher-level party and wish to modify this table, you can add such monsters as trolls, basilisks, and the like in place of some of the weaker threats, or feel free to add your own. Just remember that there is a size limitation; a green dragon, for example, would probably find the environment uncomfortably cramped.

As for treasure... again, the sewers aren't the best place to go for treasure. We recommend that if the players put forth a reasonable amount of effort in searching for treasure, they should be able to find about half the listed value of treasure under the Treasure Information in the *Monster Manual* for the monsters they randomly encounter.

This doesn't necessarily represent finding the treasure on the monster, but rather the average "wealth level" of the sewers they're travelling through. If they choose to spend extra time looking through the mud and debris, give them a higher percentage, but slow down their travel time appropriately; it's time-consuming work. Treasure will almost always be found in the form of coins, with the occasional gem; magical items will be rare in the extreme, and as for works of art - if there are any, they probably aren't worth much anymore.

Flooding is, as we've said, sometimes a problem in sewers. What follows is a table that you can use to simulate the random flooding effects of weather; feel free to modify it, depending on the climate of your fantasy city and the time of year. You should probably roll only once at the beginning of each session to determine whether flooding will occur, although you do not have to have the flood occur at a specific point during the session. (Just let dramatic timing be your guide.) Floods last a varying amount of time, but a good rule of thumb is that the stronger the flood, the less time it will last - it might not be good meteorology, but it's nicer to the PCs.

**Random Flooding Effects Table**

01-40	Little or no Rainfall
41-60	Moderate Rainfall
61-80	Heavy Rainfall
81-95	Stormes
96-00	Torrential Stormes

- **Little or no rainfall** causes no appreciable flooding. Swimming in the central water stream requires a Swim check against a DC of 12, due to the moving current.
- **Moderate rainfall** causes Level One flooding; the walkways are slippery, requiring a Balance check with a DC of 5 every round to keep footing (failure simply causes one to slip and fall); swimming in the central water stream requires a Swim check against a DC of 17, as the current is fast-moving and the water is choppy.
- **Heavy rainfall** causes Level Two flooding; the walkways are now totally covered in moving water, requiring a Balance check with a DC of 10 every round to keep footing - failure at this point will pitch one

into the deeper waters of the central stream; swimming in the central water stream requires a Swim check against a DC of 23, due to the strong currents.

- **Storms** cause Level Three flooding; at this point, the walkways are immersed to the point where it is impossible to move through any other means other than swimming. Swimming requires a Swim Check against a DC of 23, due to the strong currents.
- **Torrential storms** cause Level Four flooding; at this point, the entire tunnel is filled with water, and characters must hold their breaths or find some means of breathing without air to survive. Swimming requires a Swim check against a DC of 23, due to the strong currents.

## SUBTERRANEAN COMMUNITIES

Most fantasy worlds have a large population of underground dwellers; dwarves, of course, make up a majority of this populace, but any number of other sentient beings, both good and evil, make their homes underneath the surface of the earth, including orcs, trolls, and goblins. The fact that orcs, trolls, and goblins are among the fiercest racial enemies of the dwarven race may go some way towards explaining why so many subterranean communities wind up becoming monster-infested war zones.

The thing to keep in mind when designing a subterranean city is that it will be a multi-level map; try to keep track of altitude as well as latitude and longitude when building them. This can make things more complex, but it's something you'll get the hang of fairly easily; just make sure to mark descents/ascents that would lead the party to a different level. Most subterranean communities look, on a cross-section, like a rabbit warren; they're made up of a number of narrow transit tunnels that branch out in different directions, eventually leading to larger hollowed out chambers in which the inhabitants live, work, and interact. The pattern of "tunnels and chambers" is prominent in any burrowing life-form, from dwarves down to squirrels and chipmunks.

Of course, the scale is inevitably enlarged when dwarves are the ones doing the construction (since they have different needs than your average rabbit). Dwarven communities must have armories, vaults, and at least one meeting hall that is large enough to contain the entire adult populace - and even given that the average dwarf is half the size of the average human, this works out to a large space for all but the most modest-sized. (The ceilings, however, will still be low. In fact, this is something to take into consideration at every stage of dungeon-planning; if you want to use a former dwarven city, the players might feel cramped very quickly, depending on how recently the community has fallen into disuse. As the monstrous population increases, they will eventually raise the ceilings through the sheer number of them scraping and bumping against them; however, cities in the early stages of monster infestation will be difficult for any but the shortest characters to get through without at least one knock on the head.)

Dwarven cities deal with civic issues in the same way that any other race does; water will come from wells that dig below the water table (obviously, this is why dwarves build in mountains, and not simply under the surface of the earth - the problems of propping up a mine shaft are bad enough without dealing with flooding as well.) Traditionally, dwarves are fond of meat and mead, but unless they're eating rat filet, both of those require contact with the surface. That's not unreasonable: you keep your cattle and crops up top, then tunnel down to the dwellings beneath. (This does mean that anyone who burns out the top layer and occupies it can starve you pretty easily, however, which might explain how the city came to be abandoned. Of course, being able to tunnel underneath your besiegers is something of an advantage as well.) Some animals and plants thrive in total darkness: Fungi and lichen can grow in the dark, bugs can eat the mushrooms and rats can eat the bugs (and anything else they find). Over the centuries, the dwarves might easily have carved out giant, subterranean fungus farms. They might have even bred huge "meat rats" (capybaras?) that have, in the intervening centuries, become vicious and feral (but no less nourishing).



Alternately, you can get all high-fantasy with it and decide that either (1) those clever dwarves made some kind of artificial-sun spell and were growing regular crops underground or (2) they raised blind, albino cave-bees for their mead and perfected dark wheat that needs no light to grow. (Some people find the idea of fighting off killer bees in inky blackness very creepy indeed.) Given the number of fungal monsters extant in fantasy universes, it goes without saying that maintaining a fungal garden has more hazards than normal, and an axe is considered a perfectly suitable garden tool. Waste is disposed of through sewers, which can become a source of monster infestation themselves (see *Sewers*, above).

In general, the dwarven community works just like any other, excepting that the dwarves expand continuously. The reasons for this stem from the fact that any dwarven community is also a mine, used to extract precious ores, gems, and minerals. Dwarves live in mined-out sections, and work in sections that still have seams of precious rock (which is then refined, worked, and stored in the mined-out sections or traded with the surface communities). They are systematic and careful in this expansion, working each area until they are certain that they have exhausted its store of gold and gems, and then moving on from it. This continual expansion brings them deeper into the mountains, where eventually they will abut a community of less-civilized races. This usually brings about war, as the dwarves wish to continue their expansion, the humanoids want to raid and exploit the already-developed dwarven community, and as the different races probably hate each other on sight anyway (for more on this, see *Mines*, above).

Although dwarves are formidable and deadly warriors, certain factors do work against them in these situations. The main one is that of population; goblins and kobolds, to name two examples, reproduce at staggering rates, and usually have no compunctions about making mass charges at the enemy on a regular basis. Dwarves, on the other hand, are not known for their fertility, and as such, they find themselves massively outnumbered from the beginning, and the situation only gets worse as time goes on. Eventually, unless they seek allies, the dwarves are either driven from their community, or exterminated completely, at which point the humanoids will infest the tunnels formerly inhabited by the dwarves.

It is also possible that the dwarves could abandon the community voluntarily. If they did, it would be because they had exhausted the mineral potentials of the area so thoroughly that it would be more profitable to pull up stakes altogether and find a different mountain. This is something to keep in mind as you create your dungeon; a voluntary exile would mean fewer humanoid monsters, and also less treasure. Dwarves, being naturally thrifty and cautious, will take everything even remotely useful to them; only in the case of a rapid, forced retreat will they leave treasure and magical items.

However, just because the dwarves themselves are gone does not mean that the traces of their presence are entirely abandoned. Dwarves are cautious (the impolite might say paranoid), and they will undoubtedly have guarded their most precious of treasures in hidden and booby-trapped vaults. They also tend to leave unpleasant pitfalls, collapsing tunnels, and various other traps for the humanoids that invade their communities; most of these will have been tripped by the invaders, but the dwarven dedication to excellence extends to deathtraps as well, and there's always more for an unwary PC to trigger.

Either way, abandoning the community will lead to negative consequences, whether or not the



community is subsequently invaded by orcs, trolls, and goblins. For one thing, an underground community requires near-constant maintenance, something that monsters are rarely interested in. Shafts need to be propped up, the bridges over subterranean fissures need to be kept in good condition, collapses need to be cleared away - the greatest danger to a party of adventurers in some cases can be not the monsters, but the tunnels themselves.

For another thing, the new inhabitants will be uninterested and unskilled when it comes to keeping the area free of some of the more unsavory natural predators that live underground. The fungal gardens will become infested in short order, given that they're designed to nourish exactly that sort of life-form; jellies, slimes and molds will grow on different surfaces; subterranean predators will arrive, feeding first off of the humanoids and then off of each other; soon, the area becomes a paradise for monsters (and, depending on the mindset of your parties, a paradise for adventurers.) In the most advanced stages of infestation, a dragon will usually claim the largest room in the community as its own - the presence of any treasure that the dwarves have left behind is usually an irresistible draw to the gold-hungry beasts, and they don't need to worry about low ceilings... they can simply excavate a larger space by hand.

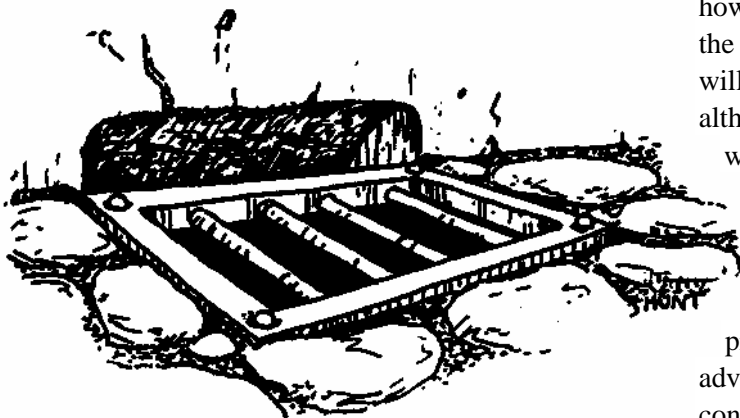
So why would your party want to travel into such a dangerous place? Probably because a dwarf asked them to. No matter how spirited the attempts made to exterminate them, there are usually at least one or two survivors of any old dwarven city - and if there's anything that characterizes a dwarf, it's determination. Unless the mines have been completely worked out and every single copper coin removed, the survivors

will be obsessed with recovering their lost territory, and will spend a good deal of effort in raising a group of adventurers to take it all back. Even after all the survivors are dead, they might leave maps (or "living maps" in the form of descendants) who will continue their quest.

However, your party does not necessarily have to be delving into the remains of a dwarven city. It is also possible that they are attacking a community of humanoids directly, one that was not formerly a creation of the dwarves. These "cities" are usually natural systems of caverns that the humanoids have adapted themselves, through inhabitation, and act as a base for raids on surface communities. They are rarely, if ever, modified, and do not use the same "tunnels and chambers" system of the burrowing dwarves; instead, they tend towards the natural hollowing effects of geological action (if you've ever gone spelunking, you'll get the idea.)

Humanoid communities tend to be primitive, with a less organized social structure. They have no civic planning council, and deal with the necessities of life in a relatively simple manner, hence, water is usually obtained from surface rivers and lakes and brought to the community by hand (unless the cavern system touches on an underground lake or river, which is a distinct possibility); food is obtained from the surface as well, through raids, hunting, or, in rare cases, farming. Waste, unfortunately, is usually dealt with in the most primitive fashion; this leads to disease, not to mention a smell that might cause party members to change their minds about the assault entirely.

It goes without saying that the primary occupants of a humanoid community are humanoids; presumably, they will form the main targets of any attacking group of PCs. This is, however, a very risky challenge for any party, as the humanoids will vastly outnumber them. They will need to use secrecy and stealth in an assault; although humanoids rarely post alert sentries, they will charge *en masse* if roused by an overt assault on their home. In addition, these cavern systems can also have an ecosystem of scavengers, parasites, and other predators who see the humanoids as prey, and will probably not discriminate when it comes to adventurers as well. These can provide a considerable secondary challenge to a party of adventurers.



One threat that is rare, though, is that of traps; humanoids rarely have patience for the more elaborate efforts of construction that accompany your typical deathtrap. However, it is a mistake (indeed, a fatal one) to assume that all traps need sophisticated construction, and humanoids are intelligent enough to make use of traps, so long as they don't require much effort; natural pits and crevices will probably be spiked, deadfalls will be rigged, etc. This won't be much work for an experienced thief to undo, but parties who stride boldly forth might suddenly find their stride hampered by a jagged piece of rock in the sole of their foot.

Again, the question has to be asked, why would a group of adventurers risk their lives by directly attacking the monsters in their lair? In this case, the answer is probably necessity; a community of orcs and goblins does not make a good neighbor, and they more than likely supplement themselves through raiding nearby communities. The PCs might need to wipe out the community, or simply discourage them a bit. Alternatively, since looting is a major feature of these raids, it's possible that they might need to recover some holy relic or heirloom snatched in the latest raid... or, perhaps, a person taken captive.

Another possibility for your underground community is that the party is exploring a ruined city of some third set of races; these could be anything from dark elven communities to the cities of some lost Elder Race; either way, these cities will provide additional challenges, both for them and for the Dungeon Master who attempts to design them. These races presumably have access to advanced magic; hence, they do not need to settle for the mundane laws of physics when creating their communities. Tunnels will be larger, and self-maintaining; chambers will be vast, well beyond the natural limits of building; vertical shafts might have magical "elevators" that can carry adventurers up to higher levels through levitation or floating platforms; indeed, the cities might consist of entirely sealed communities, with air, water, and other necessities being piped in through permanent teleportation spells. After all, when dealing with lost races, you can feel free to give them magical advantages that have been long-forgotten by the rest of the world... it's not like they're going to tell anyone how it's done, are they?

This also means that the traps in these cities will be incredibly elaborate, sophisticated, and often playfully malicious. If you want to include electrocution, riddles, poison gases, and all of the fun tricks that make DMs giggle and players whimper, this is the place to do it. Most ancient races in fantasy games have a wicked streak.

Even worse, the high degree of magical maintenance doesn't necessarily preclude monstrous infestation. On the contrary, it only means that a higher class of monster moves in. Liches will seek out the magical wonders of the ancient city; mind flayers, beholders, and dragons will love to gain access to these powerful relics; and, of course, when dealing with powerful monsters of that caliber, they're going to have their own minions with them, which means gnolls, ogres, and more of the good old-fashioned orcs, trolls, and goblins.

Of course, the PCs are also probably heading there for the same reason. If you need to come up with a reason for them to go to a city of a Lost Race, you can bring up any number of rumors about its lost wonders... and since these tales get exaggerated in the telling, you can feel free to embellish a little if they don't seem enthused. In addition, you might wind up using the stick as well as the carrot. If you have a "main villain" for the campaign, confronting him or her in the ancient city of a lost race makes a nice dramatic finale, allowing you to build the tension with each trap and encounter.

## TEMPLES

Temples can be among the most exciting and creative dungeon types in existence, but they require careful thought to pull off right. By knowing how and why a temple is there, you can gain a better understanding of what it contains, and how it is laid out.

In the simplest sense of the word, a temple is a place of worship. The first thing we are going to look at is who made this temple, and how? Generally, the answer to the first part of this question would be "followers of a particular deity." The choice of deity is crucial to determining the more concrete aspects of the temple (location, for example:

Followers of a forest or nature god probably would not put their temple in the middle of a city, and a dwarven temple would be equally unlikely to stand in the middle of a desert). In a world where the presence and power of the gods is never questioned, high-standing followers of a powerful deity may be able to literally raise the temple up from the earth in a day. Alternatively, magic can be a very useful force in architecture. A powerful wizard could use spells to carve out a network of caverns in the earth, or raise a building into the sky. However, cases like this should not be commonplace, or else the magic loses any sense of the exotic. Temples, like most other buildings, are usually built by human hands over the course of months or even years. Despite the fact that your players may never know how a temple was built, it is still something to keep in mind; a magically created temple is going to have unnatural aspects to it, such as smooth walls, unworldly architecture, and other features that human hands could never have installed.

The next aspect to address is the temple's location and the specific reason for standing where it stands. Most temples need to be accessible by worshippers. While it makes sense for a long-abandoned temple to a merchant god to



be located in a ruined city, that same temple would not logically be located in the deep wilderness (most merchants would prefer not to trek out to the boondocks to pray). Another question relevant to location is the relationship between this god and the rest of the immediate area. If the country, or even just nearby cities, are aligned to one god, then this can affect the temple's placement. If it is a temple to the local deity, then there is not problem with being out in the open. Conversely, if the local god is the patron of paladins, and this is a temple to the Lord of Ultimate Evil, then there is a bit more incentive towards discretion.

Is this location significant to the deity in some way? Most often, a site would have some historical significance: a battle or miraculous occurrence took place there, where the god rewarded his faithful. However, location can be valuable for reasons other than historical. A temple to the god of the forest would naturally be in a wooded area, and a temple to the god of justice could be across from a courthouse. Below is a list of possible deities' domains, and the locations that they might favor.

Domains	Favored Locations
Knowledge, Magic	City, Secluded Tower
War	Fortress, Battlefield
Nature, Life	Forest
Death, Necromancy	Swamp, Underground
Stone, Metal, Earth	Mountain, Mine
Water	Bay, Stream, Island
Fire	Volcanoes, Deserts
Harvest	Towns, Farming Villages

These are merely the tip of the iceberg, both in terms of deities' domains and locations. There are potentially as many gods as there are aspects of life, and their choices of temples should reflect their natures.

The next thing to determine is the temple's present status. Is it still functional? Why, or why not? This point marks the all-important transition from "temple" to "dungeon." Often, we assume that in order to be a dungeon, a temple must be abandoned, but this is not necessarily the case. Evil gods are quite likely to have dangerous and labyrinthine places of worship, and even some temples to good powers might have areas which have not been explored in ages, especially if they might be guarding ancient relics entrusted to the care of the clergy.

If the temple still functions, it becomes important to know which areas are dangerous and which are safe. It makes little sense for a band of golems to just start raiding the novices' quarters one day. However, it is perfectly reasonable for those same golems to guard the temple's captured enemies (assuming that this deity has no problem with golems). Note that if the temple is devoted to a decidedly unfriendly deity, and is still active, it would probably not contain any "safe" areas.

If the temple is abandoned by its original owners, the most important question becomes why. With the expense involved in building most temples, the great majority of sentient beings would prefer not to abandon one, if at all possible. Several legitimate occurrences could prompt such an exodus, however: disease, famine, holy pilgrimages, invasion, natural disaster, or unnatural disaster, to name a few. In a world where magic and divine interventions are facts of life, temples tend to be focal points for unpleasant events.

If the temple is abandoned due to catastrophe, make sure to provide evidence of whatever caused the abandonment. If an earthquake struck it, there should be collapsed areas. If some kind of magical experiment went awry, the sky's the limit. Below are a few reasons for why a temple would be abandoned.

- Disease
- War
- Famine
- Religious persecution
- Holy crusade
- Earthquake
- Fire
- Flood (permanent)
- Magical accident
- Magical non-accident
- Monsters
- Bankruptcy (mundane, but true!)
- Wrath of Deity
- Depopularization of Deity
- Death of Deity
- Intervention by hostile power (divine or otherwise)

With that in mind let's examine the history of the temple. When was it built? This aspect is valu-

able in terms of how old the temple is, and what kind of condition it is in. However, events surrounding the temple's construction can also influence certain aspects of it. If the temple was built during a great war, it would probably be quite defensible. If it was made during a time of economic prosperity, it would be quite lavish. The other aspect of this question is age. A thousand-year-old temple would be much different from a forty-year-old one. It would be in significantly worse repair, and probably thoroughly explored and stripped by any denizens. Which brings us to the next topic...

Who is currently living here, and why? As with any dungeon, this question is the most important, as players tend to equate it with "what is here that I can kill?" A temple's denizens must have a reason for living there, and should fit in with the overall theme you're attempting to establish. If the temple is dedicated to a good-aligned deity, the lingering presence would not be particularly attractive to infernal creatures. Similarly, a temple to the god of the sun would not be the first on a vampire's list of places to occupy. More to the point, it's advisable to put creatures in that make sense, such as salamanders and fire elementals in a temple to the god of fire, undead in a cathedral dedicated to necromancy, and something racially relevant, such as a banshee, in an elven temple.

Finally, an important part of placing creatures is knowing what they are doing there. While it makes sense for a carrion crawler to inhabit the crypts, it doesn't have a great deal of incentive to explore the library. Similarly, goblinoids probably have very little interest in the altar, except perhaps as a table or a place to set up their dartboard. Furthermore, creatures have goals they want to fulfill, and since orcs, goblins, and the like generally aren't known for their attention spans, it's reasonable that they want to get in, do whatever they came to do, and get out. How much more interesting would the temple be if, instead of the ubiquitous pack of goblins guarding the treasure, those same goblins have come to get it? Now, the characters have to get in, past the goblins (who have a better idea of where the treasure is and how the temple is laid out), past whoever is guarding the treasure, and out.

Furthermore, if the treasure isn't something goblins would normally want, they may have to track down the power behind the critters — the one with a very good reason for desiring such an object.

Before we get into the physical aspect of the temple, let's consider one last thing: how it connects with the outside. If it is underground, what does the entrance look like? If the temple's builders wanted a low profile, then the entrance is probably quite subtle, maybe even hidden or trapped. It would be quite a surprise if the nastiest traps come at the beginning of the dungeon, preventing the curious from ever getting inside. On the other hand, if there was no need to lie low, then the builders would probably have made the entrance ornate and ostentatious.

Beyond the entrance that the player characters might use, there may also be alternate or secret entrances or exits. These may lead somewhere else entirely: a dwarven or gnomish temple might open directly into a mine, or a temple to an evil deity could have a hidden cove out of which they trade slaves or smuggle poison. If there is such a hidden or side entrance, creatures could also come in through there.

At this point, we should probably look at the components of a temple. A temple can be anything from a one-room chapel to a gigantic cathedral, to a maze of underground warrens and passageways, as long as a deity is, or was, worshiped there. However, there are a few things the great majority of temples have in common. They need a place for people to worship, usually in large groups. Every temple at least one very large room, capable of holding a congregation of worshippers on whatever high holy days this god might have (and, it stands to reason, this is, or was, a large enough congregation to make it worthwhile to build the temple). This room is probably going to have a great deal of the religious paraphernalia associated with it, such as an altar, holy books, statuary, and assorted art. If any rites are performed, this is most likely the room in which they will take place. It should also be fairly easy to reach, unless the builders wanted the faithful to run through a lengthy series of rooms and corridors on their way to worship. Thematically, this chamber should be the core room of the temple, the one chamber that truly ties it together.

The next room you should include is a rectory of some sort - living quarters for the clergy who inhabit the temple (or used to). These living quarters could be as sparse as a small room with minimal furnishings, or an incredibly lavish array of apartments to rival that of the richest lord. You can determine a great deal about the temple from how the clergy lived. Were they pious or corrupt? Did they spend their days in quiet contemplation, or did they unceasingly partake in a bacchanalian orgy? If the temple is abandoned, are there remnants of its former, original inhabitants? If the temple fell to violence, some of the clergy could have unfinished business, and thus still be haunting their old home.

During the Middle Ages, monasteries and churches were some of the only repositories of information, and this trend can easily be carried over into your game. Temples will usually contain a library or something similar, with books and scrolls catalogued. Most of the texts are probably going to be religious, and thus have some bearing upon the deity to whom the temple is dedicated (but not necessarily; see below). Despite the boredom implied in most religious tracts, they offer the foundation for nearly unlimited adventuring possibilities. If the temple's deity still exists, there could be a great deal of incentive to retrieve some of these tracts, or to make sure they do not fall into the wrong hands. Alternatively, the characters could be working for a rival religion, looking to acquire the religious texts of a rival deity, or retrieve stolen ones. Depending upon the religion's approach towards knowledge, there could be other types of literature in the library. If the god supports arcane magic, then there may be magical texts buried there, as a resource for friendly magi. Or, for that matter, if this god opposes arcane magic, the priesthood could have confiscated tomes from conquered wizards, but felt them too valuable to destroy. The library could also contain vital information on any number of topics, ranging from the true name of a demon to a legendary king's favorite food. If the library is large enough, finding the necessary information can be an adventure in itself!

Most good-aligned temples also provide social services, which often require their own areas. Foremost among these are burial rites.



Again, nearly every medieval church had a graveyard for the locals, and often a mausoleum or crypt for the nobility. While a graveyard may seem like a boring place in our world, magic and the ability to contact the deceased make for a whole new playing field. When you consider the minimal amount of remains necessary for a *Resurrection* spell (and the fact that a high-level cleric can restore someone killed centuries ago), that graveyard becomes a whole lot more interesting. Imagine a quest so epic, so dramatic, that it requires the greatest hero in all the land. Now, imagine that he's been dead for nearly two hundred years, and monsters have overrun the temple at which he's entombed. Graveyards are also a handy source of antagonists - for obvious reasons, the undead tend to frequent them, and necromancers are always looking for a few good dead men.

While these areas of a temple are almost entirely universal, they are by no means the only rooms and locations one would find there. A temple to a hunter god could contain a trophy room, a war god's house could have an armory, and the treasury of a merchant god is likely to be quite impressive. If the temple still functions, then all of these rooms probably hum with bustle of everyday life (certainly an interesting proposition if the characters are uninvited guests); if not, then they might very contain occupants with more sinister intentions than the clergy.

Now, let's finally look at the physical structure itself. What does it look like? Most temples, for example, are unlikely to have extensive fortifications, unless the deity for whom it was built was extremely evil, a god of war, or simply unpopular.



But they are likely to have food storage, maybe an orchard or some fields, and a well, at least. Consider those factors carefully before sitting down to design.

Many times a game master will just state the dimensions of a room to players, but even a bare room has certain characteristics. What is it made of? If it is stone, what kind and color of stone? Is it rough hewn, or polished? Magic allows for some very interesting feats of engineering, so take advantage of it. Pillars and arches can be used to make a room more elaborate, and even the walls should be taken into account. Think of a church, or temple, or other kind of religious building. How many bare walls do you usually see? It is very likely this place had paintings, tapestries, murals, or other objects of art along the walls. Alternatively, if you want the walls to be bare, make them *conspicuously* bare - have lighter spots where tapestries once hung, empty sconces for candelabra, and other signs of ransacking and looting.

Take a moment to think about the floor as well. Are there any carpets? (Carpets, by the way, make excellent covers for pit traps.) What is the carpet made of? What color is it? Is it magical? Carpets are actually quite useful antagonists - consider Disney's *Aladdin*. There could also be tiles or mosaics. In classic videogame tradition, floor designs can give clues to puzzles later.



They could also serve to enhance the theme, such as an elaborate sunburst rendition in the great hall of a temple to the god of the dawn. Finally, you could create a mosaic of a map of the temple, with as much or as little information as you like.

Another thing to consider is what this temple sounds like. Air sounds would usually be caused by rushing wind, especially if the altitude is high, such as on a mountaintop. Air movement can also help gauge how close to the surface someone might be in an underground temple. Water, and its noises, can be useful to a group of adventurers. A pool or fountain is a likely piece of scenery in a temple, complete with any interesting properties the water might contain. A temple that delves deep enough might reach an underground lake or river, which might serve as the source of water for the temple's inhabitants (or it the source of something more sinister). Finally, what kind of sounds do the temple's inhabitants make? While mimics, slimes, and the like are usually pretty quiet, many living creatures (most, in fact) such as orcs, goblins, and dragons generally are not. Humanoids tend to get bored with sitting still for a long time; noises, whether talking, fighting, or just moving around, mark the normal activities of living creatures. Keep in mind where living things are, and what kind of sounds they'd make.

One of the less glamorous aspects of any dungeon is the olfactory one - the smell. Any place that has stagnated for a while is going to develop a very distinctive aroma. While a temple rarely develops the same overwhelming stench as a sewer, take into account the likely absence of indoor plumbing, the possible presence of herb gardens, and the fact that certain evil gods are big on human sacrifice. The point to emphasizing smells is not to make your players nauseous, but to give the characters certain clues about their surroundings. Mausoleums, gardens, kitchens, privies, and sacrificial altars each have their own distinctive smell, which can help the players develop a strong sense of location. Furthermore, creatures inhabiting a temple also have smells associated with them. Emphasize the stench of brimstone and char emanating from the demon's chamber or the zombies' rotting flesh.

Goblinoids are legendary for their odors, and it is best not to dwell on the kind of things you would find on a carrion crawler's breath. Alternately a good-aligned temple could smell of incense and other fragrances... or a temple to a nature deity could smell of pine needles and wildflowers.

Finally, the last thing to think about when designing a temple is flavor. By flavor, this does not mean the culinary value of granite, but rather the theme of the entire temple. What broad feeling do you want to generate in your players as they journey through this place? Temples can be places of great emotion and tremendous drama, and you should incorporate this into your adventures. Think about all that you've covered while designing this temple, and all the work that's been put into it. Now that it has become a living, breathing creature, what is it saying? Is this temple solemn? Is it holy? Is it joyful? Sad? Tragic? Terrifying? Hopeful? There are as many themes for a temple as there are gods to populate it. If you really want to get a good feel for a temple in your game, go to a real one. There is an advantage in that, of all the dungeon types, places of worship are the most easily accessible in the real world. How does a church compare to a synagogue, or a mosque, or any other temple? What do they have in common? What strikes you as different? What would any of these places have in common with a medieval fantasy temple? The answers might just make your next game that much more interesting.

Violated temples, in particular, are good for this. The biggest advantage a violated temple offers the DM is nothing so mundane as water supplies and a nice pantry. It has *bad vibes*. Zombies don't just pop up and start munching brains whenever somebody gets buried: otherwise cremation would be universal. They need a *reason* to rise from the grave. Similarly, evil creatures from the outer planes don't just stop by because they were in the neighborhood. They need a *reason* to leave their stygian depths for the sunlight world of humanity. Bad vibes from a rained temple give you a reason for the dungeon to develop.

Violated temples can also provide a nice twist *and* the PCs' standard mode of adventuring. For example, assume that a group of goblins have started camping out in the desecrated Temple of Diu the Bounteous.

They like the gloomy aura the place has gotten since the vestal virgins were all slaughtered in the invasion and the sacred statue of Diu got smashed to pieces. Perhaps they're also there because there's some magic widget that makes the temple useful - say, a cornucopia that gives them all the food they need. The PCs covet the gadget (or are indignant that these goblins keep raiding the nearby town, or have some other equally reasonable beef), they go in, slaughter the tribe, grab the cornucopia and go on their merry way. Some time passes, and the townsfolk are now terrorized by the undead. The priestesses of Diu are prowling the countryside, killing indiscriminately and demanding the return of the cornucopia. The PCs now have to fight their way *back in* to the temple, past swarms of zombies and skeletons, to return the magic item they took in the first place.

### SAMPLE TEMPLE

Lionheart was legendary, in its day. Renowned as the largest temple in the world to Gaiwin (pronounced GUY-win) Foebane, God of Courage, Lionheart is located at the top of Mount Gareth'Kar (Griffin's Claw, in the Priest's Tongue), and carved out of the very mountain itself. Long ago, paladins would go on yearly pilgrimages to Lionheart to offer proof of their heroism to Gaiwin, competing for the honor of his esteem, and the right to carry the Lion's Tooth, the sword blessed by Gaiwin during his covenant with the first paladin. Each year, on the summer solstice, paladins from the world over would bring evidence of their heroic deeds, and Gaiwin would read their hearts, and judge who was most worthy to carry his name. However, one fateful festival, a paladin whose name is forever lost to the histories made a grievous error. He brought as an offering to Gaiwin the magical amulet of a powerful evil wizard he had slain, not realizing that the wizard was a lich of great power, and the amulet its phylactery.

By the time the unknown paladin learned of his mistake, it was too late. The lich had risen and carefully took over the temple, killing any who learned of her existence. Finally, as a reward for giving her the temple, the evil lich killed the paladin who had brought her there. With his dying breath, he prayed to Gaiwin not to let his mistake harm the people he had sworn to protect and



though his temporal power was greatly weakened by the defiling of his temple, Gaiwin answered, sealing the lich's fate into his holiest artifact, the Lion's Tooth Sword. Since that day, the lich Achilara has been unable to leave the ruins of Lionheart; else she would have long conquered the surrounding countryside. However, with the fall of the temple, no champion has yet arisen capable of destroying her. Thus she waits, to this day, plotting her escape. Over time, she has amassed a sizable amount of like-hearted followers, who hope for a share of power once she leaves her prison.

The structure of the Lionheart temple is awe-inspiring. It is literally carved from the peak of Mount Gareth'Kar, created over several decades by the finest dwarven stonemasons in the world. Superficially, it resembles a castle, but upon closer inspection, the temple appears to seamlessly merge with the mountain, as if sprung from the peak by the hand of Gaiwin himself. Over time, the once-wide road up the mountain has worn down into a small game path, as very few beings ever travel to the place, and none leave it. A fifteen-foot wall of stone encircles the temple, with the only entrance being the main gate. The gates are rusted open, as they are no longer used or needed.

Above them, in the stone, the words "Mordiem fallous est. Kareth veritas est," which in the tongue of Gaiwin's faithful means "Death is a lie. Courage is truth."

The outer courtyard is huge, housing all of the buildings of the complex plus the grand arena where tourneys and ceremonies once took place. While the courtyard once held a beautifully tended and regal garden, nearly all of the trees and smaller plants have died, and those that are left are twisted by the evil presence here. Many of Achilara's lesser servants - those who prefer the surface instead of the indoor corridors - tend to inhabit the courtyard. The arena is a gigantic stadium, capable of seating thousands of people. When the temple was still active, any who wished could attend the great tournaments of chivalry on Gaiwin's holy days. Now that Achilara has taken over the temple, however, the arena now serves a more sinister purpose. On the rare occasions that a group of adventurers ascended Mount Gareth'Kar, hoping to put an end to Achilara's presence, the arena would most often house their doom. The lich would force the adventurers to turn upon each other, battling to the death for her amusement and that of her followers. The last one standing would be personally killed by Achilara and recruited into her Ghost Legion. The rest would be animated as lesser undead, and the skeletons and zombies they became can be found all over the temple grounds. Occasionally, one of the spirits of the failed adventurers would return as a spectre or ghost, tied to the arena in which they died. Whether they are helpful or hostile to other erstwhile heroes remains to be seen.

The main sanctuary is as impressive a structure as the arena, but is enclosed. It contains the Grand Chapel, where the rites and prayers to Gaiwin were performed. Now it is entirely abandoned, as Achilara and her servants can still feel the lingering presence of Gaiwin within its walls. For this reason, the chapel shows the least signs of degradation of any part of the temple. The tapestries that cover the back wall are dusty and faded, but still intact. The stained glass windows, each telling a story of courage and heroism from the ancient past, are unbroken and untarnished. The chapel contains seating equal to that of the arena, and the dwarven artisans who carved it engineered the walls so acoustically well that a

whisper from the altar in front can be heard clearly from the main entrance, over a hundred yards away.

The altar is a wonder in itself, built of solid and purest platinum. It is an immense block, etched on all sides with detailed scenes of legendary heroism. Standing embedded in the altar is the Lion's Tooth. Despite the aura of power emanating from the sword, the Tooth has a very modest appearance. It is a simple longsword, well-crafted, but with no special or distinguishing markings, save the words etched into the pommel, "Death is a lie."

The rest of the main sanctuary building is dedicated to study of all the disciplines Gaiwin endorses. The library once contained many great works on philosophy, religion, ethics, and other subjects dear to the hearts of Gaiwin's followers. However, it has long since been ravaged and ransacked by Achilara and her lackeys. Now, books and desks lies scattered and destroyed, and the area lies in a complete state of disorder. The sanctuary also once held a prominent martial school, devoted to training aspiring paladins in the arts of combat. Now, the training halls and classrooms are completely pillaged of anything valuable. Some of the lesser of Achilara's minions live in the academy, and most of them are not inclined to take care of the place. Finally, a set of cloisters stands near the library, used by the original clergy for quiet reflection, contemplation, prayer, and solitude. While these were originally just simple rooms, Achilara now uses them to store some of her undead underlings which require no upkeep, such as zombies, skeletons, and the like.

The other buildings on the grounds are the living quarters, which vary in elegance and opulence from simple monks' cells, all the way up to the large and ornate apartment that used to belong to the high priest, and has now been turned into Achilara's sanctum.

Underneath the sanctuary building (and in fact the entire complex), lie a series of vast catacombs. In these catacombs lie the Heroes' Walk and much of the temple's storage area. The catacombs are quite large, and it is easy to get lost in them if one does not know the layout. They are made of the same stone as the rest of the complex (and the mountain), and there is an entrance from every building on the grounds.

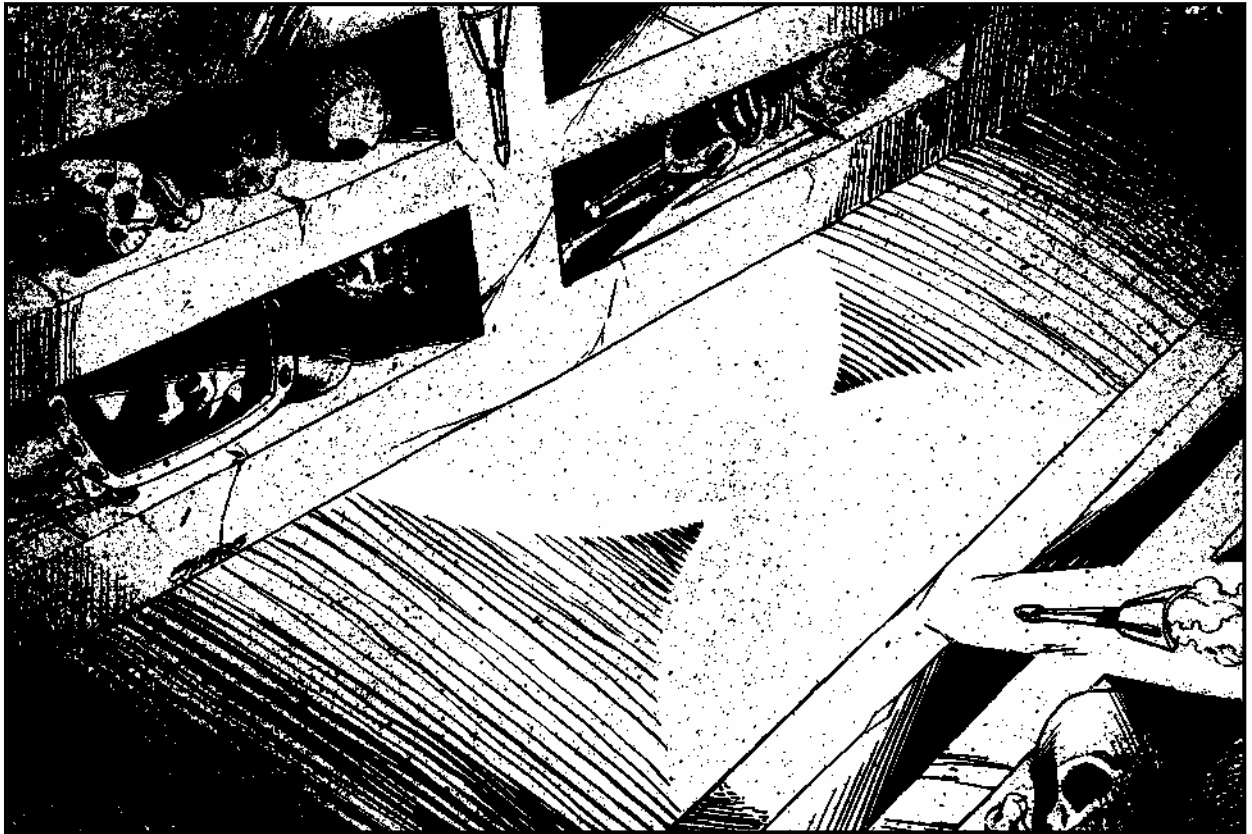
While the corridors contain regular torch sconces, the current inhabitants have no need for light, and thus they are quite empty. The tunnels themselves have acquired the stench of their new occupants, and while the catacombs were once quite well-kept, they now stink of death and decay.

The supply areas were originally used for all of the mundane provisions that keep a temple running, and while most of the foodstuffs have long since rotted away, much of the nonperishable items are still in fine condition (Achilara and her minions have no need of them). The Heroes' Walk is the final resting place for many of Gaiwin's most favored followers, and the occupants of these crypts are all legendary heroes. Many of these heroes were buried with full honors, including much of their belongings. However, Achilara has long since raided the Walk, and anything she could find of use is now most likely in her sanctum. She also finds great humor in animating the bodies of dead heroes, and many of the corpses in this mausoleum are most likely quite active, ready to add inquisitive heroes to their ranks.

## TOMBS

The main function of tombs, obviously, is storing the remains of dead creatures -specifically, creatures whose importance warrants the creation of a building or underground complex. Unfortunately this doesn't tell us much about their design. Unlike fortresses, where function normally dictates design, a tomb's features are largely determined by the religious beliefs of the builders. If the builders only want to place the body where its putrefaction won't bother anyone, then a simple hole in the ground will suffice. On the other hand, if the builders believe that the soul of the deceased moves on to another plane, and that its station there is effected by the grandeur of the burial chamber, then it would make sense for creatures who can afford it to spend as much time and money as possible in making their burial places as elaborate as possible. They will, after all, be spending a lot more time on the other side than on this one.

Give some thought to the beliefs of the builders of your tomb, since that is the major design factor. Some things to consider:



- Did they believe in an afterlife of any kind? Surprisingly, this isn't very important, since it is theoretically possible for a culture to have not believed in an afterlife but still believe in honoring the achievements of an individual in the creation of their tomb (a general for example, could be honored with a tomb to commemorate the great victories he had won). In fact, what appears to be a "tomb" might not even contain a body!
- Did they believe that you could take it with you? If so, the tomb is likely to contain as much treasure as the deceased could afford. The nature of this treasure will be affected by the type of currency the culture believes has value on "the other side". That doesn't necessarily mean gold and jewels, or even useful items. Imagine the chagrin of a party of adventurers who finally break into the treasure vault of the ancient tomb only to find it full of pickled pigs' feet, the only kind of wealth usable in that culture's afterlife.
- Did they believe you could take them with you? If the builders believed that servants should be buried with their master, in order to serve him in the afterlife, the tomb is likely to have a number of other creatures that were buried, willingly or not, at the same time as the deceased. The same applies to spouses, relatives, and even progeny in extreme cases.
- Did they believe that magic worked on the other side? If so, then magic items and spellbooks may well be included in the treasure of the tomb.
- Did they believe that the soul needed help to escape the tomb? If so, there may be passageways leading out of the tomb, their size varying with the beliefs concerning the size and shape of the soul. If they believed that the soul needed help to find the afterlife, like the ancient Egyptians, they might include maps or even guidebooks with the dead. On the other hand, if they believe that the soul needed "protection" on its journey, they might make the tomb a confusing maze in order to keep evil spirits from reaching the departed.



- Did they believe that the dead could come back to prey upon the living? If so, there may be any number of traps or wards designed not so much to keep creatures out of the tomb, but rather to keep them in. Whether these traps have any impact on a living hero depends on what form the builders expect the deceased to take upon their return.
- Did they believe that the soul is maintained in the afterlife by ongoing devotion by the living? If so, then the tomb will need to support the entrance and exit of many creatures, as well as contain a place for their worship. Whether such worship still continues will be related to the importance of the deceased and how long it has been since his or her death. In the most extreme cases, the tomb may eventually become a temple, taking on the characteristics of a temple discussed above.

With beliefs in mind, you can devise a layout that matches the builders' purposes. Within that framework, a tomb can be laid out in almost any conceivable way: as simple as a one-room cairn or as complex as a vast necropolis containing thousands of dead bodies.

Another issue which tomb-builders had to deal with was defense. The tomb needed to be safe from the depredations of tomb robbers plotting to steal either the treasures buried with the deceased, or even the deceased herself! Also, as mentioned above, in a world where the dead can be expected to rise again, the tomb needs to be designed to keep them in.

The effects of decay on a tomb are somewhat different from other buildings. The builders of a fortress expect it to be in day-to-day operation, and assume that if something wears out or breaks it will be repaired or replaced. The builders of a tomb generally assume that once the structure is sealed up, it will never be opened again.

This means that a mechanical contraption of any sort has to be designed to last the ages (and will therefore probably be both simple and durable; see *Hazards and Traps*, page 32 for more ideas).

The logical alternative to mechanical traps is magical ones, which are relatively decay-resistant. Since the creation of tombs is usually a religious activity and often reserved for the wealthy, there is plenty of clerical and sorcerous magic available at the time of the building of the tomb. The dungeon designer should use magical traps carefully, however, since they can be much harder to detect and defend against.

Unlike most buildings, a tomb can't, by definition, have any living creatures within it as long as it retains its original function. A combination of superstition, concern about traps and a healthy fear of the undead keeps most intelligent creatures from taking over tombs and making their homes there. This means that the vast majority of the monsters found in tombs are either carrion feeders, unintelligent creatures like molds and slimes... and the undead. (If the tomb is particularly well-sealed, there probably won't be anything except undead) This has the advantage of allowing the tomb to retain its normal functioning, traps and all, and still present an interesting challenge to a party of adventurers.

Because they are designed specifically to keep tomb robbers out (and sometimes hold horrendously powerful undead creatures), tombs are usually very tough dungeons, and only recommended for high level parties containing powerful clerics (or plenty of healing potions). Note that this is not intended as an exhaustive list of the myriad ways in which religion affects architecture. It is rather intended to give the dungeon designer some things to think about in designing his tomb.

## SECTION THREE:

## PLAYER

What's a dungeon without dungeoneers? Brave heroes can't be expected to scour the depths of the underworld without a little help... and DMs can't be expected to throw out monsters that their players have memorized by now either. The following two sections contain new skills, feats, and equipment based around dungeon exploration, new prestige classes for underground explorers, new spells to make the hazards below less threatening, some sample dungeons, and a list of new monsters and treasure to be found in those dark places where brave men fear to tread.

## NEW SKILLS

**CONTORTIONIST (Dex; Armor Check Penalty; Trained Only)**

Through practice, you have developed improved flexibility in all of your limbs.

**Check:** By using this skill (DC 15), you can attempt to squeeze yourself into a passageway meant for creatures one size rank lower than you. Using this skill allows you to squeeze into tight spaces while moving at your normal rate and without having to remove your armor (though doing so does improve your chances of using this skill successfully).

**Retry:** You may not attempt to retry this skill for a given passageway. If it is too narrow for you to use this skill to traverse it, you must gain a rank in Contortionist before attempting to move through the passageway again.

**Class skill:** Bard, rogue.

**INTUIT DEPTH (Wis; Trained Only)**

You have an innate ability to determine how far below the surface you are.

**Check:** By concentrating for five minutes, you can gauge your current depth beneath the earth's surface. The DM makes this check in secret. If the check is successful (DC 20), you correctly deduce your depth.

If not, you are unable to determine how far underground you have traveled.

On a roll of 1, you badly err. The DM adds or subtracts (at his option) 2d100 from the current

**Retry:** You may use this skill only once per day.

**Class skill:** Counts as a class skill for druids and all gnome and dwarf characters.

**INTUIT DISTANCE (Wis; Trained Only)**

You have an excellent eye for judging the distance between any two points.

**Check:** By concentrating for 1 minute, you can determine the distance between two points within your line of sight (DC 15). If the check fails, you cannot determine the distance. If you succeed, the DM tells you the distance in a reasonable unit of measure; you cannot determine the distance between two towns down to the nearest foot, but you can judge how many miles separate them.

You may also use this skill to determine the size and dimensions of a subterranean chamber that you cannot fully see, using echoes and telltale rock formations (DC 20).

**Retry:** You may only judge the distance between any two given points once per day.

**Special:** If you have 5 or more ranks in the Spot skill, you receive a +2 synergy bonus to Intuit Distance checks.

**Class Skill:** Barbarian, druid, ranger.

**INTUIT LANGUAGE (Wis; Trained Only)**

When trying to communicate with someone with whom you do not share a common language, you can watch his body language, listen for changes in his tone of voice, and use other subtle clues to determine the gist of what he is trying to say.

**Check:** A successful check allows you to pick up the gist of a conversation carried on in a foreign language. You must be able to see and hear the creature you wish to use this skill on. The level of comprehension is determined by the result of the skill check:

- **DC 15:** You can sense the general emotional tone of the creature. *Example: This goblin is nervous about something.*
- **DC 20:** You have a general sense of what the creature is talking about. *Example: This goblin is nervous about the well water.*
- **DC 25:** You pick up half the specific details about what a creature wants. *Example: This goblin thinks the well water is poisoned.*
- **DC 30:** You fully comprehend what a creature is trying to communicate. *Example: This goblin is trying to tell us that the orcs poisoned the well.*

**Retries:** You may only use this skill once per day per language.

**Special:** If you have 5 or more ranks of Sense Motive, you receive a +2 synergy bonus to Intuit Language.

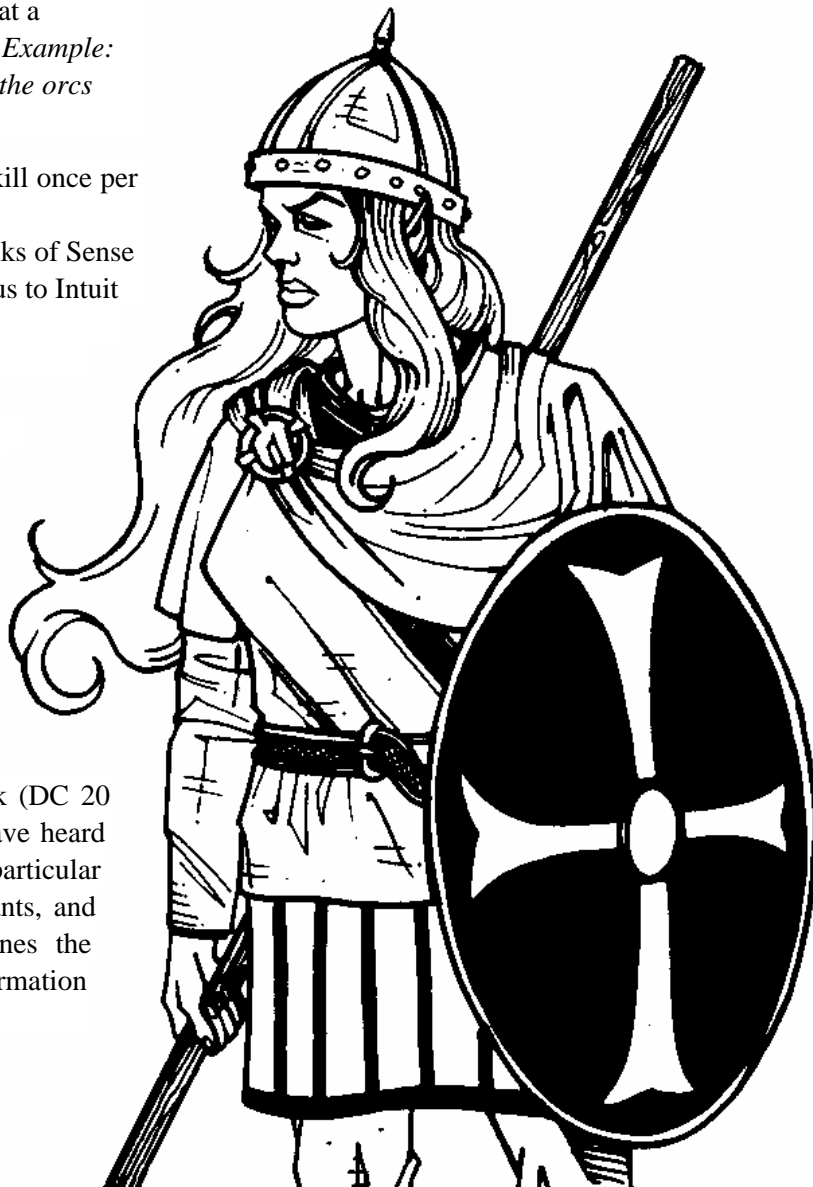
**Class Skill:** Bard, cleric, druid.

### KNOWLEDGE (Int; Trained Only)

Listed here are several new fields of knowledge that you may elect to specialize in when taking the Knowledge skill.

- **Dungeon Lore:** You have spent many hours researching the legends and tales concerning dungeons, tombs, and other areas beneath the earth. A successful check (DC 20 or DM's choice) indicates that you have heard some bit of information regarding a particular dungeon, such as its history, inhabitants, and reputed treasures. The DM determines the amount, truth, and nature of the information divulged by this skill.

- **Monster Lore:** You have spent some time studying the myths, legends, and properties that surround monsters. When facing a new monster, you may use this skill (DC 20 or DM's choice) to determine whether you have come across it in your research. If so, the DM gives you a brief description of the monster, including its name, nature (plant, outsider, undead, etc.), general level of power, and a vague idea of one or two of its special abilities.
- **Riddles:** This covers puzzles, word games, and other mental challenges. When faced with a riddle, you may use this skill (DC 20 or DM's choice) to receive a minor, helpful hint about the puzzle from the DM. This skill only applies to items expressly designed as puzzles and other riddles.



- **Subterranean Cultures:** You have studied the nature, organization, and traditions of intelligent creatures that dwell in subterranean realms. Pick one race that makes its home beneath the earth (DM's discretion). When dealing with that race, you may check this skill (DC 20 or DM's choice). On a successful test, you receive a +2 bonus to any Bluff or Diplomacy checks made with members of that race.

**Retry:** No. If you do not possess any relevant knowledge about a particular subject, tribe, or creature, you must gain a rank in this skill before trying again.

**Special:** The knowledge represented in these fields of study is highly specialized. Characters may not attempt untrained Intelligence checks to mimic the effects described here.

**Class Skill:** Bard, wizard.

### MIMIC (Cha; Trained Only)

You can reproduce animal sounds that you have heard, such as an owlbear's growling, a wolf's howl, or a bird's song. You accomplish this with your natural voice and training.

**Check:** You can trick others into believing that they have heard whatever creature you choose to mimic. You must hear the sound you want to mimic and spend at least a day practicing to master it. Attempting to mimic a creature before you practice it causes a -5 circumstance penalty to your check. You may not attempt to mimic creatures that you have

never heard before. Anyone hearing your mimicked call must make an opposed Listen check to detect it as false. If the Listen check does not beat your Mimic check, they believe they heard the creature you chose to mimic.

**Retry:** Retries do not often work. Once a target has determined that they are not hearing a real creature, any more Mimic attempts of that particular creature fail automatically against him, and all other attempts suffer a -2 penalty.

**Special:** If you have 5 or more ranks in Listen, you receive a +2 synergy bonus on Mimic checks.

**Class skill:** Bard, druid.

### SAPPER (Str)

You are trained in demolishing barricades and other fortifications.

**Check:** When attempting to smash down a door, gate, or other man-made fortification, use this skill in place of making a Strength check. You must have a sledgehammer, axe, or other large, destructive instrument to take full advantage of this skill. Otherwise, you may only make a standard Strength check.

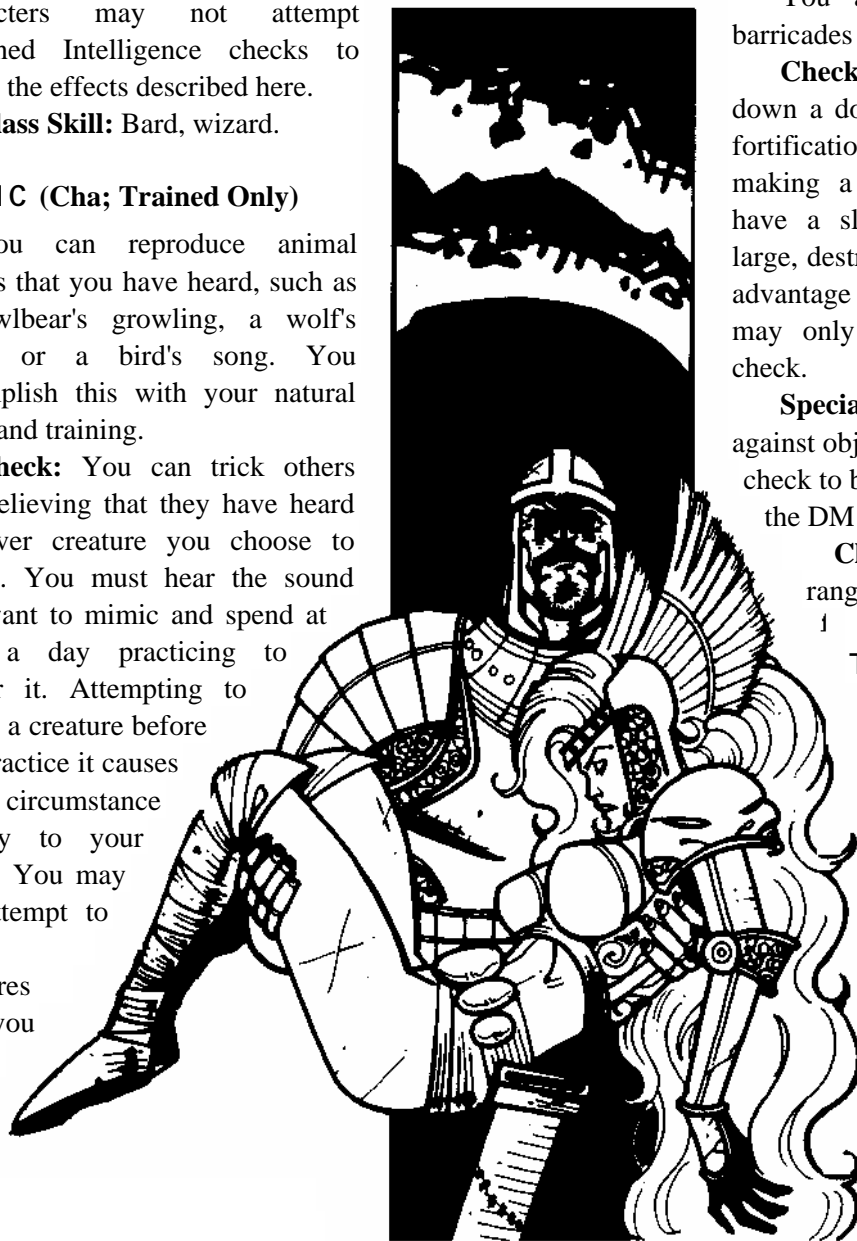
**Special:** You may only use this skill against objects that allow a Strength check to batter or break them, unless the DM explicitly rules otherwise.

**Class Skill:** Barb., fighter, ranger, paladin.

### TRAP DESIGN (Int; Trained Only)

You have a working knowledge of how to design and build simple traps.

**Check:** With an hour's worth of work and the proper materials, you can build simple traps that work on tripwires and other basic mechanical triggers.



You may not build elaborate traps that require extensive engineering knowledge and work (such as stone pressure plates) with this skill. The result of this skill check is the saving throw DC necessary to avoid this trap, to detect it using the Spot or Search skills, and to disarm using Disable Device. For traps that make an attack, such as a rigged crossbow, the traps attack bonus is +1 for every 5 full points above 10 that you roll on this skill.

On a result of less than 10, the trap fails to function when triggered. The DM should make this roll so that you do not know if the trap will work or not

When designing a trap, you must provide your DM with a diagram - even a rough one - showing how the trap works and a full list of the materials you need to create it. If the DM feels that your design is unworkable or that you lack the proper tools and materials to build it, he may either declare the attempt an automatic failure or assess a penalty to your skill check.

**Retry:** Yes, as often as you wish.

**Special:** If, in order to build the trap, you must use a Craft skill in which you have 5 or more ranks, you receive a +2 synergy bonus to Trap Design. If creating a trap which requires a trip wire or other string or rope portion, you receive a +2 synergy bonus if you have 5 or more ranks in Rope Use.

**Class skill:** Rogue.

## NEW FEATS

### BLIND CASTING [General]

You are adept at casting spells against unseen opponents. Specialized training has taught you how to target spells using non-visual cues.

**Prerequisite:** Blind-fight

**Benefit:** When casting a spell that requires an attack roll, you can reroll your miss chance roll once to see if you hit. The target of the spell must be within 15 ft of you. If the target is further away than that, you do not get the chance to reroll your miss chance.

Invisible attackers do not receive a +2 bonus to hit you in melee, and you do not lose your Dexterity bonus to Armor Class when attacked by an invisible foe. Ranged attacks from invisible foes still receive a 42 bonus and negate any bonus to Armor Class your Dexterity grants you.

You suffer only half the movement penalty for being unable to see, and darkness and poor visibility reduces your speed to only three-fourths your regular rate.

### CONTROLLED BREATHING [General]

You can hold your breath for much longer than most members of your race.

**Benefit:** You receive a +4 bonus to your Constitution checks to avoid taking damage from suffocation, smoke inhalation, or drowning. You receive a +2 bonus when making a Fortitude save against gas attacks.

### EIDETIC MEMORY [General]

You have a very sharp memory for details. You can recall anything that you have seen with almost perfect clarity, allowing you to recall the text on the page of a book or the exact size and shape of the runes inscribed on a door.

**Benefit:** You receive a +2 competence bonus to any Intelligence checks that you make to recall the details of something you have seen, a book you have read, or a conversation to which you have listened. Furthermore, you make an Intelligence check (DC 20) to recall anything you have seen with photographic clarity or to recall the series of turns necessary to return to the starting point of a maze. You may not retry this check for any given object if you fail. Also, you may not use this feat to prepare spells you have seen in spellbooks or on scrolls.

### GOLDEN TONGUE [General]

You possess excellent speaking skills and have an in-born talent for bringing people around to your point of view.

**Benefit:** You receive a +2 bonus on all Diplomacy checks. You also receive a +2 bonus on Bluff checks, except on checks for feinting in combat and creating a diversion to hide.

### GRACE UNDER PRESSURE [General]

You have very strong control over your emotions and are difficult to panic or confuse. You can remain calm in the face of grave danger and are resistant to spells and magical effects that cause panic or confusion.

**Benefit:** You receive a +2 bonus to resist magical fear and confusion. Note that this bonus also increases the DC of any attempts to Intimidate a character with this feat.

### IMPROVED ALERTNESS [General]

Your senses are so well honed that you are able to react to events slightly sooner than others, making it very difficult to catch you with your guard down.

**Prerequisite:** Alertness

**Benefit:** At the beginning of combat, you are not considered *flat-footed* against enemies in your line of sight during the round in which you rolled initiative. You must have rolled initiative in the round. Therefore, monsters that act before you roll for initiative catch you *flat-footed*. You are not *flat-footed* against enemies that you can detect. An undetected enemy who attacks you catches you *flat-footed*, even if you have already rolled for initiative.

### IMPROVED ENDURANCE [General]

You are capable of going longer than usual periods of time without food and water. Through sheer force of will and inhuman endurance, you can resist the ravages of exposure, dehydration and malnutrition.

**Benefit:** A character with this feat gains a +4 bonus to Constitution checks to resist subdual damage caused by a lack of food or water. The character becomes fatigued due to starvation or dehydration after failing two Constitution checks, rather than one.

### INCREASED CARRYING CAPACITY [General]

You are used to carrying heavy loads of equipment and can shoulder a much heavier burden than someone with your strength is normally capable of handling.

**Benefit:** You receive a +2 Strength bonus for the purposes of determining your carrying capacity. This bonus does not apply to the maximum weight you can lift over your head. You receive the bonus only if you are able to adjust the weight across your body or otherwise optimize its placement. Thus, you don't receive this bonus if you try to pick up a large rock, but you do receive it if you are loading your backpack and belt pouches with gold coins.

### KNOWLEDGEABLE [General]

You have acquired a basic understanding of a wide variety of topics during the course of your studies. While your knowledge is very broad, it is not particularly deep in areas that you have not made a conscious effort to study.

**Prerequisite:** Intelligence 13+

**Benefit:** You may make any Knowledge skill rolls as untrained Intelligence checks. However, the DC of the check is increased by 5 for all areas of knowledge. At the DM's option, the DC for an obscure area may be increased by more than 5.

### LIGHT SLEEPER [General]

The slightest noise rouses you awake. It is very difficult to sneak up on you while you sleep.

**Benefit:** While you are sleeping, you are allowed to make a Listen checks as if you were awake. If you succeed at the check, you automatically wake up. However, you must make a second Listen check to determine what caused you to awaken. While you know that some noise woke you up, you do not initially know the source or nature of the noise after waking up.

### THICK SKIN [General]

You are much more resistant to extreme temperatures.

**Benefit:** You receive a 44 bonus to Fortitude saves made to resist subdual damage from exposure to very hot (over 90° F) or very cold (below 40° F) environments.

**Special:** You must choose whether you receive the bonus against hot or cold weather when you take this feat. You may take this feat more than once in order to gain a bonus against both hot and cold conditions.

### TINKER [General]

You are a master of creating items and tools from scavenged pieces of scrap material. You can improvise tools and rely on estimates and eyeballed measurements when crafting objects.

**Benefit:** When making a Craft skill check, you do not suffer the -2 circumstance penalty for using improvised tools. Furthermore, you may construct any item with a Craft check DC of 12 or less in 1d6 hours.



However, such items are very crude and cause a -2 circumstance bonus to any die roll (including attack and damage rolls) that involves their use. Furthermore, such items always have no monetary value, owing to their extremely crude workmanship.

**Special:** You must choose a single Craft skill to apply this feat to when you select it. Thus, a character with the Craft (weaponsmith) and Craft (armorsmith) skills who chooses the Tinker feat must choose Tinker (weaponsmith) or Tinker (armorsmith) when he selects the Tinker feat. You do not need to choose a Craft skill that you have any ranks in.

## NEW MUNDANE ITEMS

### GLOBE OF TRAP SPRINGING

This six-inch diameter ball of black, springy material is often used by adventurers to test areas for pressure plates, touch-activated effects, and other hidden dangers. When thrown at a stationary object, make an attack roll against AC 10 (or an AC determined by the DM, as appropriate). The globe has a range increment of 15 ft. When the globe hits, it generates the equivalent of 50 + the thrower's Strength pounds of force (and presumably triggers whatever nasty surprises are waiting there). The globe is too springy and soft to make an effective weapon. After striking a surface, the globe rebounds back towards its user half the distance it was thrown.

Creating a globe of trap springing requires 10 gp worth of raw materials, a week's worth of work, and an Alchemy check (DC 20).

**Cost:** 30 gp **Weight:** 4 lbs.

### INSTANT ROPE

This alchemical concoction is typically sold in a large bladder that resembles a waterskin filled with a dense but light material with the consistency of pudding. When squeezed, a thick, gooey blue material oozes from the bag in a single, continuous strand. After a minute of exposure to air, the material hardens slightly and acquires the strength and flexibility of a high-quality rope. A strand of Instant Rope has 8 hit points and can be burst with a successful Strength check (DC 25).

However the, Instant Rope is not quite as supple as a normal rope and causes a -2 circumstance penalty on Use Rope checks. A strand may be automatically broken into smaller pieces right after it is squeezed from the bag, before it is exposed to air for a minute.

Two hours after the Instant Rope hardens into its usable form, the rope disintegrates into a fine, blue dust.

Each bag of Instant Rope holds enough mixture to create 300 ft. of rope. If the bag sustains 4 hit points of damage, it is torn open and the remaining mixture within hardens and is ruined.

Creating a bag of Instant Rope requires raw materials worth 25 gp, a week's worth of work, an Alchemy check (DC 25), and a Craft (leatherworking) check (DC 10).

**Cost:** 75 gp **Weight:** 5 lb.

### INSTANT GLUE

A small jar holds 8 applications of this powerful bonding substance, which appears as a thick, white paste that dries six seconds after it is exposed to air. Each application can cover a one square foot.

Glue can bond any two items together, and is often used to hold doors shut, secure objects in place, or trap enemies. If used to bond two objects, anyone wishing to separate them must make a Strength check (DC 15).



If used to hold a door in place or to otherwise augment any item that already has a listed Strength DC for the purposes of opening or moving the item, apply a -2 circumstance penalty to anyone trying to move or open the object. If no DC is listed, assume it is 10. If the glue is spread across a floor, apply a -2 Dexterity penalty to anyone walking through or in the glued area; anyone spending a round in the same spot is stuck in place and must make a Strength check (DC 10) to move. The glue does not function in this manner if spread across a sand or dirt covered area. In this case, the glue simply sticks dirt to anyone walking across it and does not impede movement. Removing any object stuck directly to a creature does not have a natural armor class bonus causes 1d4 points of subdual damage to the creature. If two creatures are stuck together, both take damage (if applicable).

In an emergency, the glue can be used to close the wounds of anyone below 0 hit points. Doing so inflicts 1d4 points of damage on to the patient but automatically stabilizes him and prevents further hit point loss. Removing the glue after such a treatment requires a Heal check (DC 20) or the patient suffers an additional 1d4 points of damage.

If a jar of Glue is left open, 1d6 applications of the glue solidify, leaving the remaining glue trapped beneath a hardened layer.

Creating a pot of Instant Glue that holds 8 applications requires raw materials worth 40 gp, one week of work, and an Alchemy skill check (DC 25).

**Cost:** 120 gp **Weight:** 2 lbs.



## TOOL STAFF

The tool staff resembles a standard five-foot long wooden staff, with one important difference: both ends of the staff feature two-inch deep octagonal sockets. Extensions, tools, and other devices designed to work with the tool staff fit into these sockets and allow the tool staff to fulfill a wide variety of roles. The standard staff comes with the following attachments:

- **Extension:** This five-foot long wooden rod has an octagonal socket on one end and a metal stud on the other. This piece extends the tool staff's length by five feet, and multiple extensions may be used together. However, if the tool staff is used for any activity that requires a Dexterity check, impose a -2 circumstance penalty for each extension used on the tool staff. An extended tool staff is awkward and difficult to work with. Also, if the tool staff is used as a weapon each extension imposes a -1 penalty to hit.
- **Hook:** This simple metal hook may be used to carry a lantern or grab a small item. Grabbing an item with the tool staff requires a Dex check (DC 15 or as determined by the DM). The hook is often used with one or more extensions.
- **Mirror:** This tool is mounted on a pivot. In addition, a small wooden handle extends three feet from the back of the mirror, allowing the user to peek around corners and move the mirror back and forth, scanning the area ahead for dangers.
- **Spearhead:** Attaching this to the tool staff transforms it into a short spear or it may be used with the extension piece to create a longspear. The spearhead often comes loose in battle. On any attack roll of 3 or less, the spearhead comes loose from the socket.
- **Torch Bracket:** This metal mounting bracket is designed to hold a standard torch. The torch bracket is most often used to shed light around corners, deliver torch attacks against monsters, or set aflame items beyond reach. If used to deliver attacks, the bracket comes loose on an unmodified attack roll of 3 or less.

**Cost** 40 gp **Weight:** 4 lbs.

## NEW SPELLS

### CLOAKED SPHERE OP RADIANCE

Evocation [Light]

**Level:** Brd 3, Clr 4, Sor/Wiz 3

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Touch

**Target:** Object touched

**Duration:** 10 minutes/level

**Saving Throw:** None

**Spell Resistance:** No

This spell functions exactly like the *daylight* spell, but with one important difference. The 60-foot radius of light produced by the spell is cloaked in a one-foot thick shell of *darkness*. Thus, creatures just outside of the spell's area of effect see a large globe of darkness. This shell functions much like the *darkness* spell. Regular light, such as that from torches, lanterns, and even sunlight, cannot penetrate the shell of darkness.

A *daylight* spell cast by a cleric strips away the shell of darkness, but the light effect within is kept intact.

This spell is often used by adventurers who wish to move about at night or in dungeons in secret. The interior light lets them see their immediate surroundings, but the shell of darkness covers up their approach.

### DETECT PRECIOUS METALS

Divination

**Level:** Brd 0, Sor/Wiz 0

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** 60 ft

**Area:** Quarter-circle emanating from the caster to the extreme of the range

**Duration:** Concentration, up to 5 minutes/level (D)

**Saving Throw:** None

**Spell Resistance:** No

You can detect concentrations of precious metals. The amount of information revealed depends on how long you study a particular area or object

**1st Round:** Presence of precious metals.

**2nd Round:** Amount of precious metal in area of effect.

**3rd Round:** Location and type of each concentration of precious metals.

**Each additional round:** Purity of individual amounts of precious metals.

### DISTANT LIGHT

Evocation [Light]

**Level:** Brd 3, Clr 4, Sor/Wiz 3

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Medium (100 ft + 10 ft/level)

**Duration:** 10 minutes/level

**Saving Throw:** None

**Spell Resistance:** No

Except for its range, this spell functions exactly as the *daylight* spell.

### FORCEFUL FOOTFALLS

Conjuration (Creation)

**Level:** Brd 2, Sor/Wiz 2

**Components:** V, S, M

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Close (25 ft. + 5 ft/2 levels)

**Duration:** 10 minutes/level

**Saving Throw:** None

**Spell Resistance:** No

*Forceful footfalls* is commonly used to trigger traps and test dungeon and cavern floors, ensuring that they can handle the weight of an adventurer. This spell conjures a pair of spectral boots into existence. The boots move at the direction of the caster, and have a movement rate of 30 ft/round. They exert pressure on the ground equivalent to the footfall of a 200 lb. person. Thus, if the boots walk over a trap triggered by weight, the boots may cause the trap to activate. If the boots trigger a pit trap or slide, they fall into it, and if this brings them beyond the spell's range the spell immediately ends.

The boots may not be used to attack in any way; they can only understand commands that involve movement to a given point at a requested rate of movement. The caster delivers commands to the boots telepathically, and need not be able to see the boots to command them, though the boots are incapable of communicating anything about their surroundings to the caster.

The boots have 10 hp, are AC 12, and have damage reduction 5/+1. If the boots are reduced to 0 or fewer hp, the spell immediately ends.

*Arcane Material Components:* A single leather boot worn by the caster for at least one day.

### SPHERE OF PURE AIR

Conjuration (Creation)

**Level:** Drd 2, Rgr 3, Sor/Wiz 3

**Components:** V, S

**Casting time:** 1 action

**Range:** Long (400ft. + 40 ft/level)

**Area:** 15 ft. radius emanation centered on a creature, object, or point in space

**Duration:** 1 minute/level

**Saving Throw:** None

**Spell Resistance:** No

This spell produces a 15-foot radius sphere of fresh, pure air. The spell counters any gas or scent based attacks made within its areas. It also provides an unlimited supply of fresh air within its area of effect for the duration of the spell.

Creatures with the scent special ability cannot detect creatures who stand within the *sphere of pure air* for the duration of the spell, and those within the spell's area do not leave behind a trail of scent.

This spell is ineffective if cast underwater or within any other liquid medium. It does not project a force capable of preventing a liquid from filling in the spell's area of effect. However, the spell still counters any water-borne poisons within its area of effect when cast underwater.

### STONETELL

Divination

**Level:** Drd 2, Rgr 3

**Components:** V, S, M

**Casting Time:** 1 full round

**Range:** Personal

**Target:** One dungeon wall

**Duration:** Instantaneous

**Saving Throw:** None Spell

**Resistance:** No

Stonetell allows a druid or ranger to commune with the spirits of earth and pose questions to them.

Upon casting this spell, the druid or ranger sends out a magical call to any minor earth spirits in the area, such as a xorn or earth elemental. The spirit that appears before the druid must first be placated with an offering of precious metals worth at least 25 gp. The druid is then free to ask the summoned spirit up to three questions about the surrounding dungeon or cavern. The druid must make a Diplomacy check (DC 10) with a +1 circumstance bonus for every full 25 gp in metals given to the spirit. Success indicates that the spirit has useful information. The DM must determine exactly what the spirit knows, based on the current game situation and the subject the druid is asking about. In general, summoned spirits only have knowledge of the dungeon level on which the druid casts this spell. The spirits may not always have an answer for the druid, especially if he asks about something they could not possibly have any knowledge about.

This spell has no effect if it is cast above ground. The spirits of the earth cannot hear the druid's call and thus are incapable of answering.

### TENNIT'S TEMPORAL FOLD

Transmutation

**Level:** Sor/Wiz 9, Trickery 9

**Components:** V, S, M

**Casting Time:** 1 round

**Range:** N/A

**Area:** N/A

**Duration:** See text

**Saving Throw:** None

**Spell Resistance:** No

This spell creates an "anchor" in time at the moment it is cast; this causes the next five minutes (not the last five minutes) to happen twice. Whatever you do during the first five minutes of time does not affect what happens during the second five minutes of time; thus, any doors opened, traps triggered, discussions had, weapons broken, or any other effect at all will "unhappen" at the end of the first five-minute span. However, you (and only you) will remember what happened during that five-minute span, and be able to plan accordingly. This can be invaluable when testing dangerous scrolls, potions, magical items, or traversing a dangerous trap.

*Arcane Material Component:* An hourglass.

## NEW PRESTIGE CLASSES

### CRUSADER

The evil denizens of the subterranean realms see those who dwell on the surface as little more than easy targets in their unending war against the forces of good. Many communities have known the terror of a raid launched from the bowels of the earth. Hideous monsters and fiendish humanoids in the service of dark gods swoop down on defenseless villages, seeking plunder, treasure, and prisoners to serve as slaves, sacrifices, or worse.

Amongst the militarized clergy of the gods of good, some initiates hear the call to take the fight to the enemy. These dedicated champions of good, known as crusaders, journey into the depths with the blessings of the gods, granted divine strength to smite the enemies of light and root out the threat they pose at their source.

Crusaders are relentless warriors who fear no evil. Unlike paladins, crusaders have chosen one particular evil race to oppose, typically a one native to the passages and caverns beneath the earth. Many of them have lost loved ones and friends to raids launched from the deepest depths of dungeons, and the fires of vengeance spur them onward.

**Hit Die:** d8

#### Requirements

To become a crusader, a character must meet the following requirements:

**Base Attack Bonus:** +5 or divine spell caster level 5

**Knowledge (religion):** 8 ranks

**Feat:** Weapon Focus (any)

**Special:** Swear an oath of vengeance in patron

god's name to avenge some wrong committed against either that god or his followers or against the character's family, friends, or patron.

#### Class Skills

The crusader class skills (and the key ability for each) are Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (arcana) (Int), Knowledge (subterranean cultures) (Int), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Scry (Int), Spellcraft (Int).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

#### Class Features

All of the following are class features of the crusader prestige class.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Crusaders are skilled in the use of all simple weapons. They are proficient with all armor and shields.

**Spell Ability:** A crusader advances his divine spell casting level by one for each level of crusader gained. Thus, a 5th-level cleric/5th-level crusader prepares and casts spells as if he is a 10th-level cleric. An 8th-level paladin/4th-level crusader casts spells as a 12th-level paladin. A 9th-level druid/9th-level crusader casts spells as a 18th level druid.

**Chosen Enemy Bonus:** At 1st level, a crusader must choose a monster race as his chosen enemy. Good crusaders must choose an evil race. Evil and neutral crusaders are allowed to choose any race, even their own or one that shares their alignment.

Against his chosen enemy, a crusader receives a bonus to attack rolls and the DC necessary to resist his divine spells. This bonus is +1 at 1st level, and rises to +2 at 3rd level, +3 at 5th level, and +4 at 7th level.

#### CRUSADER ADVANCEMENT TABLE

Level	Attack	Fort	Ref	Will	Special
1	+0	+2	+0	+2	Chosen Enemy Bonus +1
2	+1	+3	+0	+3	Bonus languages
3	+2	+3	+1	+3	Chosen Enemy Bonus +2
4	+3	+4	+1	+4	Find path
5	+3	+4	+1	+4	Chosen Enemy Bonus +3
6	+4	+5	+2	+5	Improved spontaneous casting
7	+5	+5	+2	+5	Chosen Enemy Bonus +4
8	+6	+6	+2	+6	Spells
9	+6	+6	+3	+6	Chosen Enemy Bonus +5
10	+7	+7	+3	+7	Turn chosen enemy





**Bonus Languages:** Many crusaders journey into foreign lands or alien environments to destroy their chosen foe. At 2nd level, a crusader gains the ability to speak three new languages, as chosen by the crusader. One of these languages must be the chosen enemy's, unless the crusader already knows it.

**Find the Path:** The crusader may cast the spell *find the path* once per day. However, the spell may only be used to find the closest temple dedicated to the crusader's patron deity. The crusader need not know the location or even suspect the existence of the temple, and he has no option when casting this spell to specify a particular temple or other location.

**Improved spontaneous Casting:** At 6th level, the crusader has proven himself so dedicated to his cause that his deity is willing to grant him powers normally forbidden to his followers. Good clerics are now allowed to use their spontaneous casting ability to use *inflict* spells on his chosen enemy. Evil clerics may now spontaneously cast *cure* spells on himself (and only himself).

Druids and paladins do not acquire this ability, as neither has access to the spontaneous casting ability. However, paladins or druids with levels in cleric may use this ability with their cleric spells.

**Spells:** To further provide for their champions, the gods provide them with the ability to cast a minor but useful spell at will. Followers of good deities may cast a single *daylight* spell at will three times per day. Minions of evil deities are granted the ability to cast *darkness* three times per day. Neutral crusaders may cast either *darkness* or *daylight* three times per day. They are free to choose whichever spell to use each time they activate this ability. Both of these effects operate as their cleric spell list versions and are cast at the character's crusader level.

**Turn Chosen Enemy:** A crusader who attains 10th level is a living embodiment of his deity's righteous fury against the crusader's chosen enemy. The crusader may now use the cleric class's turning ability against his chosen enemy.



The crusader turns his chosen enemy as a 10th-level cleric, and may use this ability three times plus his Charisma modifier per day.

This ability does not stack with a paladin's or cleric's turning ability. Neither of those classes may use turning attempts granted by that class against a chosen enemy.

## DEMOLITIONIST

The demolitionist specializes in creating explosive devices. Masters of alchemy, magic, and item creation, the demolitionist combines those three arts to produce fearsome concoctions capable of blasting enemies to pieces and shattering the stoutest defensive wall. While demolitionists are prized for their skills, their work is extremely dangerous, and few cities allow them to practice their research and work within the town walls.

Demolitionists study not only the art of producing explosives but methods to effectively apply them. Thus, demolitionists also branch out into the manufacture and use of primitive firearms, research improvements and modifications of their basic bomb design, and investigate of how to most effectively apply their explosives against fortified structures.

**Hit Die:** d4

### Requirements

To become a demolitionist, a character must meet the following requirements:

**Alchemy:** 8 ranks

**Craft (blacksmith or metalworking):** 8 ranks

**Feat** Craft Wondrous Item

**Special:** Arcane spell caster level 3

### Class Skills

The demolitionist class skills (and the key ability for each) are Alchemy (Int), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Knowledge (any) (Int), and Profession (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

### Class Features

All of the following are class features of the demolitionist prestige class.

#### Weapon and Armor Proficiency:

Demolitionists are proficient with the same set of weapons available to the wizard class. They are proficient with light armor, but not shields. Many demolitionists don protective gear when working with their creations, and thus gain the ability to work effectively while wearing light armor.

**Spell Ability:** A demolitionist advances his arcane spell casting level by one for each level of demolitionist gained. Thus, a 5th-level wizard/3rd-level demolitionist prepares and casts spells as if he were an 8th-level wizard.

**Produce Explosives:** The demolitionist can produce bombs capable of dealing explosive damage to targets. The maximum damage a demolitionist's bombs can deal is determined by his level. At 1st level, the bombs may do up to 2d6 points of damage. This increases to 3d6 at 4th level, 4d6 at 7th level, and 5d6 at 10th level. Creating a bomb requires one full, uninterrupted day of work, an Alchemy skill check (DC 20), and 50 gp worth of materials for each d6 of damage the bomb inflicts.

No proficiency is required to use a demolitionist's explosives. A bomb must be lit, which requires a standard action, before it can be thrown.

## DEMOLITIONIST ADVANCEMENT TABLE

Level	Attack	Fort	Ref	Will	Special
1	+0	+0	+2	+2	Produce explosives (2d6)
2	+1	+0	+3	+3	Time delay explosives
3	+1	+1	+3	+3	Craft flash bombs
4	+2	+1	+4	+4	Produce explosives (3d6)
5	+2	+1	+4	+4	Craft musket
6	+3	+2	+5	+5	Exotic Weapon proficiency (firearms)
7	+3	+2	+5	+5	Produce explosives (4d6)
8	+4	+2	+6	+6	Master of destruction
9	+4	+3	+6	+6	Uncanny dodge
10	+5	+3	+7	+7	Produce explosives (5d6)



Using a bomb counts as a ranged touch attack. On a miss, roll for deviation as per the grenade-like weapon rules. The bomb deals damage to everything within its blast radius. Those caught within a bomb blast must make a Reflex save (DC 20) to take half damage.

Each bomb weighs 1 lb., has a blast radius at the time of its creation, and a 10 ft. range increment. The demolitionist may create bombs with a blast radius from 0 to 5 ft. plus his demolitionist level.

**Time Delay Explosives:** At 2nd level, a demolitionist gains the ability to craft simple fuses for his bombs. The demolitionist may choose to delay the detonation of a bomb by up to five minutes times his demolitionist level.



This delay must be chosen at the time the bomb's fuse is lit. Disabling the bomb's fuse requires no skill check (one must only snuff out the fuse).

**Craft Flash Bombs:** At 3rd level, a demolitionist masters the ability to create bombs that produce a bright flash of light. These bombs operate exactly like the demolitionist's standard bombs. However, rather than dealing damage these bombs blind those caught in its blast radius who fail a Reflex save (DC 20) for 2d6 rounds. These bombs cost 150 gp to produce and otherwise follow the same rules for regular bomb production and use. A demolitionist may use a time delay fuse with a flash bomb, if so desired.

**Craft Musket:** The demolitionist gains the ability to craft firearms. This process takes two weeks of uninterrupted work and requires a successful craft (metalworking or blacksmith) skill check (DC 20) and 250 gp in raw materials to make a musket, 125 gp to produce a pistol. The demolitionist may also craft 10 bullets for either a musket or pistol with one day of work, a successful Craft (metalworking or blacksmith) check (DC 15) and 2 gp worth of materials. The rules for pistols and muskets are on page 162-163 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

**Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms):** Having mastered the ability to produce firearms, the demolitionist acquires the ability to effectively use them through an erratic process of trial and error. The demolitionist gains proficiency with both muskets and pistols.

**Master of Destruction:** The demolitionist's knowledge of explosives allow him to optimally place them when setting charges to demolish a structure or natural terrain feature, including buildings, walls, cave tunnels, and so forth. When using his explosives to damage such objects, the demolitionist doubles the number of dice he rolls for damage.

**Uncanny Dodge:** Working with dangerous, explosive mixtures is deadly work. Tempered by experience and catastrophic failures, the demolitionist's reflexes are honed to a keen edge. When making a Reflex saving throw against any area of effect attack, the demolitionist takes no damage on a successful save.

## SHOCK TROOPER

The deep mine complexes and tunnels dug by dwarves and gnomes are prime targets for many monsters that lurk deep within the earth. While goblin and orc attacks are troubling, worse still is the threat posed by such horrid monsters as purple worms, umber hulks, and other gigantic subterranean predators. Many experienced dwarven miners have at least one tale to spin of a carrion crawler or other such beast running loose in the lower mines, requiring a rapid muster and assault to slay the creature before it could wreak too much havoc.

Shock troopers serve as emergency shock troops in a dwarf hold or gnome colony. They are trained to rapidly respond to threats and deal tremendous amounts of damage to them as quickly as possible. The faster a threat such as a purple worm is dealt with, the less chance it has of bursting into the community's living or food storage areas.

**Hit Die:** d10

### Requirements

To become a shock trooper, a character must meet the following requirements:

**Base Attack Bonus:** +5

**Race:** Dwarf or gnome

**Feats:** Power Attack, Quick Draw, Run

### Class Skills

The shock trooper class skills (and the key ability for each) are Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Intuit Direction (Wis), Jump (Str), Listen (Wis), Tumble (Dex).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

### Class Features

All of the following are class features of the shock trooper prestige class.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Shock troopers are proficient with all simple and martial weapons. They are proficient with light and medium armor and shields.

**Fast Movement:** When wearing no armor, light armor, or medium armor, the shock trooper moves at a faster speed than normal for his race. His base movement increases by 10 ft. This increased base speed is also used to calculate his speed when running or using a double move action. This does not stack with the barbarian's fast movement ability.

**Bonus Damage:** The shock trooper trains extensively on the weaknesses and anatomy of large creatures. When facing a creature that is size large or bigger, the shock trooper may take a full round action to deal an attack that does extra damage to his target. At 2nd level, this attack does +1d6 damage. This bonus rises to 2d6 at 4th level, 3d6 at 6th level, and 4d6 at 8th level. This damage does not stack with sneak attack damage and does not increase in the case of a critical hit.

**Improved Aid Another:** Shock troopers are taught how to maximize their ability to draw attacks and confuse their opponents, allowing their comrades a better chance to strike at an enemy. When facing creatures of size large or higher, the shock trooper may grant an ally a +4 circumstance bonus to attacks made against a large or bigger creature when using the aid another action.

**Focused Attack:** Shock troopers know that a single well-timed blow is deadlier than a hundred poorly planned ones.

## SHOCK TROOPER ADVANCEMENT TABLE

Level	Attack	Fort	Ref	Will	Special
1	+1	+2	+0	+0	Fast movement
2	+2	+3	+0	+0	Bonus damage (1d6)
3	+3	+3	+1	+1	Improved aid another
4	+4	+4	+1	+1	Bonus damage (2d6)
5	+5	+4	+1	+1	Focused attack
6	+6	+5	+2	+2	Bonus damage (3d6)
7	+7	+5	+2	+2	Improved dodge
8	+8	+6	+2	+2	Bonus damage (4d6)
9	+9	+6	+3	+3	Into the breach
10	+10	+7	+3	+3	Improved critical



Against large or bigger opponents, the shock trooper may take a full round action to watch his opponents movements and plan a perfect strike against him. On the round immediately after using this ability, the shock trooper gains a +4 circumstance bonus to all of his attacks against the creature he observed. This ability may be combined with the shock trooper's bonus damage ability.



**Improved Dodge:** Shock troopers learn not only how to destroy large monsters, but also how to avoid their blows. The shock trooper gains a +2 dodge bonus to his AC against all creatures of size large or higher.

**Into the Breach:** Many of the creatures that a shock trooper is expected to face have the ability to swallow dwarves and gnomes whole. Shock troopers learn how to make the best of this unfortunate situation. When swallowed by any creature, a shock trooper is capable of using any size weapon while trapped in the creature and attacks with a +2 circumstance bonus. It is not unknown for the braver (or crazier) shock troopers to launch themselves into a gigantic monster's jaws and climb down into its gullet.

**Improved Critical:** At 10th level, the shock trooper has achieved a tremendous mastery of fighting large monsters. No matter what weapon he uses, he is considered to have the Improved Critical feat with that weapon when fighting monster of size large or higher, if the shock trooper already has Improved Critical with his weapon, this ability stacks with the feat.

## TREASURE HUNTER

The treasure hunter specializes in tracking down legendary treasures and claiming them as her own. Much of a treasure hunter's work takes place in libraries and other centers of learning rather than moldy old tombs. Treasure hunters are not simple opportunists looking to make a quick fortune. Through careful research and investigation, they uncover the location of fabulous treasures long though lost. Many of them pursue their vocation as a personal crusade to recover and study artifacts of ancient, forgotten cultures. A treasure hunter is equally at ease discussing history with a sage as she is darting through an ancient tomb.

Treasure hunters emphasize detecting and avoiding traps. They have a sixth sense for danger, as their study of and experience with traps allows them to intuit the location and nature of them with little more than a glance of their surroundings.

**Hit Die:** d6

### Requirements

To become a treasure hunter, a character must meet the following requirements:

**Disable Device:** 8 ranks  
**Search:** 8 ranks  
**Knowledge (ancient history):** 4 ranks  
**Feat:** Lightning Reflexes

**Class Skills**

The treasure hunter's class skills (and the key ability for each) are Appraise (Int), Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Decipher Script (Int), Disable Device (Int), Escape Artist (Dex), Hide (Dex), Jump (Str), Knowledge (ancient history) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Open Lock (Dex), Search (Int), Spot (Wis), Tumble (Dex), Use Magic Device (Cha), Use Rope (Dex).

Skill Points at Each Level: 8 + Int modifier.

**Class Features**

All of the following are class features of the treasure hunter prestige class.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Treasure hunters are proficient with light armor, but not shields. They are proficient with the same set of weapons that the rogue class is proficient with.

**Danger Sense:** The treasure hunter's experience with traps, study of tombs and treasure vaults, and sixth sense for danger give her the ability to intuitively detect traps. When a treasure hunter moves within 10 ft. of a trap, the DM should make a secret Spot check with DC equal to DC of Search check needed to discover the trap. If the check succeeds, the treasure hunter has an intuitive sense that a trap is near. The DM does not provide any more information to the player other than that the treasure hunter has a feeling that a trap is near. The treasure hunter gains a +1 bonus to this check at 4th level and a +2 bonus at 7th level.

**Treasure Lore:** The treasure hunter's research into legends and lore concerning lost treasures and artifacts gives her a broad range of knowledge on the topic. This ability is identical to the bard's bardic knowledge ability. However, the treasure hunter may only use this ability in relation to magic items and treasure. The treasure hunter also gains a +2 competence bonus on all Appraise checks.

**Improved Poison Save:** Poison is a constant danger to treasure hunters, as it can transform even the simplest trap into a deadly threat. Treasure hunters ingest small amounts of several types of poison in order to build a natural resistance to venom. They gain a +1 bonus to all Fortitude saves made to resist poison. This bonus increases to +2 at 6th level.

**Uncanny Dodge:** A treasure hunter develops phenomenal reflexes that allow her to react to the danger posed by traps. At 2nd level the treasure hunter gains a +1 bonus to Reflex saves against traps and a +1 dodge AC bonus against attacks by traps. This bonus rises to +2 at level 5 and +3 at level 8.

**Improved Evasion:** At 9th level, the treasure hunter's reflexes are so well honed that on a failed Reflex save against any damaging effect, she takes only half-damage. On a successful save, she takes no damage.

**Uncanny Danger Sense:** When a treasure hunter reaches 10th level, her intuitive sense for danger and well-honed reflexes allow her to avoid most traps. Her danger sense bonus rises to +4. In addition, she takes only half damage from traps that deal damage or that causes ability score drain or damage.

**TREASURE HUNTER ADVANCEMENT TABLE**

Level	Attack	Fort	Ref	Will	Special
1	+0	+0	+2	+0	Danger sense, Treasure lore
2	+1	+0	+3	+0	Uncanny dodge+1
3	+2	+1	+3	+1	Improved poison save +1
4	+3	+1	+4	+1	Danger sense+1
5	+3	+1	+4	+1	Uncanny dodge+2
6	+4	+2	+5	+2	Improved poison save +2
7	+5	+2	+5	+2	Danger sense+2
8	+6	+2	+6	+2	Uncanny dodge+3
9	+6	+3	+6	+3	Improved evasion
10	+7	+3	+7	+3	Uncanny danger sense 1



## SECTION FOUR:

# DUNGEON MASTER

The following information is intended for Dungeon Masters only. Players who wish to be surprised by the threats and rewards contained herein should stop reading now.

## NEW MONSTERS

### FLOOR TRAPPER

#### Large Aberration

**Hit Dice:** 6d8+18 (45 hp)

**Initiative:** +1 (Dex)

**Speed:** 10 ft.

**AC:** 14 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +5 natural hide, upper body) 10 (lower body)

**Attacks:** Grab +7 melee

**Damage:** Grab 2d8+4

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft. / 5 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Crush attack

**Special Qualities:** Camouflage, darkvision 60 ft.

**Saves:** Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +5

**Abilities:** Str 19, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 14

**Skills:** Listen +11, Spot +11

**Climate/Terrain:** Any subterranean

**Organization:** Solitary

**Challenge Rating:** 2

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Neutral

**Advancement Range:** 7-12 HD (Large); 12-18 HD (Huge)

The floor trapper is a peculiar creature that lurks in dungeons, lying in wait to grab and smother its prey. This creature is a flat, 2-inch thick, 10-foot radius disk. Its upper surface is covered with a thick, tough hide that has the consistency and appearance of rough stone. Its underside is pale white, pulpy flesh studded with dozens of stubby legs. The floor trapper hunts by positioning itself in a well-traveled cavern.

When a medium-size or smaller creature walks over the trapper, it wraps itself around its victim and begins to crush it. The initial grab attack inflicts 2d8+4 points of damage. Creatures that survive the first attack take 1d6+4 points per round while trapped in the creature. Those caught within a floor trapper may escape by winning an opposed Strength check against the trapper's 19 Str. The creature may be freed by those outside of the trapper if they succeed in an opposed Strength check against the trapper.

**Camouflage (Ex):** The trapper's upper body is easily mistaken for a plain stretch of rocky cavern floor. Any creature that approaches within 30 feet of the trapper must make a Spot check (DC 20) to notice the creature. Those actively looking for a trapper can note the slightly moist, glistening look that marks the creature's upper body. Characters who specifically look for this telltale sign of a trapper notice one on a Spot check (DC 15).

**Crush (Ex):** Once the trapper hits with its first attack, it automatically crushes its victim for 1d6+4 points per round until the victim escapes.

After a trapper's initial attack, the thing is somewhat defenseless unless its victim cannot move off of the trapper. Many trappers prefer to lurk in narrow passages, where a victim has less of an opportunity to escape their grasp.

### GIANT HELLGRAMMITE

#### Large Magical Beast

**HD:** 6d8 +10 (34)

**Initiative:** +1 (Dex)

**Speed:** Swim 30 ft.

**AC:** 17 (-1 Size, +1 Dex, +7 natural)

**Attacks:** Bite + 5 melee

**Damage:** 3d6 + 4

**Face/Reach:** 2 ft by 10 ft/10 ft



**Qualities:** Blindsight (Ex) Saves: Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +0

**Abilities:** Str 17, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 2, Wis 2, Cha 2

**Skills:** Swim +5

**Climate/Terrain:** Any freshwater aquatic

**Organization:** Solitary CR: 5

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Always neutral

**Advancement:** 12d8 + 20 (Large)

The giant hellgrammite is actually a larval stage of the giant winged insect known as the dobsonfly; however, the adult form of the creature is utterly harmless, living only long enough to mate and lay its eggs before dying. It is the larva which poses the true danger to adventurers; it can cut a man in half with its powerful jaws.

**Combat**

The hellgrammite will drift in bodies of water, camouflaging itself by submerging itself among weeds, leaves, and other aquatic debris; when it feels the vibrations in the water of a prey's approach, it will strike rapidly, attempting to dismember its prey with a strike from its powerful pincer-like jaws. If the initial strike fails, it will generally attempt to hide again, only fighting if it cannot escape.

**HOARD RAIDER**

**Large Magical Beast**

**HD:** 6d8 + 20 (44)

**Initiative:** +8 (Improved Initiative feat + Dex bonus)

**Speed:** 40 ft., fly 30 ft. (poor)

**AC:** 18 (-1 size, +4 Dex, +5 natural)

**Attacks:** 2 Claws +8 melee, Bite +6 melee

**Damage:** Claw 1d8+2, Bite 1d10+2

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft/10 ft

**Special Abilities:** Sense Treasure (Ex)

**Special Qualities:** Blindsight (Ex), Regeneration (Ex), Scent (Ex)

**Saves:** Fort +2, Ref +10, Will +0

**Abilities:** Str 15, Dex 18, Con 13, Int 3, Wis 11, Cha 3

**Skills:** Balance +7, Climb +3, Jump +3, Swim +2

**Feats:** Lightning Reflexes, Multiattack, Improved Initiative

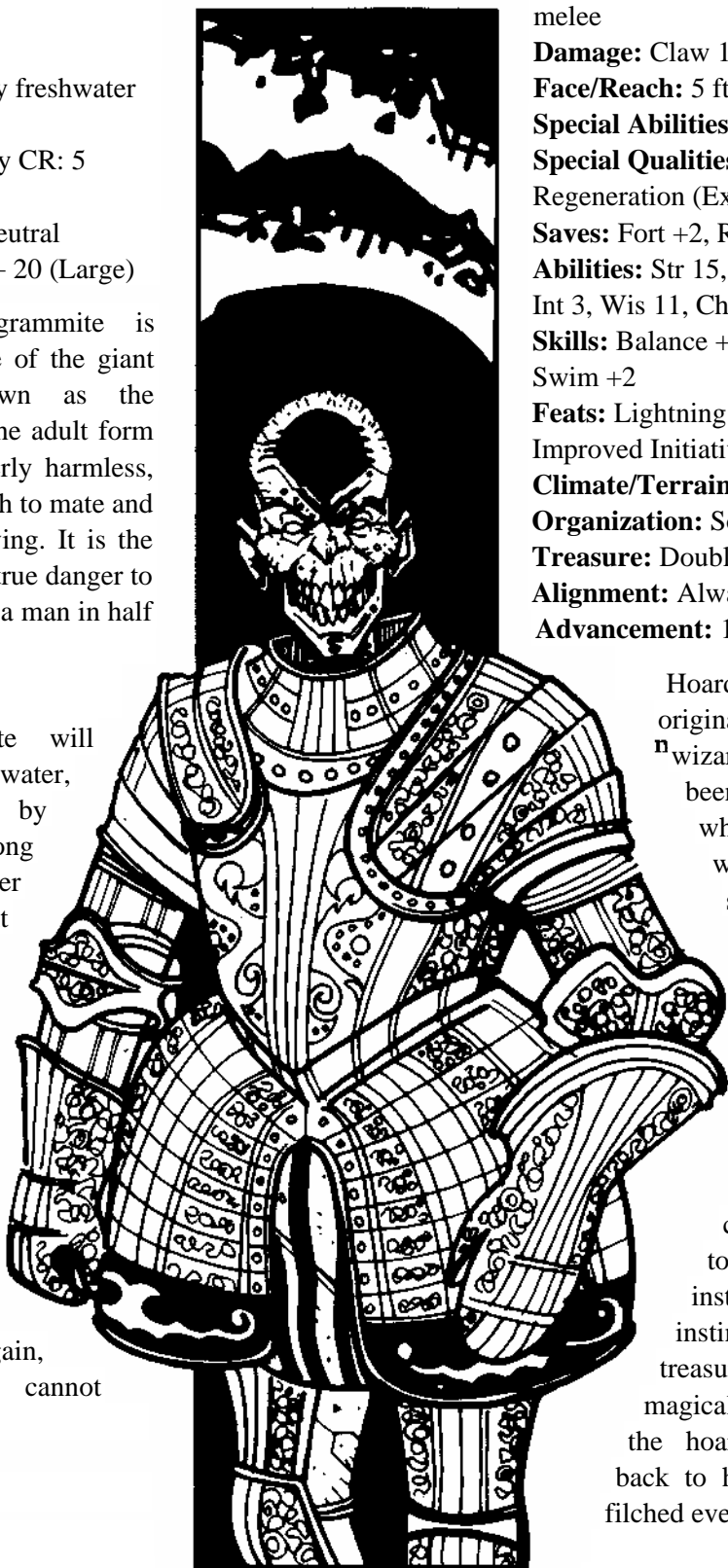
**Climate/Terrain:** Any dungeon

**Organization:** Solitary CR: 6

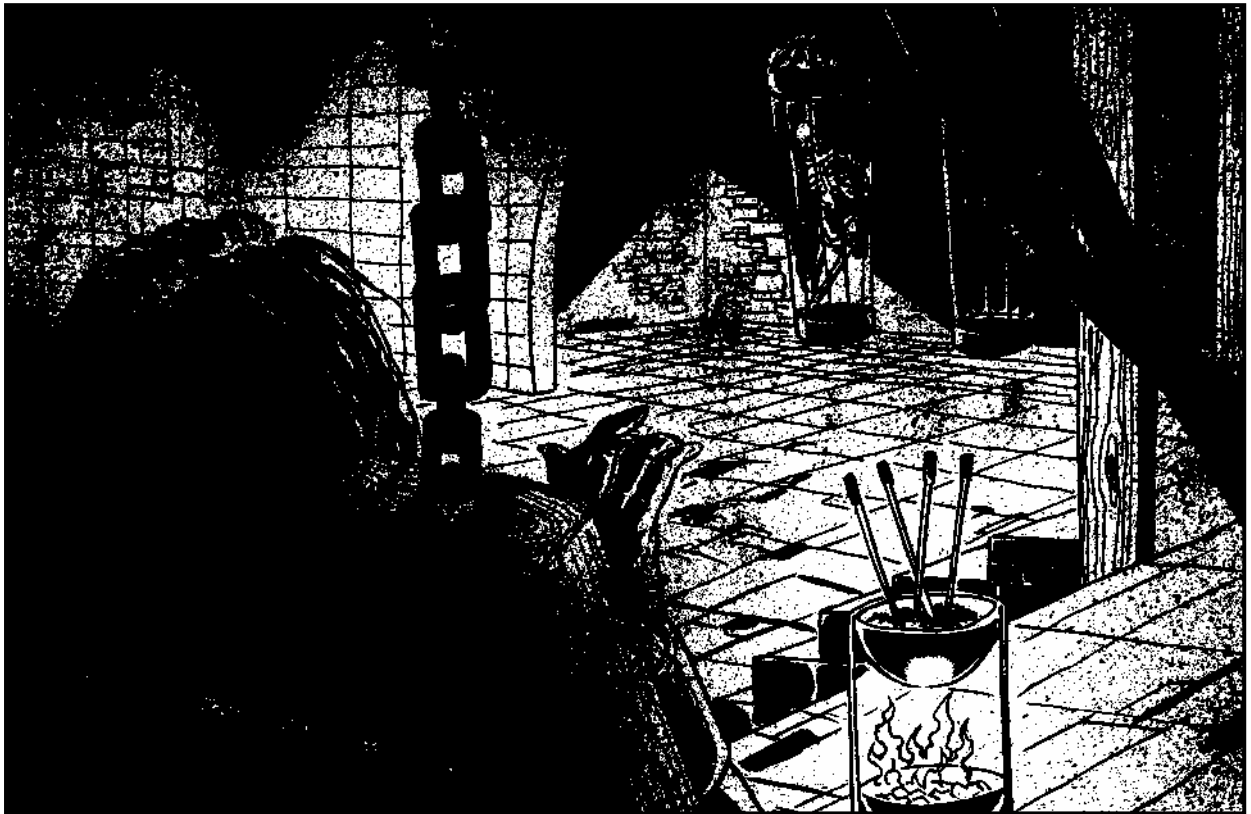
**Treasure:** Double standard

**Alignment:** Always neutral

**Advancement:** 12d8 +20 (Large)



Hoard Raiders were originally the creation of a wizard whose name has been lost to history, whoever he was, he wanted the treasures of several ancient tombs, but was unwilling to enter them himself. Instead, he used his magic to breed together bats and humans, creating a hybrid creature; fast, agile, and capable of moving in total darkness. He instilled in them an instinct to seek and collect treasure, and planned to magically recall them (and the hoards they'd collected) back to his tower once they'd filched everything.



No one knows what went wrong, but they were never recalled, and many still exist in the dungeons he planted them in, still collecting treasure for their master.

Hoard Raiders appear as giant humanoid bats, covered with dark fur. Their eyes are hollow and empty, a blank expanse devoid of even rudimentary emotions. The wingflaps on their forearms are somewhat vestigial, but they can still use them for labored flight.

### Combat

Hoard Raiders will only attack for two reasons: to protect their existing hoard, and to gain further treasure from creatures within the dungeon. It will strike quickly, slashing and biting at its victims. If badly wounded, it will play possum, relying on its regenerative abilities to get it back into the fight. It will not flee unless it has tried to play possum at least once without success.

**Sense Treasure (Ex):** Hoard Raiders can actually sense the presence of magical items, precious metals and gemstones within a 40-foot radius of them; it is suspected that this is somehow related to their radar sense and their ability to track by scent, but nobody is certain. It is this ability that they use to find the treasures they collect.

### HUNGRY WATERS

#### Large Undead

**HD:** 4d6 + 7 (19)

**Initiative:** -4 (Dex)

**Speed:** Swim 5 ft.

**AC:** 17 (-4 Dex, +11 natural)

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft by 5 ft/ 15 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Improved Grab (Ex), Swallow Whole (Ex)

**Special Qualities:** Blindsight (Ex), Damage Reduction 30/fire

**Saves:** Ref +0, Fort +2, Wil +1

**Abilities:** Str 19, Dex 2, Con, Int 2, Wis 2, Cha 2

**Climate/Terrain:** Any aquatic

**Organization:** Swarm

**CR:** 3

**Treasure:** Standard

**Alignment:** Always evil

**Advancement:** 10d6 +30 (Huge)

Hungry waters may come into being wherever someone has drowned; in certain cases, the spirit of the dead may infest the area, causing the water to become a deathtrap for the unwary swimmer. The very waters become the new body of the angry spirit, which is continually seeking to bring new souls to share its eternal torment.

With each drowning victim, the area grows more deadly. Hungry Waters appear as nothing more than large pools of water, though perhaps a bit calmer on the surface than most.

### Combat

The waters infested by the spirit look very calm; indeed, they seem phenomenally easy to swim through. This impression usually lasts until the swimmer is halfway through the area, at which point powerful undertows develop, dragging the swimmer under. (The DC of any Swim checks made in this area are 25.) If the swimmer does manage to escape the flow of water, the area will return to normal, with no sign of the dangerous currents. Although the hungry waters can be forced into dormancy with fire, the only true way to get rid of them completely is to perform an exorcism of the area in which they drowned.

### THE LOST

Of the legions of explorers who penetrate the forbidding depths of the earth, only a fraction returns laden with treasure and gold. Many adventurers simply fail to track down any valuable hoards, while others die at the hands of humanoids or monsters. Some, however, meet a fate worse than death. In certain dungeon levels, bands of mad surface dwellers stalk about through the corridors, wearing tattered remnants of their adventuring gear and attacking anything they encounter on site, screaming maniacally and fighting with a madman's fury. These pitiable creatures are commonly referred to as the lost.

Rumors often circulate that the lost are actually infected with some sort of disease or afflicted with a curse. The lost tend to appear in the same dungeon areas over time, lending credence to the theory. Some explorers believe that creatures such as grimlocks are simply humans infected with some strange disease that causes devolution in humanoids. The losts' often wild, animal like appearance gives further support to this theory. Lost adventurers often have thick, shaggy hair, and enhanced physical abilities but diminished mental ones. Thus far, no one has discovered a method to return the lost to their original condition.

The lost typically attack surface dwellers on sight, shrieking incoherent battle cries and foaming at the mouth.

Spell casters transformed into one of the lost usually lose access to their spells, except for sorcerers who seem to retain the memory of how to use their magic.

### Creating a Lost

"Lost" is a template that can be added to any intelligent, humanoid creature. The base creature type is unchanged by this template.

**Hit Dice:** as base creature + enhanced Con bonus  
**Initiative:** as base creature + enhanced Dex bonus  
**AC:** as base creature + enhanced Dex bonus  
**Attacks:** as base creature + enhanced Str bonus  
**Damage:** as base creature + enhanced Str bonus  
**Special Qualities:** Darkvision 60 ft  
**Abilities:** Str +4, Dex +4, Con +4, Int -4, Wis +0, Cha -2  
**Skills:** Recalculate skill points in light of adjusted Intelligence.  
**Climate/Terrain:** Subterranean  
**Organization:** Solitary or gang (2 - 5)  
**Challenge Rating:** As base creature  
**Treasure:** None  
**Alignment:** Chaotic neutral

### ROCK BORERS

#### Small Magical Beast

**HD:** 1d8 (4)  
**Initiative:** -2 (Dex)  
**Speed:** Burrow 5 ft  
**AC:** 12 (+1 size, -2 Dex, +3 natural)  
**Face/Reach:** 6 in. by 2 ft /2 ft  
**Attacks:** Bite +1 melee  
**Damage:** Bite 2d6  
**Special Qualities:** Blindsight (Ex)  
**Saves:** Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +0  
**Abilities:** Str 8, Dex 6, Con 9, Int 1, Wis 1, Cha 1  
**Climate/Terrain:** Any subterranean  
**Organization:** Swarm  
**CR:** 1/3  
**Treasure:** None  
**Alignment:** Always neutral  
**Advancement:** 2d8 (Small)

Rock borers are not deadly to adventurers in and of themselves; nonetheless, to those who venture underground, as well as to those who live and work there, no creature can possibly be more feared.



The rock borers, a larger (and magical) cousin of the earthworm, has powerful jaws capable of crushing solid rock to powder; it is on this powdery material that the creature subsists. Unfortunately, this also has the effect of weakening the rock structure; even a single rock borer, given time, can do grave damage to the stability of a network of tunnels, and the creatures come not in single numbers, but in swarms. A dungeon infested with rock borers can suffer a localized collapse at the tread of even the lightest of feet.

Rock borers appear as huge, squat, dark gray earthworm with enlarged jaws containing serrated bone-like teeth. Hard, bristly hairs, almost like spikes, dot its body, helping it move through the earth.

### Combat

Rock borers do not attack humans, not recognizing them as a source of food; if, however, one is pulled from the rock (which is difficult, due to the spiky body hairs that cover it; a Strength check must be made with a difficulty of 23),

it will wriggle about in an attempt to bite its captor and startle him or her into dropping the borer. It will then immediately attempt to burrow back into the ground.

### SKITTIBLIN

#### Small Monstrous Humanoid (Goblinoid)

**Hit Dice:** 1d6+1 (4 hp)

**Initiative:** +2 (Dex)

**Speed:** 30 ft. (15 ft. outside caverns)

**AC:** 13 (+1 size, +2 Dex); but see Special Qualities

**Attacks:** small rocks +1, slap +1

**Damage:** 1d2 rock or 1d3 slap (subdual) or 1d2 bite (normal)

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft/5 ft

**Special Qualities:** Darkvision 60 ft., constant cover, improved evasion, spider climb

**Saves:** Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +0 (note Cover Reflex Save Bonus)

**Abilities:** Str 10, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 7, Wis 10, Cha 4

**Skills:** Hide +8, Listen +2, Move Silently +2, Spot +2

**Feats:** Alertness, Improved Unarmed Strike, Mobility

**Climate/Terrain:** Underground caverns •

**Organization:** Pack (2-8)

**CR:** 1

**Treasure:** No coins, 25% goods or items

**Alignment:** Usually chaotic neutral

**Advancement:** 2 HD (Small)

Skittiblins are the result of a partial (at best) success by a goblin sorcerer at creating a watchdog/servitor race for goblinoid beings. Only marginally more intelligent than animals, skittiblins lack the malice of their larger cousins but also lack their ability to coordinate. They look like slightly stunted, wiry goblins with sickly green-yellow skin and hair that only grows in patches. If they wear anything at all, it's usually no more than a poor loincloth.

Skittiblins speak Goblin very poorly; the rare, more intelligent ones can speak it almost as well as an average goblin. Though none are known to exist, a skittiblin with an Intelligence of 12 or better could speak Common, just as an intelligent goblin could.

**Combat**

Skittiblin's aren't big on tactics, but they don't usually have to be. Their natural habitat means they are rarely left unarmed, and their ability to cling to cavern walls makes them difficult targets. They pelt their victims until attackers fall down or run away; if necessary, they use their toughened hands to strike with surprising force.

**Constant Cover (Ex):** So long as there are rocky outcroppings nearby, the thin skittiblin always has at least half cover unless grappling. The less distance it moves, the greater cover it will have. A skittiblin that restricts itself to a five-foot step always has at least three-quarters cover unless grappling. A skittiblin that does not take an; movement action in a round always has nine-tenths cover unless grappling. Depending on the density of the nearby cover, the skittiblin may have greater cover available to it, at the DM's discretion.

**Improved Evasion (Ex):** Functions exactly as the rogue's extraordinary ability of the same name except it only functions if the skittiblin has some sort of cover available to it. For this reason, it is ineffective against attacks that fill the area more or less completely regardless of obstacles - a *fireball* can be evaded in this manner, for example, but not a *circle of doom*.

**Spider Climb (Ex):** Functions identically to the spell of the same name, although the skittiblin's talent for this is an extraordinary ability that comes from the rough, resilient skin on its palms and dexterous feet. It can also pull loose a small chunk of rock as a free action 90% of the time, for use as a ranged weapon.

**UNDERWORLD ORACLE**

**Medium-Size Aberration**

**Hit Dice:** 3d8+3 (16 hp)

**Initiative:** +3 (Dex)

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**AC:** 18 (+3 Dex, +5 natural armor)

**Attacks:** Bite +1 melee

**Damage:** Bite 2d4

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft. / 5 ft.

**Saves:** Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +5

**Special Qualities:** Darkvision 60 ft.

**Abilities:** Str 10, Dex 17, Con 12,

Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 15

**Skills:** Diplomacy +7, Gather Information +6,

Hide +8, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Listen +7,

Move Silently +8, Search +7

**Feats:** Dodge, Run

**Climate/Terrain:** Subterranean

**Organization:** Solitary

**CR:** 1

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Chaotic neutral

Underworld Oracles are said to be the byproduct of a bizarre curse that affects humanoids who venture into a forbidden cavern deep beneath the surface of the earth. Oracles appear as 5-foot tall armless humanoids with dull gray, stony skin. Their heads are slightly larger in proportion to their bodies, and their faces are emotionless masks that resemble the countenance of statues. Underworld Oracles received their moniker for their tendency to lurk at the edge of established subterranean societies, gathering information and sharing it with those whom they encounter.



They hunger for rumors and news, and often spy on explorers and monsters to learn of their plans and natures. When an Underworld Oracle encounters a group of strangers, it presses them for information, usually offering news of the surface or background information on the strangers in return for information that the Oracle has learned about the dungeon.

Oracles were reputedly created by a lich who dwelled deep within the earth, near the very core of the planet. The lich was concerned about losing touch with the events in the outer world, so it transformed any humanoids it encountered into oracles and sent them out to learn as much news about the world and report their findings. Oracles are loathe to impart any information about their own origin or habits, preferring to keep as much about their own doings a secret as possible. The creatures' biology, however, offers disturbing evidence of the validity of the curse theory. Slain oracles that are dissected show the internal structure of a variety of species, human, orc, dwarf, elf, and many other humanoids.

## NEW MAGIC ITEMS

### GLOVES OF TUNNELING

These dull gray leather gloves are studded with smooth, rounded pieces of granite. When the command word is spoken, the gloves glow with a dim red nimbus for one hour. During this time, the gloves' wearer can tunnel through unworked rock with his gloved hands as if he was digging through soft, loamy soil. The wearer may burrow through rock and soil at a rate of 1 ft. per round, leaving a tunnel behind him that characters of his size may crawl through. Creating a tunnel tall enough to allow

creatures one size larger to crawl through and those the same size as the wearer to walk through slows the rate of burrowing to 0.5 ft. per round. The gloves can only tunnel through unfinished stone, as per the spell *transmute rock to mud*.

*Caster Level:* 5th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *soften earth and stone*; *Market Price:* 3,000 gp; *Weight:* 4 lb.

### KANEGOR'S INSTANT WALL

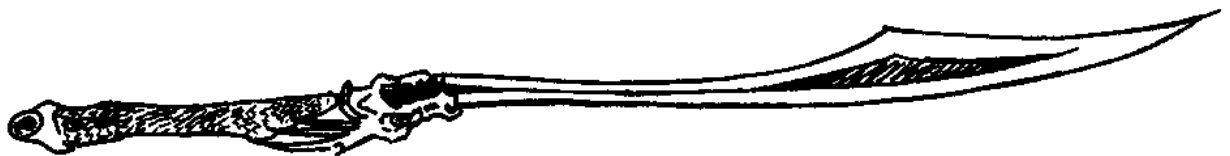
This magic item appears as a stone brick 4 inches long and 2 inches high, carved from black basalt. The brick's surface is covered with golden runes. When the command word is spoken, the brick grows into a *wall of stone* as if cast by a 12th-level sorcerer. However, unlike the spell, the instant wall is capable of forming only a wall 3 inches thick and covering up to 60 square feet. The user may not opt to decrease the wall's surface area to increase its thickness, though the wall only grows large enough to fill the available area. The wall is formed from bricks exactly like the original brick that generates the wall. An instant wall is a single use item.

*Caster Level:* 12th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *wall of stone*; *Market Price:* 1,000 gp; *Weight:* 8 lb.

### LIGHTSTEP BOOTS

These magical boots allow a character to walk across weakened floors and pressure plates without fear. While wearing the boots, the user is considered to be only half his weight, including all equipment, for the purposes of disturbing unstable ground or triggering a trap activated by weight placed on a panel or trap door. The boots do not improve the wearer's stealth or provide any other benefit.

*Caster Level:* 3rd; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *feather fall*; *Market Price:* 1,000 gp; *Weight:* 1 lb.





## MYRR'S MAGICAL MARBLES

The wizard Myrr was known for two things; first, his magical talent, which was undeniable, and second, his interest in children's games, which was considered eccentric to say the least. He loved to enchant children's toys in fantastic and marvelous ways, creating toy soldiers that fought each other and toy ships that flew through the air, however, it was in the creation of his Magical Marbles that he finally made something which veteran adventurers considered useful. As such, they were highly sought after, and he created dozens of sets in his lifetime; even so, they are considered something of a rarity, and a complete set even rarer. More often, the marbles are found in individual numbers (with the obvious exception of the Pathfinder Marbles.) What follows is a description of the known magical marbles that Myrr created; he may, however, have created additional "one-of-a-kind" marbles for specific individuals.

**Cat's Eye Marbles:** These look identical to non-magical cat's-eye marbles; however, when placed in front of the eye, they allow low-light vision through that eye in a manner identical to that of an elf.

*Caster Level:* 3rd; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *darkvision*; *Market Price:* 1,500 gp; *Weight:* -

**Flamecatcher Marbles:** The flamecatcher marble is obviously magical, appearing as though it is lit from within by a flickering light, and feeling warm to the touch. When the command word is spoken, it will automatically absorb into itself all open flames, including magical fire, within a twenty-foot radius. It can absorb an unlimited amount of fire into itself, but can only absorb 50 points of flame damage per usage of the command word. After it has absorbed its maximum amount of flame, it cannot be activated for one full turn. If it is destroyed by any means before this full turn has passed, it will discharge any flame it has absorbed as though it was a fireball spell.

*Caster Level:* 3rd; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *darkness*; *Market Price:* 1,500 gp; *Weight:* -

**Footseeker Marbles:** These marbles are usually of a solid bright color, and come in all different colors of the rainbow; no matter what color they are, though, they all do the same thing.

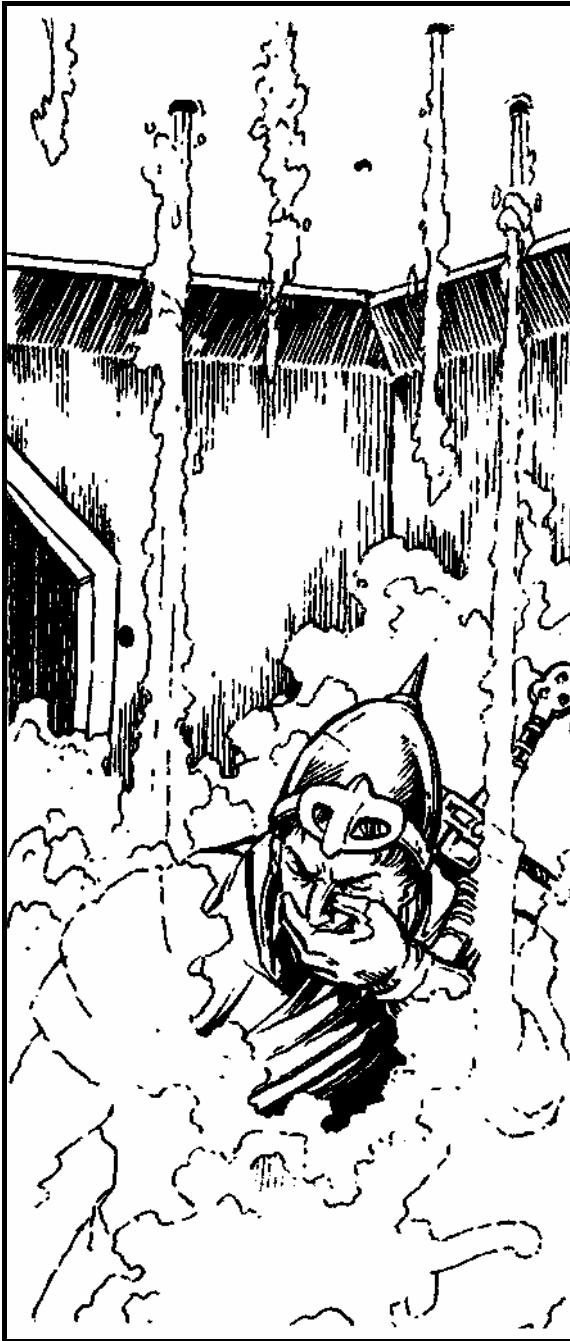


They are activated simply by pouring them on the floor, and once activated, they will immediately move towards anything descending towards the floor (most commonly a foot, hence the name). Each Footseeker marble present on the floor of a room adds 5 to the DC of any Balance checks made. (These marbles are by far the most common of the marbles Myrr made, which probably says quite a bit about his sense of humor.)

*Caster Level:* 3rd; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *locate object*; *Market Price:* 1,500 gp; *Weight:* -

**Pathfinder Marbles:** These marbles are found in pairs, one black and one white, which are held together by a powerful magical attraction. When the command word is spoken, the black marble will remain wherever it is set, resisting any attempts to move it; from that point, the white marble can be carried with the adventurer. When the command word is spoken again, the white marble will begin to roll towards the location of the black marble, retracing its path that it was carried along; if for some reason this path is blocked, the white marble will roll along the blocked point, still seeking to rejoin its twin. Once the two marbles touch again, they will bond together once more; however, the pair can be moved as normal.

*Caster Level:* 3rd; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *locate object*; *Market Price:* 1,500 gp; *Weight:* -



**Steel Marbles:** On speaking the command word, Steel Marbles (which look like ball bearings) will take up a complex, three-dimensional orbit around the person who spoke the command word. They will maneuver themselves into the path of the first attack made against this person, absorbing all damage; having done so, they will then drop to the ground. They cannot be re-activated for a number of minutes equal to the amount of damage they took in that attack. (These are by far the rarest of Myrr's Magical Marbles.)

*Caster Level:* 3rd; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *shield*; *Market Price:* 1,500 gp; *Weight:* -

### RAVENWING'S EXTENSIBLE ROPE

This is a piece of rope that is one foot long it appears to be perfectly normal, but when the command word for the rope is spoken, it will immediately extend itself out in length until it makes contact with a solid object. It will then attempt to tie itself in a knot around that object if possible; this knot cannot be untied. Upon repeating the command word, the knot will untie itself, and the rope will retract back to its original length (it is important to note that it unties itself before retracting itself; thus, it must still be physically climbed if one wants to get to the top.) Speaking the command word as you flick the rope in the direction you want it to go does take some practice, and requires a Use Rope check with a DC of 7.

*Caster Level:* 5th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *animate rope*, *fabricate*; *Market Price:* 5,000 gp; *Weight:* 1 lb.

### SCROLL OP MAPPING

This magic item appears to be little more than a mundane sheet of plain vellum, possibly with a map drawn on it. However, when the command word is spoken, the scroll of mapping exhibits its true powers. When activated within a dungeon, building, or other enclosed environment, a crude map of the area appears on the scroll as its bearer moves through the dungeon. Each map can chart out up to a 400 ft. by 400 ft. area. The map begins at the bottom edge of the scroll; if the map runs off the edge of the sheet, it immediately deactivates. Only areas that the map's bearer can see appear on the scroll. When the command word is spoken, any map previously drawn by the scroll disappears and is replaced with the new map. Any marks put on the map by mundane means are not automatically erased.

*Caster Level:* 3rd; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *Scribe Scroll*, *erase*; *Market Price:* 500 gp; *Weight:* -

### STONE OP MUTING

When activated, a stone of muting muffles all sounds made within 15 feet of it. Spellcasters may still use spells with a verbal component when the stone is used, and other sonic effects, including sonic attacks, are not affected by its muffling effect.

However, anyone attempting to detect sounds made within 15 feet of the stone suffer a -4 penalty to their Listen check. A stone of muting is best used to cover sounds that may attract unwanted attention, such as guards or patrolling monsters. The stone may be used three times per day. The muffling is in effect for 5 minutes after the stone is activated.

*Caster Level:* 3rd; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *silence*; *Market Price:* 1,500 gp; *Weight:* 2 lb.

## NEW TRAPS

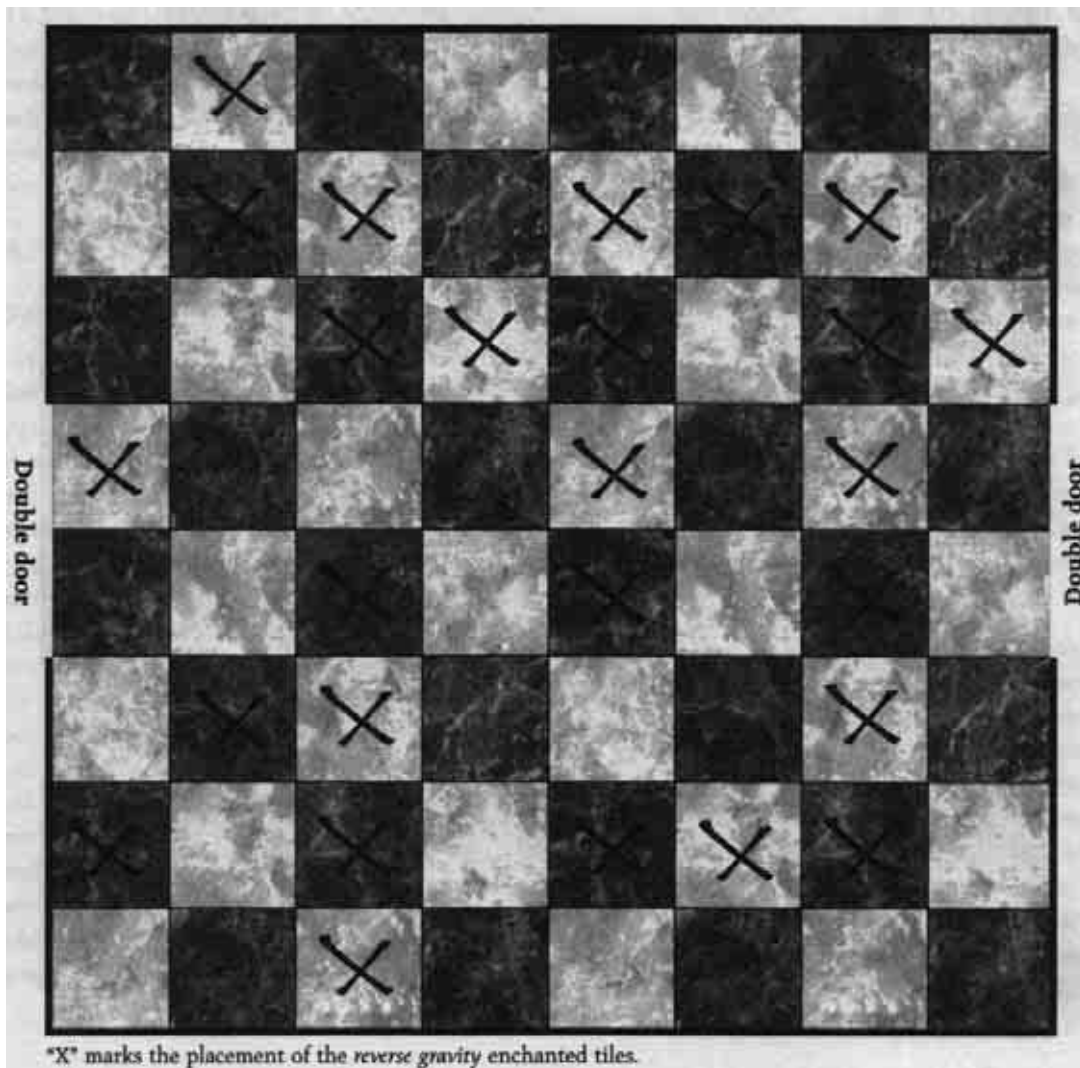
The following sample traps have been provided as examples to place in dungeons of your own devising. With a little tweaking their effects and mechanisms can be adjusted to fit nearly any scenario you wish.

### THE BUTTON

This is a classic trap; it, and variants upon it, have been around since the beginning of role-playing. It is a button (or lever, or other triggering device) that is in plain view. Next to it is a sign that says, in a variety of languages, "Do not, under any circumstances, press this button (pull this lever, step on this flagstone, etc.);" In any given party of five or more people, somebody will press the button. You may then have whatever consequences you wish occur... or you can just be messing with their heads.

### GRAVITY MAZE

The players enter a room that is 24 feet long by 24 feet wide by 12 feet high, tiled with sixty-four gray tiles (each three feet by three feet). On the far side of the room is a pair of double doors.



It seems as though there are no obstacles between them and the far doors; however, the unwary who attempt to cross too quickly will find that certain squares have been enchanted with a permanent *reverse gravity* spell (see picture); stepping onto the square will cause the adventurer to fall onto the ceiling, taking normal falling damage. Thus, the party must figure out which squares are not enchanted in order to cross without falling... or, if speed is of the essence, they can simply cross in a straight line and take their lumps.

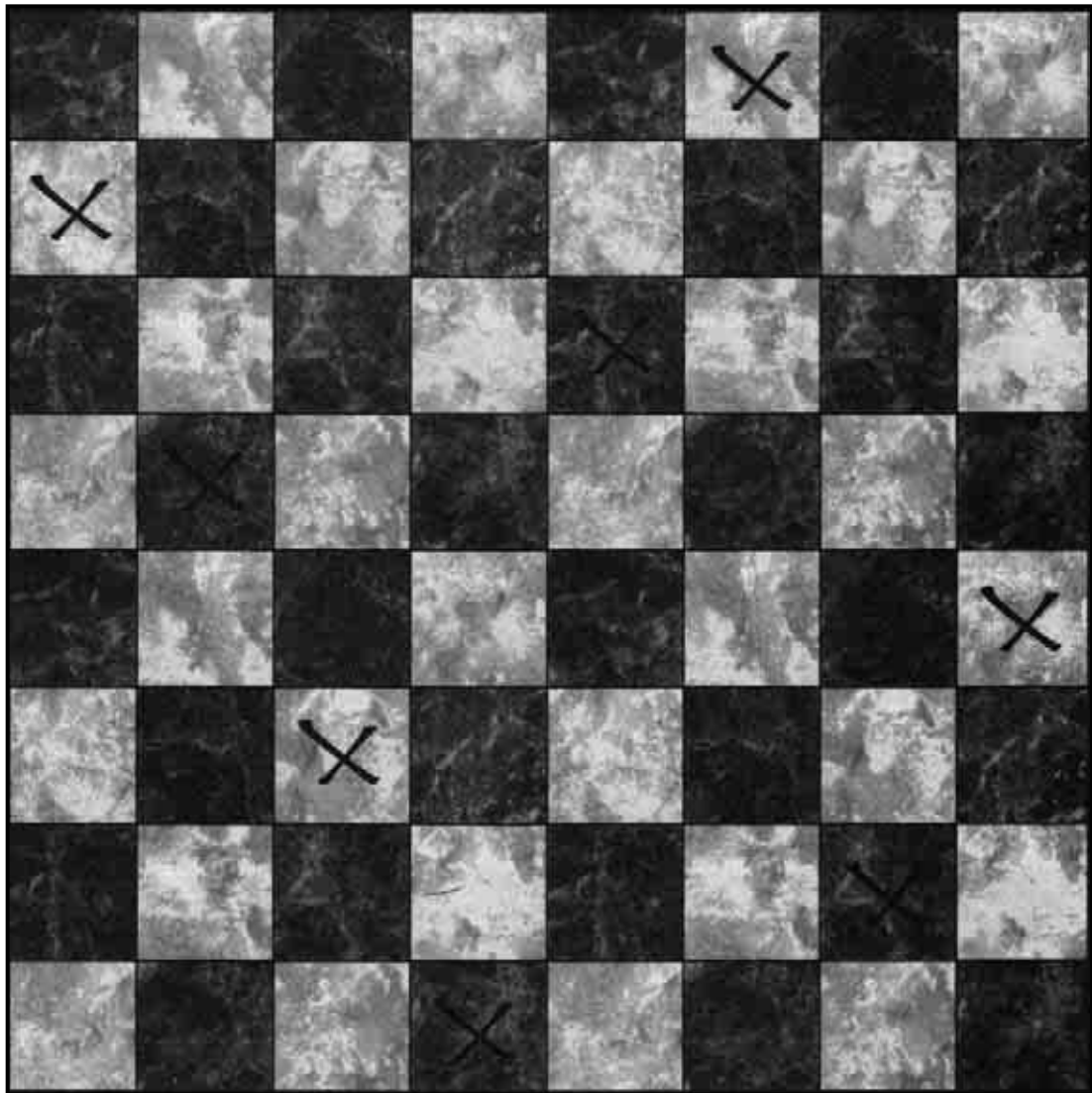
**CHESS GAME**

The players enter, and find a table in the center of the room. On that table lies a large, ornate chessboard, with writing around the edges, and eight chess-pieces. All eight are queens, but instead of all being black, or white, or even a mixture of the two, they are of eight different colors.

The inscription around the edge of the board reads, "When eight kingdoms without kings live in peace, then shall the way be opened to what you seek." Once the eight queens have been placed on the chessboard in such a way that none of them can take any of the others (see picture), a hidden door in the far wall of the room will open up. (This door can be detected by a careful search, but cannot be opened without solving the puzzle.)

**THE INFINITE PLUNGE**

This puzzle is best suited to a highly magical dungeon. It is a long, rectangular room with a force barrier in the middle, preventing all further progress beyond the halfway point. There are tapestries along the walls, one on each side of the barrier, which illustrate someone standing at a spot in the room and kneeling down.



"X" marks the placement of the queens to solve the puzzle.

The spot in the room has a hand imprint which corresponds to the spot in the tapestries, and it looks, indeed, like one is supposed to place one's hand in the imprint. However, a closer examination of the tapestries will let one note that the kneeling man is wearing a ring; even closer examination reveals that the ring is not a part of the tapestry, but an actual ring, woven into the fabric and easily removable. (Close examination of the imprint reveals a slight bulge in the imprint, corresponding to the finger on which the ring should be worn.) If the player places their hand in the imprint while wearing the ring, they will be teleported across the barrier (and the ring will be returned to the tapestry.) If they place their hand in the imprint without wearing the ring, they will be teleported to the ceiling, and as they fall, they will be teleported back to the ceiling again the instant before they hit the ground. This will continue for about five minutes, then the portal will shut back down again. Unfortunately, the person has now reached terminal velocity. You might want to describe some rather interesting-looking corpses when the party first enters the room...

## SAMPLE DUNGEONS

### TOMB OF LORD HAFORCSSON

(Note that specific characters and locales can be adjusted to fit the DM's current campaign.) The Trygvi buried generations of their dead in a cleft known as the Valley of Death. The Trygvi had a strong belief in the afterlife, and also believed that a warrior's tomb should reflect the accomplishments of his life. They believed that a reflection of the treasures that were buried with a warrior would be available to him in the afterlife, including magical items. They believed that if a warrior's thanes who died with him in battle were buried with him they would support him in the afterlife. They had no specific philosophy about how the transition to the Land of the Dead was accomplished, and were far more concerned about keeping the dead from invading the land of the living, since they had learned through terrible experience that the dead could walk again. They had no particular belief in the efficacy of ongoing prayers for the dead, except for those intended to keep the dead dead.

Ulri Haforcsson was a mighty Lord of the Tiger Clan of the Trygvi, who brought half of the Utherian continent under his sway before being defeated by General Dinarius at the Battle of Three Rivers. Lord Haforcsson's followers recovered his body after the battle and placed it in the giant tomb that his slaves had labored for years to prepare. Much of his personal treasure, including his beloved longsword "Soulcleaver" was placed in the tomb along with him, as were several of his lieutenants who had died in the battle.

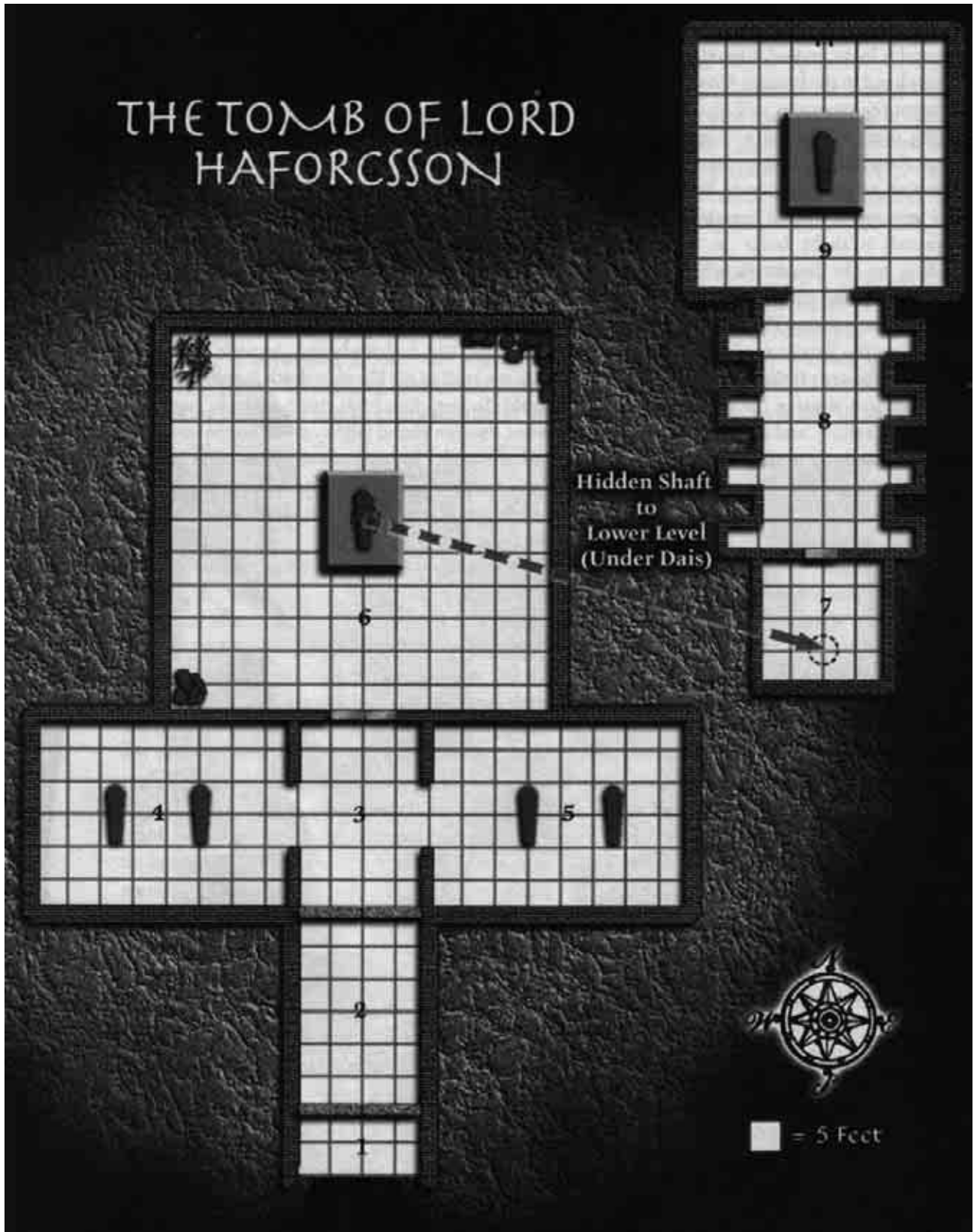
The preparation of the tomb wasn't entirely motivated by love for Lord Haforcsson. The Trygvi knew that Ulri had made unholy pacts during his lifetime, trading his life after death for power in this world. To keep him from rising again to pay those debts, the clan placed mighty spells on the tomb and sealed it well. The tomb remained inviolate for over three hundred years, until one day when a band of heroes wandered into the long-abandoned Valley of the Dead...

The tomb is built into a large circular earthen mound, approximately twenty feet high and seventy-five feet in diameter. The mound is covered with grasses and ferns, and a tree grows on the top, but the manna from the dark forces gathered in the tomb have warped and twisted the plant growth, making it dark and foreboding. The doorway to the tomb was originally covered in earth, but over the years, the covering has slipped away, revealing plain (and very heavy) stone doors.

Inside the corridors are about eight feet high-carved into dark stone. There is no lighting, and no torch holders beyond the Entrance Hall. Assume that a 10th level wizard cast all the spells used for the traps.

- 1. Stone Doors:** While these doors can be clearly seen from the base the mound, it will require several hours of heavy digging to completely clear away the dirt blocking them. If another 20 minutes is spent brushing the deep carvings which cover the doors, a frieze will be revealed showing a mighty warrior standing on a mound of skulls on the left door, and a party of warriors bearing the same warrior's body away on the right. The doors open outwards, but have no handles. Fortunately the doors have shifted slightly over the years and there is now room for one hero to insert his/her fingers between the doors to pull them open.







The task requires a Strength check with a DC of 22. The doors tend to remain open unless pulled shut.

2. **Entrance Hall:** The east and west walls of the room are covered with a glowing description of the life of Ulri Haforcsson, written in ancient Trygvi. Over the lintel to the heavy stone double doors in the north wall is a warning, also written in ancient Trygvi. It says "Before you lies the tomb of Ulri Haforcsson, beloved of Helas. Do not open these doors, lest the Soulcleaver lay waste to Death Itself." Even those who do not read Trygvi will get the feeling that this is a warning of some kind. The words simply *feel* bad. The doors have had arcane lock cast on them, raising the difficulty of knocking them down to 30. These doors will tend to close again unless they are staked open, and of course the *arcane lock* will reactivate after ten minutes, trapping the party inside the tomb.
3. **Hall of Fear:** The doors on the north wall of this hallway are made of bronze, now so corroded that the pictures once covering their surfaces are impossible to make out. The doorways on either side are arches without doors, through which can be seen the tombs in rooms four and five. A *symbol of fear* has been carefully inscribed on the floor in front of each archway, giving a -4 to the saving throw of each member of the party standing in the room when it is stepped on.
4. **Hall of Thanes:** The room contains two sarcophagi, covered with carvings of the deeds of the hero buried within. But they aren't buried within anymore. The four thanes have been transformed into wights by the dark energy of Ulri, and now lie in their sarcophagi, waiting for the *symbols of fear* to go off, at which point they throw off the lids and attack. Each is wearing the remains of the armor in which they were buried, and carrying their masterwork longsword at their side. The armor has long since rotted away, and the wights are too crazed to think about drawing their swords. The swords, if recovered, are in excellent condition.

**Wights (4):** CR 3; SZ M (undead); HD 4d12; hp 26; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +4 natural); Atk: Slam +3 melee (1d4+1 and energy drain); create spawn; SQ undead; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +5; Str 12, Dex 12, Con -, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 15; AL LE; Skills: Climb +5, Hide +8, Listen +8, Move Silently +16, Search +7, Spot +8; Feats: Blind-fight

5. **Second Hall of Thanes:** This room is identical to room 4.
6. **The Burial Hall:** This is a huge room. The walls were covered in the battle banners of Ulri's foes, although most have now rotted away completely. In the northeast corner of the room stands a pile of six large barrels which once held decent mead, now gone bad. Next to them lie three boxes full of silks, still in fairly good condition, and three large crates packed with ceramic jars from a strange and foreign land. A large pile of weapons can be seen in the northwest corner, many of them still in good condition (although there are no magical or masterwork items). A heap of armor lies in the southwest corner, including one suit of banded mail, two plate breastplates and a suit of chain mail. The straps for the armor have long since rotted away, so none of it is immediately useful, but it will sell for normal prices if repaired, cleaned up and returned to civilization. In the center of the room on a raised dais lies a very elaborate coffin, which contains a vampire spawn who will rise and attack at the dramatically appropriate moment. The wards over the door keep the spawn from leaving the room, but it will turn into gaseous form if it has to survive. It is dressed in rotted decorative armor and has a sword at its side, but like the wights is too blood-crazed to use it. If captured it turns out to be a normal sword.

Hopefully the players will realize that something is wrong here. The treasure is hardly appropriate for a hero of Haforcsson's stature, and if he was so legendary, why did he turn into a mere vampire spawn? The answer can be found on the secret trapdoor underneath the sliding dais.

The trapdoor is heavily sealed with wax, into which *glyphs of warding* have been worked, set to attack any undead creature that breaks the seals. Carved into the door in ancient Trygvi are the words "Here lies the true tomb of Ulri Haforcsson. Open it at your peril." Beyond the trapdoor, a featureless tube goes down into the darkness. Another *glyph of warding*, specific to the undead, is set along its edges.

**Vampire Spawn (1):** CR 4; SZ M (undead); HD 4d12; hp 26; Init +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30; AC 15 (+2 Dex, +3 natural); Atk: Slam +5 melee (1d6+4 and energy drain); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SA charm, energy drain, blood drain; SQ undead, +2 turn resistance, damage reduction 10/silver, cold and electricity resistance 10, gaseous form, spider climb, fast healing 2; SV Fort +1, Ref +5, Will +5; Str 16, Dex 14, Con -, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 14; AL CE. Skills: Bluff +8, Climb +8, Craft (any one) or Profession (any one) +10, Hide +10, Jump +8, Listen +11, Move Silently +11, Search +8, Sense Motive +11, Spot +8; Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (any Craft or Profession)

7. **True Entrance Hall:** The only entrance into this room is through the hole in the ceiling, and the only exit is the single door in the north wall. The walls are plain, but the door is covered with symbols made from a circle with two crossed lines inside. These represent holy symbols of the Trygvi faith.



The door has arcane lock cast on it, as well as a *glyph of warding* set to attack anyone who touches the door handle.

8. **The Hall of Death:** The four niches which line each wall of this hallway originally held skeletons, under orders to only attack non-skeletal undead who entered the hallway. When Ulri had his apotheosis and entered the hallway, the skeletons did attack, and he slaughtered them all. All that remains now are a few broken bones and piles of dust and broken weapons. The backside of the southern door has a huge Trygvi holy symbol deeply etched into it. The northern doorway is an arched opening through which the heroes can see a single, plain sarcophagus.
9. **The Tomb of Ulri Haforcsson:** The room is devoid of decorations except for the middle of the northern wall, which contains a plaque which was obviously supposed to hold a weapon, although it is empty now. Inside the sarcophagus lies Ulri Haforcsson, now a vampire. (Ulri was originally a 10th level fighter. He wears a masterwork breastplate and carries his weapon Soulcleaver (+3, with the *Mighty Cleaving* ability)). Ulri's main goal is not to kill the heroes, but to escape his tomb. In order to do that he has to *dominate* one of the heroes into opening the door out of the Hall of Death. Once he has done that he will take on his gaseous form and flee, taking an additional attack from the glyphs along the tube. If Ulri escapes, he will wreak havoc amongst the local farms and villages until the heroes stop him.

**Vampire (1):** CR 8; SZ M (undead); HD 10d12; hp 100; Init +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30; AC 18 (+2 Dex, +6 natural); Atk: Slam +5 melee (1d6+4 and energy drain); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SA domination, energy drain, blood drain; children of the night, create spawn; SQ undead, +4 turn resistance, damage reduction 15/+1, cold and electricity resistance 20, gaseous form, spider climb, alternate form, fast healing 2; SV as 10th level fighter, Str 21, Dex 14, Con -, Int 15, Wis 13, Cha 14; AL CE. Skills: Bluff +8, Climb +8, Hide +10, Jump +8, Listen +11, Move Silently +11, Search +8, Sense Motive +11, Spot +8; Feats: Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes

## BLACK HOLLOW FORTRESS

(Note that specific characters and locales can be adjusted to fit the DM's current campaign. The treasure has been left deliberately vague, so as to allow you to make changes as you see fit.)

Black Hollow Fortress was originally built by the Great Empire over three hundred years ago to establish control over the Black Hollow region, a perennial trouble spot on the Empire's border. The engineers discovered the remains of an ancient dwarven outpost on the site chosen for the fortress, and used that rather than constructing an entirely new fortress. In typical Imperial fashion the engineers wiped out any traces of dwarven decoration, so the only trace of the original builders is the mathematical precision of the wall alignment within the complex.

The fortress remained in active use for over 100 years, until the Dinarian Revolt, when the troops were withdrawn to help defend the capital and the fortress was abandoned. Several years later, a band of gnolls came across the fortress and made their home there for a short time, but they eventually moved on, having exhausted the food supplies in the area. Shortly after they left, an earthquake brought down the southeastern corner of the inner fortress (which has since been cleared by various occupants). Recently an ogre boss and her retinue moved into the complex, and shortly thereafter they permitted a band of orcs to occupy some of "their" space. The band is made up of two gangs, the Gouge-Eye Orcs and the Slasher Orcs, united under a single leader. The orcs pay "rent" in the form of irregular sacrifices to the Ogre Boss.

The ogres and orcs haven't made any major alterations to the fortress, since it meets their needs fairly well. The biggest change is in the use of the armory (see below)

**General Notes:** The ceilings are a uniform nine feet high in all of the corridors and rooms except for the Reception Area, where they are twelve feet high. Note that while orcs have night-vision, ogres don't, so they have lit their areas (6, 9, 10, and 18-20) with torches set into the brackets left behind by the Empire. The rest of the complex is dark. Since the complex has been and is currently occupied, all of the doors are unlocked unless specifically described otherwise in the room descriptions.

**Outside:** The Fortress was built into the side of a valley, overlooking a mostly abandoned trading road. A narrow trail, too steep for horses, leads up to the entrance. The gates are deeply recessed into the tunnel, so all that can be seen from below is the roughly ten foot by ten foot opening in the side of the hill.

1. **Gate Complex:** These massive gates once effectively barred entrance to the fortress. Since they were set twenty feet into the tunnel, they were almost impossible to target with artillery, and their weight and size made them almost impervious to battering. In addition, archers could fire on attackers through the murder holes on either side of the corridor. Age and decay have accomplished what armies could not, however. The thick ropes, which originally raised and lowered the gates, eventually rotted away and the orcs got tired of having to wait on the ogres to lift the gates for them. So they shoved some upright logs under the gates to hold them up, completely negating their defensive function. The gates are now held open about three feet off the floor.
2. **Lookout Post w/ Murder Holes:** This long corridor leads to a slit in the actual side of the mountain through which a lookout could keep watch on the valley below. A rope once ran from the lookout post to a large warning bell in the reception area, but this too has rotted away. Although the orcs are supposed to keep this area manned as part of their "rent", they rarely do so, and the post will only be manned if the GM wants a large battle at the entrance to the dungeon, rather than a series of battles throughout the fortress.
3. **Gate Control with Murder Holes:** The winches that raised and lowered the gates are still intact, but the ropes they acted through have long since rotted.
4. **Reception Area:** This is where visitors to the fortress were greeted, where individual squadrons were mustered and inspected, and where the regalia of the various units that manned the fortress was displayed. All that remains of these proud devices are some brackets on the wall.



A bell installed over the door on the west wall still works, but the rope that connected it to the lookout is long gone. If the party has been fairly quiet thus far, then they can hear sounds of growling and grunting from behind the door in the western wall. If they have made a lot of noise in their entrance then all will be silent. The heavy wooden double doors in the north wall are closed, but not locked.

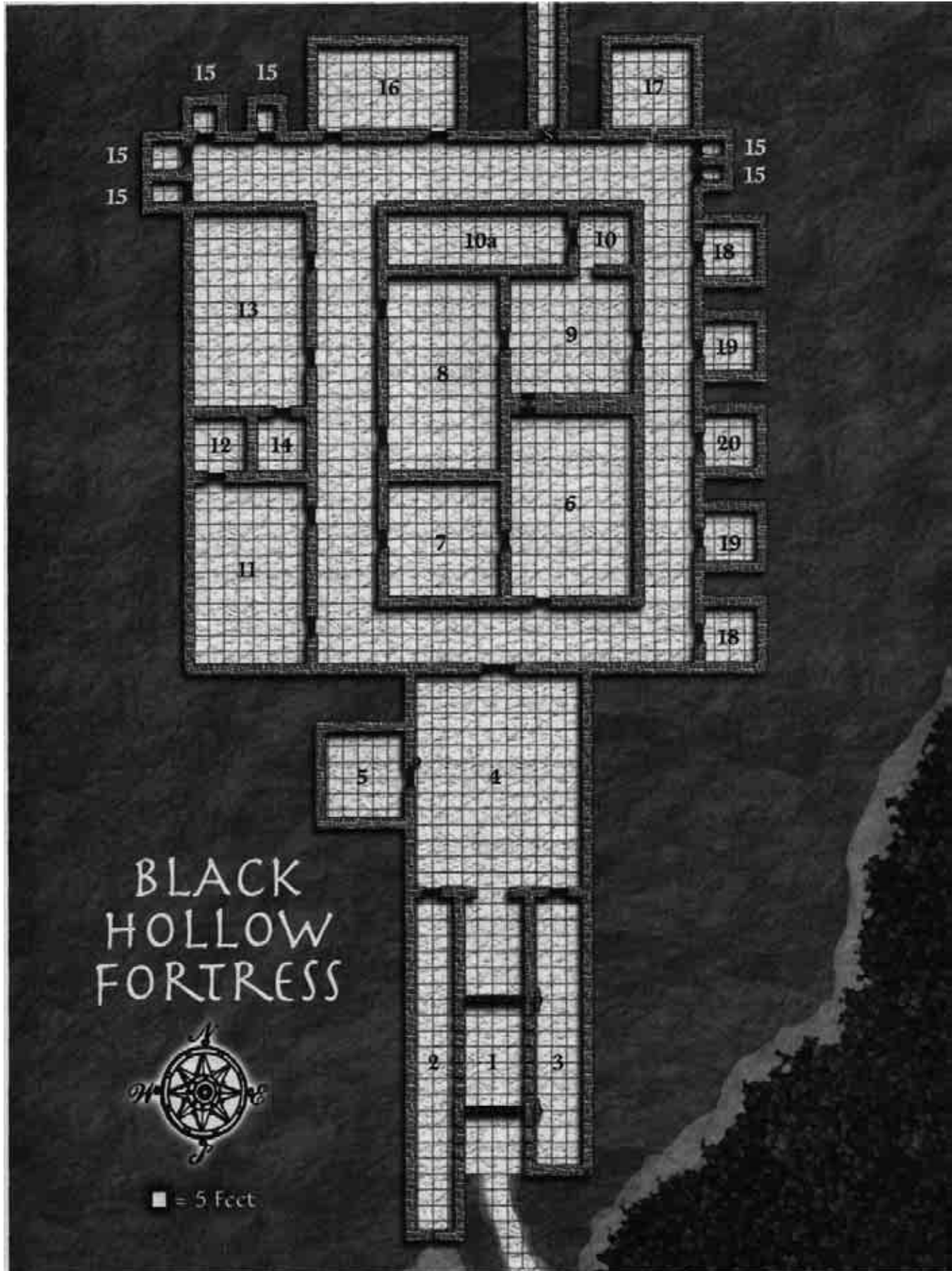
5. **Ready Room:** All that remains of the original furnishings of this room is a collapsed bench that ran the length of the south wall. Three Gouge-eye Orcs are sort of on watch here. Unless the party has alerted them somehow, two of the orcs are fighting over some perceived slight, while the third lies asleep in a corner. If they are alerted, they stealthily wait to either attack the party as they enter the Ready Room, or sneak up behind them as they enter the rest of the fortress.

**Orcs (3):** CR 1/2; SZ M (humanoid); HD 1d8; hp 4; Init +0; Spd 30; AC 14 (+4 scale mail); Atk: Greataxe +3 melee (1d12+3) or javelin +1 ranged (1d6+2); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Darkvision 60 ft.; light sensitivity; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will -1; Str 15, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 9, Wis 8, Cha 8; AL CE. Skills: Listen +2, Spot +2; Feats: Alertness

6. **Armoring Workshop:** This fortress's original soldiers created and repaired arms and armor in this room. In the northwest corner a furnace still shares a ventilation shaft up to the surface with the kitchen oven on the other side of the wall. Note that the common ventilation allows characters in one room to hear what's going on in the other room relatively easily. Near the forge stand an anvil and a workbench that has recently been moved so as to be close to the furnace. A stack of fresh firewood next to the furnace indicates that it is currently in use, as do the bloodstains on the bench. The ogres have turned this room into a crude but effective torture chamber, using the furnace to heat the pokers. It is currently inhabited by one ogre, cleaning off the torture implements with his tongue. He will strongly object to being interrupted.

7. **Armory:** Metal bands reinforce the western door to this room, making it almost impossible to batter down without a ram. In addition, it has recently been nailed shut. The door on the east wall has also been reinforced, but instead of being nailed shut, a crude sliding bar has been installed on the outside of the door, so that it can be locked from the outside. Inside the room. Empty weapon ranks attest to its original function. It has now become the ogres' prison/pantry, and contains three peasants who were recently kidnapped by the orcs and presented as "rent", in addition to any victims the heroes may have been sent to rescue.

8. **Mess:** It certainly is! Of the eight tables that originally made up the major furnishings of this room, two have been destroyed, leaving just wood shards. The remainder have been tipped over and used to construct two mini "forts" at either end of the room, which the orcs use to play war. Right now three Gouge-Eye Orcs occupy the northern "fort" while two Slasher Orcs man the southern one. Each group is armed with an effectively endless supply of rocks, which they have been throwing at each other for the last hour or so. (In fact, the southern fort had three orcs until recently, when their leader was hit by a flying rock).

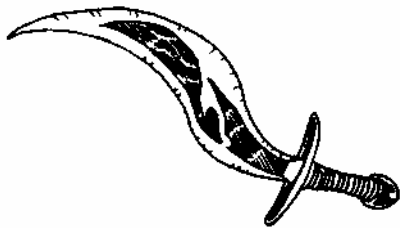


The orcs will happily turn their attention to the new targets, and have long swords in their belts in case the characters manage to close. The orcs have covered the walls with the crude and often obscene banners of their various units. Behind one of these banners stands the door to the kitchen, but it won't be found unless the heroes state that they are checking behind every banner.

**Orcs (5):** CR 1/2; SZ M (humanoid); HD 1d8; hp 4; Init +0; Spd 30; AC 14 (+4 scale mail); Atk: Greataxe +3 melee (1d12+3) or javelin +1 ranged (1d6+2); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Darkvision 60 ft.; light sensitivity; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will -1; Str 15, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 9, Wis 8, Cha 8; AL CE. Skills: Listen +2, Spot +2; Feats: Alertness

**9. Kitchen:** The ogres don't cook their food, except for amusement, so they have left the kitchen in the original state of decay in which they found it. Of note is the large stone oven in the southwest corner, which shares a vent with the armory furnace on the other side of the wall. The common ventilation allows characters in one room to hear what's going on in the other room relatively easily. The rest of the furniture has been removed, leaving the floors bare. The door to the pantry (10a) is missing.

**10. Pantry:** The gnolls who originally raided the fortress actually ripped the door off of this room in their frenzy to get to the few foodstuffs which the army left behind, and they completely cleaned it out when they left. In their excitement they knocked over a shelf unit, crushing one of the gnolls under it, to the vast amusement of his mates. The skeleton is still here, but that's about all. The reinforced and heavily locked door to the wine cellar defeated them, however, and the ogres, having just stuck their heads in and looked around briefly, never even noticed it behind the fallen shelving.



**10a. Wine Cellar:** In the confusion caused by the Dinarian Revolt the troops who pulled out were assured that their new assignment was just temporary, and that they would be returning. As a result, the commander left his considerable wine collection in this room. The 121 bottles will fetch an enormous price if safely returned to civilization (alternately, at the Dungeon Master's whim, they may all have turned to vinegar and be worth nothing).

**11. Barracks:** The gnolls, uninterested in sleeping in the bunks and chests which originally filled this room, broke them up for huge bonfires, the results of which can still be seen on the floor and ceiling. The Gouge-Eye Orcs have occupied this room; six of them can currently be found here (the rest are playing a war game against the Slashers in the former Mess). Unless they have been alerted, four of the orcs are asleep, while the other two are playing knucklebones in the southwest corner. If alerted, their boss will have come out of his den and will enter the corridor with them and head for the entrance, trying to find the intruders as quickly as possible. The stench in here is fairly vile.

**Orcs (5):** CR 1/2; SZ M (humanoid); HD 1d8; hp 4; Init +0; Spd 30; AC 14 (+4 scale mail); Atk: Greataxe +3 melee (1d12+3) or javelin +1 ranged (1d6+2); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Darkvision 60 ft.; light sensitivity; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will -1; Str 15, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 9, Wis 8, Cha 8; AL CE. Skills: Listen +2, Spot +2; Feats: Alertness

**12. NCO Quarters:** This is now the home of Henk, the leader of the Gouge-Eye Orcs. Like most orc leaders, he earned his position by being the toughest, if not the smartest, orc in the bunch. He has maximum hit points for an orc, and his armor is one grade better than normal. The furnishings for his den consist of a matted blanket and the one trunk which survived the gnolls. The trunk is locked with a newish padlock to which only Henk has the key, and contains all of the treasure for the twelve orcs that make up the Gouge-Eye gang. Henk will come out and throw himself into the fight if he hears anything going on in the barracks.



**Henk (1):** CR 1/2; SZ M (humanoid); HD 1d8; hp 8; Init +0; Spd 30; AC 14 (+4 scale mail); Atk: Greataxe +3 melee (1d12+3) or javelin +1 ranged (1d6+2); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will -1; Str 15, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 9, Wis 8, Cha 8; AL CE. Skills: Listen +2, Spot +2; Feats: Alertness

**13. Barracks:** This barrack may come as something of a surprise to the heroes. The gnolls didn't use this room, only removing the first two bunks for firewood. Until recently the Slashers who live here were bossed by an anomaly in orc society, a lawful evil leader named Throk. Throk insisted that the orcs sleep on the bunks and keep their meager possessions stowed away in the trunks. He also insisted that they keep their arms and armor clean and use the jaques, so the smell in here is not at all bad, compared to the other barrack. This experiment in lawfulness was doomed to failure of course, and since last week Throk's head has adorned a hook over the entrance to the new boss' quarters. Things have gotten a bit messy since then, but the bunks are still in place and the trunks are still there, although they now stand open with the few possessions in them scattered about.

There are seven orcs in here. If they have not been alerted, two will be asleep and the other five will be sitting on the bunks talking. If alerted they will act similarly to the Gouge-Eyes. The only difference between the two groups is that the Slashers will not necessarily be alerted by the sound of fighting from the Gouge-Eye barrack, since the Gouge-Eyes are always fighting with each other. The Slashers, on the other hand, did not fight with each other until recently (Throk disapproved of it), and have sort of gotten out of the habit. Sounds of fighting from the Slasher barrack will certainly arouse suspicion among the Gouge-Eyes.

**Orcs (7):** CR 1/2; SZ M (humanoid); HD 1d8; hp 4; Init +0; Spd 30; AC 14 (+4 scale mail); Atk: Greataxe +3 melee (1d12+3) or javelin +1 ranged (1d6+2); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will -1; Str 15, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 9, Wis 8, Cha 8; AL CE. Skills: Listen +2, Spot +2; Feats: Alertness

**14. NCO Quarters:** This is the den of the new leader of the Slashers, an average ogre named Kaht. His quarters still contain the original bed, trunk and table. The trunk is unlocked, and contains the treasure of the ten members of the Slashers, plus Kaht's.

**Ogre (1):** CR 2; SZ L (giant); HD 4d8+8; hp 26; Init -1 Dex; Spd 30; AC 16 (-1 Dex, +5 natural, +3 hide); Atk: Huge Greatclub +8 melee (2d6+7) or Huge longspear +1 ranged (2d6+5); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 10 ft.; SV Fort +7, Ref +1, Will +3; Str 21, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 17; AL CE. Skills: Climb +4, Listen +2, Spot +2; Feats: Weapon Focus (greatclub)

**15. Jaques:** These are all identical booths, containing a horizontally mounted board with a hole in it. All of the jaques in the same area stand over a single large pit, which was originally regularly seeded with lime. The more recent inhabitants have not been so finicky, so the smell in both areas reeks something awful. The secret corridor in the northeast corner of the dungeon serves as the bolthole for the complex, and leads to a long, narrow corridor, which eventually exits through a hidden door on the far side of the mountain.

**16. Chapel:** This small chapel was originally dedicated to Humas, the war god of the Empire, but the small altar at the front as well as the frescoes on all of the walls have been repeatedly vandalized by both the gnolls and the orcs. However, the vandals have failed to find the secret compartment at the base of the altar where the soldiers hid the golden candelabra, silver bowls and holy mace and sword which were used in the Humatic rituals. These will fetch an excellent price if simply sold *off*, and a great deal more if returned to the High Temple of Humas, (far away from this locale). Then exact worth is up to the DM.

**17. Water Reservoir:** The "entrance" to the reservoir was a two-foot by two-foot panel hinged at the side with a handle on it *ahead* three feet up the wall. The "room" behind the panel is only six feet high, and was usually filled with water.

The panel now has a large hole inside the result of an old acid burn (any close examination will reveal this). The water has long since dried up, and the room is now home to a small gray ooze, which will attack the first creature which looks through the hole or opens the panel.

**Gray Ooze (1):** CR 3; SZ M (ooze); HD 3d10+10; hp 14; Init -5; Spd 10; AC 5 (-5 Dex); Atk: Slam +3 melee (1d6+1 and 1d6 acid); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SA improved grab, acid, corrosion, constrict 1d6+1 and 1d6 acid, SQ Blindsight, cold and fire immunity, ooze, camouflage; SV Fort +1, Ref -4, Will -4; Str 12, Dex 1, Con 1, Int -, Wis 1, Cha 1; AL N.

**Note:** The ogres have hung a blanket across the entrance to the eastern north-south corridor, to mark off their territory and keep from being bothered by the noise from the orc barracks. That they will rarely investigate any noises from the rest of the fortress, assuming that it's just the orcs fighting. They will, however, investigate any suspicious sounds in their own corridor, and react aggressively to any perceived threat.

**18. Officer Quarters:** The ogres use these rooms as a common meeting place. They pulled the door off and used it for a table, and have dragged four chairs in from the other rooms. They each currently hold one ogre asleep in one of the chairs. His snoring can be heard on the far side of the curtain.

**Ogre (1):** CR 2; SZ L (giant); HD 4d8+8; hp 26; Init -1 Dex; Spd 30; AC 16 (-1 Dex, +5 natural, +3 hide); Atk: Huge Greatclub +8 melee (2d6+7) or Huge longspear +1 ranged (2d6+5); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 10 ft.; SV Fort +7, Ref +1, Will +3; Str 21, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 17; AL CE. Skills: Climb +4, Listen +2, Spot +2; Feats: Weapon Focus (greatclub)

**19. Officer Quarters:** Two of the three ogres who share this room are here, tearing in to a haunch of raw meat (it may look suspicious, but it's only a cow). Not the most delicate eaters, they too can be heard down the hallway.

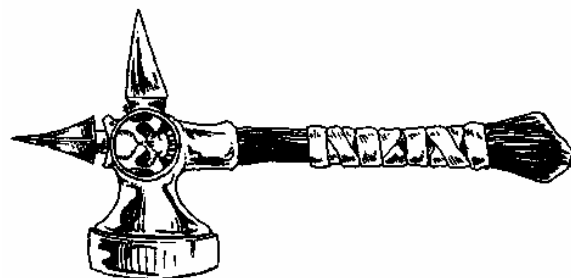
**Ogre (2):** CR 2; SZ L (giant); HD 4d8+8; hp 26; Init -1 Dex; Spd 30; AC 16 (-1 Dex, +5 natural, +3 hide); Atk: Huge Greatclub +8 melee (2d6+7) or Huge longspear +1 ranged (2d6+5); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 10 ft.; SV Fort +7, Ref +1, Will +3; Str 21, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 17; AL CE. Skills: Climb +4, Listen +2, Spot +2; Feats: Weapon Focus (greatclub)

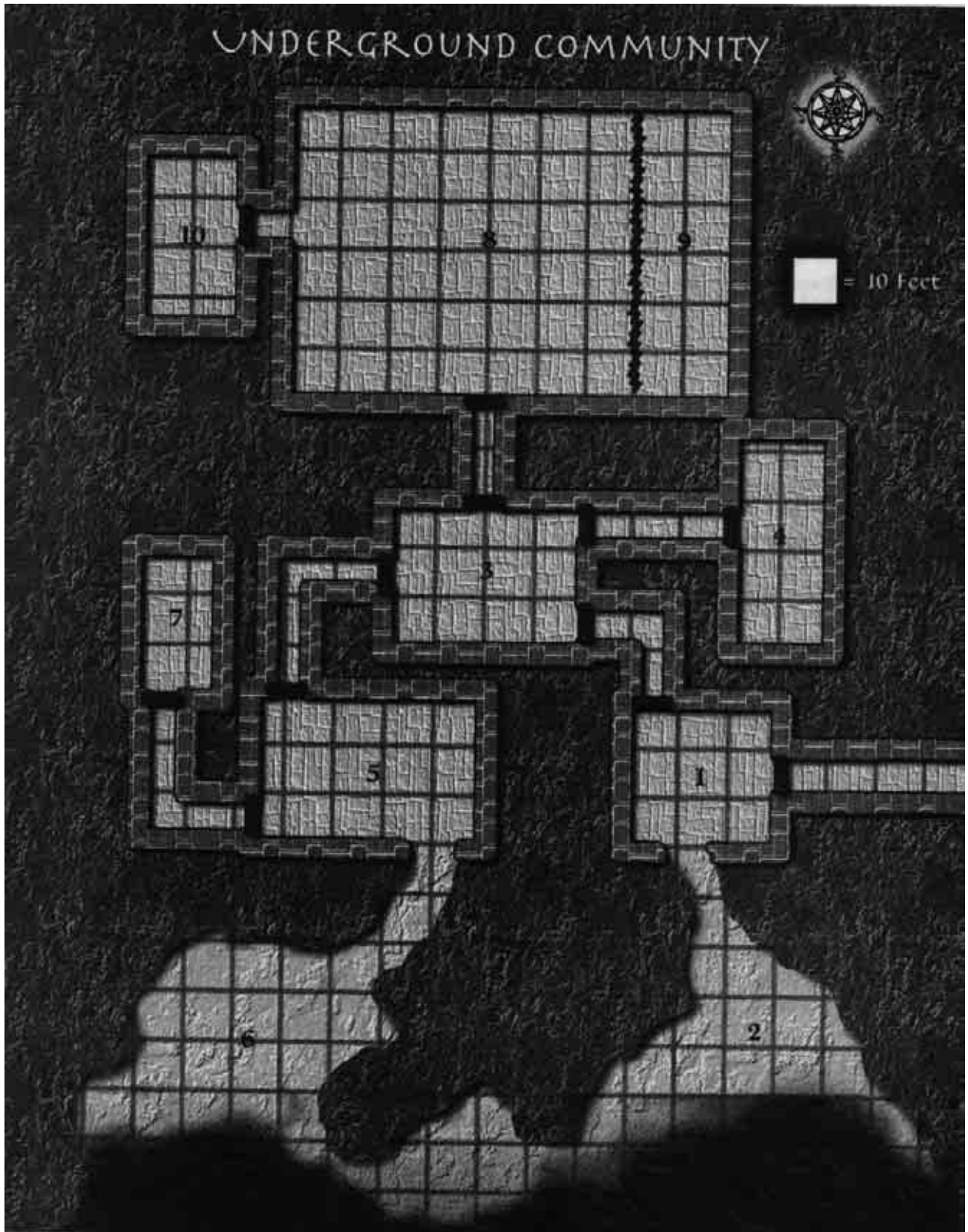
**20. Officer Quarters:** This is the den of Thranah, the leader of the ogres. She's huge, almost eleven feet tall, although when stooped over in the normal ogre fashion she can just fit under the nine-foot ceilings. She has the maximum hit points for her race, and her armor class is two better than average. Thranah is no fool, and may be willing to bargain for her freedom and those of her mates. She doesn't care about the orcs. In her quarters is the full treasure of the ogres.

**Thranah (1):** CR 2; SZ L (giant); HD 4d8+8; hp 40; Init -1 Dex; Spd 30; AC 16 (-1 Dex, +5 natural, +3 hide); Atk: Huge Greatclub +8 melee (2d6+7) or Huge longspear +1 ranged (2d6+5); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 10 ft.; SV Fort +7, Ref +1, Will +3; Str 21, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 17; AL CE. Skills: Climb +4, Listen +2, Spot +2; Feats: Weapon Focus (greatclub)

## DESIGN NOTES

Like most dungeons, Black Hollow Fortress has been designed to get tougher as the heroes get deeper into it. The Gate Complex should make the heroes nervous, but in fact it is unmanned, and the guardians in the ready room should not prove much of an obstacle. A great deal of care has been taken in the design to keep the rooms sufficiently discrete so that the first combat won't necessarily result in the entire population of the complex pouring out into the corridors and mopping up the heroes.





## UNDERGROUND COMMUNITY

This sample dungeon a single-level orcish community that is also shared by other humanoids and monsters. It was originally intended as a dwarven village, but the Humanoids attacked just before completion, before the dwarves had time to occupy it. It now serves as a modest cultural center for the various Humanoids who raid the surrounding areas. They have banded together for mutual protection, and while their vicious nature results in numerous fights, their leadership has somehow kept it all together. You can easily expand it by adding on extra rooms, adding more monsters, or bringing in larger monsters.

- 1. Entryway:** This room is just inside the entrance, after a short passage. It is small, more or less just a brief widening of the passage; it contains three orcs, who are set to act as sentries. They will attempt to run and raise the alarm if the odds are clearly against them; however, they have no "alarm system" that they can trigger, and must depend on screams or bellows to alert their companions. Beyond this room is a short passage; part of the passage contains a pit trap (DC 20 to spot) Falling into the pit causes 3d6 damage; the bottom is filled with sharp, jagged rocks.
- 2. Natural Cavern:** The passage descends as it goes into Room Two, which is a natural cavern created by the receding of an underground lake. Here, the inhabitants pile their refuse, and the stench is overpowering; it is also the home to a carrion crawler. There is some treasure in amongst the garbage; use approximately half the value given in Table 7-2 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* as a rule of thumb to determine this (basing the "encounter level" on the number of carrion crawlers present)

**Carrion Crawler (#):** CR 4; SZ L(aberration); HD 3d8+6; hp 19; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30; climb 15; AC 17 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +6 natural); Atk: 8 tentacles +3 melee (paralysis); bite -2 (1d4+1); Face 5 ft. x 10 ft.; SA paralysis (DC 13, 2d6); SQ: scent; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +5; Str 14, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 1, Wis 15, Cha 6; AL N. Skills: Climb +10, Listen +6, Spot +6; Feats: Alertness

- 3. Armory:** The humanoids store weapons and items that they use in everyday life here; most of the weapons are of inferior quality, but there are a couple of fine axes mixed in with the weapons, if the party takes the time to search. However, for every five minutes they search, there is a cumulative 10% chance that a group of 2d6 orcs will be attracted by the commotion.
- 4. Eating Area:** This is a communal eating area for the humanoids who live here; at any given time, a group of 1d6 orcs, 1d8 goblins, and 1d10 kobolds is here feasting. (If you have a very low-level or high-level party, adjust these numbers up or down accordingly.) There is no treasure in this room save what the humanoids are carrying on them.
- 5. Lakeshore:** This is the shore of a subterranean lake, and is also the home to a small community of troglodytes. They will not leave the water unless disturbed, but attack anyone who approaches the water's edge, attempting to drag them underneath the surface where they can devour them. If disturbed in this fashion, they will leave the water and attack, always attempting to drag the prey back into the lake. (Again, numbers can be adjusted to fit the party's level of experience).

**Troglodytes (#):** CR 1; SZ M (humanoid, reptilian); HD 2d8+4; hp 13; Init -1 Dex; Spd 30; AC 15 (-1 Dex, +6 natural); Atk: longspear (1d8), bite -1 melee (1d4), javelin +1 ranged (1d6); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.(10 ft. with longspear); SA Stench, Darkvision 90 Ft.; SV Fort +5, Ref -1, Will -0; Str 10, Dex 9, Con 14, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 10; AL CE. Skills: Hide +6, Listen +3; Feats: Multiattack, Weapon Focus (Javelin)

- 6. Prison:** This is a central area with crude cells, constructed of rocks and branches; here, any prisoners the humanoids might have from their raids are kept. (At any given time, assume that 1d4 prisoners of some race or other can be found here; they are kept for sport, food, or the occasional ransom.) It is guarded by two ogres, each with a large club (again, feel free to adjust this number, depending on the level of the party.)

A passage to the north is partially blocked off, apparently by the humanoids themselves; this leads to Room 7. A further passage, unblocked, leads to the east to Room 8.

7. **Cockatrice Lair:** If the PCs unblock and follow the passageway, they will find that it ascends steeply and curves to the west as it continues north. They will discover oddly-shaped stones, and shattered statues in the shape of people; wiser and more experienced adventurers will notice the tell-tale signs of a cockatrice, which the humanoids keep here as a means of disposing of prisoners they do not wish to eat. The passage eventually dead-ends, and the PCs will find the cockatrice at the far end, assuming it doesn't find them first.

**Cockatrice (1):** CR 3; SZ S (magical beast); HD 5d10; hp 27; Init +3; Spd 20 ft., fly 60 ft. AC 14 (+1 size, +3 Dex); Atk: Bite +4 melee (1d4-2); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SA petrification; SQ petrification immunity; SV Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +2; Str 6, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 9; AL N. Skills: Listen +7, Spot +7; Feats: Alertness, Dodge.

8. **Central Party Zone:** The passage curves sharply south, leading to a large open area in which a large number of orcs, kobolds, ogres, gnolls, goblins and hobgoblins are working, playing, and generally living. This communal living area contains a large number of humanoids, but it also contains a great number of rock outcroppings and places to hide; if the PCs are careful, any noise they make should be lost in the general din. If they aren't careful, they'll have a major fight on their hands; these odds should intimidate most parties into retreat. (Think twenty or so of each species.)
9. **Sleeping Chambers:** Crude furs cover the floor of this room, and there are a large number of humanoids slumbering here at any given moment. This should have about as many humanoids as in room eight.
10. **Vault:** This is the treasure hoard of the monsters; use Table 7-4 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* to determine the treasure contained within, using the average level of the party as

the level listed to determine the amounts of gold. It is guarded by an ogre, or a similar monster of appropriate Challenge Level for the PCs.

**Goblins (#):** CR 1/4; SZ S (humanoid); HD 1d8; hp 4; Init +1; Spd 30; AC 15 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +3 studded leather); Atk: Morningstar +1 melee (1d8-1) or javelin +3 ranged (1d6-1); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Darkvision 60 ft.; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 8, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 8; AL NE. Skills: Hide +6, Listen +3, Move Silently +4, Spot +3; Feats: Alertness.

**Hobgoblins (#):** CR 1/2; SZ M (humanoid, goblinoid); HD 1d8+1; hp 5; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +3 studded leather, +1 small shield); Atk: Longsword +1 melee (1d8) or javelin +2 ranged (1d6); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Darkvision 60 ft.; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will 0; Str 11, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; AL LE. Skills: Hide +1, Listen +3, Move Silently +3; Spot +3; Feats: Alertness

**Ogre (#):** CR 2; SZ L (giant); HD 4d8+8; hp 26; Init -1 Dex; Spd 30; AC 16 (-1 Dex, +5 natural, +3 hide); Atk: Huge Greatclub +8 melee (2d6+7) or Huge longspear +1 ranged (2d6+5); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 10 ft.; SV Fort +7, Ref +1, Will +3; Str 21, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 17; AL CE. Skills: Climb +4, Listen +2, Spot +2; Feats: Weapon Focus (greatclub)

**Kobolds (#):** CR 1/6; SZ M (humanoid, reptilian); HD 1/2 1d8; hp 2; Init +1 Dex; Spd 30; AC 15 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +1 natural, +2 leather); Atk: Halbspear -1 melee (1d6-2) or light crossbow +2 ranged (1d8); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Darkvision 60 ft.; light sensitivity; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +2; Str 6, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; AL CE. Skills: Craft (trapmaking) +2, Hide +8, Listen +2, Move Silently +4, Search +2, Spot +2.

**Orcs (#):** CR 1/2; SZ M (humanoid); HD 1d8; hp 4; Init +0; Spd 30; AC 14 (+4 scale mail); Atk: Greataxe +3 melee (1d12+3) or javelin +1 ranged (1d6); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Darkvision 60 ft.; light sensitivity; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will -1; Str 15, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 9, Wis 8, Cha 8; AL CE. Skills: Listen +2, Spot +2; Feats: Alertness



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