

# Footprints

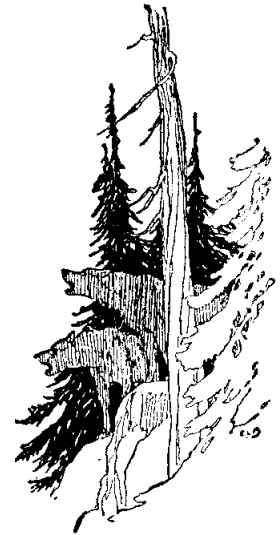


Number 19

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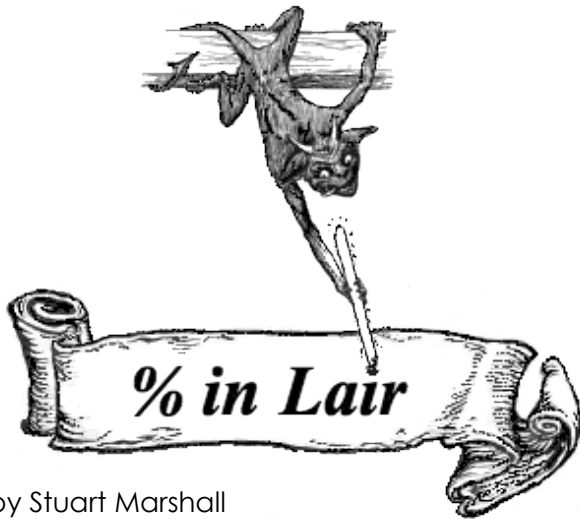


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by Stuart Marshall

What's a % in lair? It's a monster statistic in the Monster Manual, of course, but more relevantly it's also the first section of Footprints. When I was asked to write a % in lair, all I had was this vague notion that this was the bit of Footprints where you were supposed to beg for submissions for the next issue. So I went back to the beginning and looked up what it was supposed to be. What I found was this:-

*This section, "% in Lair" will be where I (and sometimes the Assistant Editors) will rant about various pertinent topics of the day.--Mike Stewart, Footprints Issue #1, April 2004.*

Yes, April 2004. Nine-and-a-bit years ago. Saddam Hussein was alive. George W. Bush was still in his first term. Tony Blair was Prime Minister (shortly to be re-elected) and John Paul II was the Pope. Buffy the Vampire Slayer had only just finished its last televised season. Gary Gygax was alive and well and chatting on the Dragonsfoot forums. I wouldn't register my DF account for another six months yet.

A rant about pertinent topics of the day? That wouldn't be hard to produce. Ranting comes naturally to me—I'm not a patient man—and there's no shortage of pertinent topics. I could produce a 10,000 word rant about kickstarters without any trouble at all... But I think that a magazine foreword merits something a little calmer and more measured.

I shan't beg for submissions. The truth is that small-press e-zines always need submissions (you can never have too many, in publishing), but they need everything else as well:- artwork; proofreaders; layout people; heck, we even need letters to the editor.

What we really need is the main motivator who makes it all happen, and we're extremely lucky to have Nicholas Partridge, who for the moment has slipped into the role of motivating man. It's not an easy role, and the lack of someone with time and energy to do this explains Footprints' virtual disappearance for the best part of four years. John Turcotte is an admirable editor and manager as well as a writer, and his dedication to Footprints kept it going three times a year from 2005 to 2009. But apparently he has a life now, so between autumn 2009 and spring 2013 we only managed to produce one issue (issue #17 from 2011). If you want to help Footprints and you can't submit content, be nice to Nicholas.



Another truth is that there's no *point* begging for submissions. The way to get authors to submit good content is to produce a magazine that people are reading, and the way to produce a magazine that people want to read is to publish good content. It's a virtuous circle. If we don't have enough submissions, we've got to roll that snowball to the top of the hill ourselves. The message here is that for a few issues, you might get a Footprints that's got a lot of content written by the staff with illustrations from the public domain. I think that if we keep producing decent stuff, eventually you'll get round to typing up an idea for an article you've got, and then you'll send it in to Footprints. That's what I did, back in issue #5 when my first little article for the zine got published, so why shouldn't you?

—SJM

# Field Notes from Davendowns

A Ranger's Workbook

By Tain Wehrcraft

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** I loved the various *Pages from the Mages* articles by Ed Greenwood; they fired my imagination and made me realize that a spell book should be much more than just a list of spells. In fact, there is no reason that any book or journal kept by an adventurer should not hint at the kind and number of dangerous locations, persons & monsters, treasures, and troubles that keep adventurers tramping about the countryside for their (probably short) careers.

I developed the *Field Notes from Davendowns* as a treasure and set of hooks for a sand-boxy campaign. My hope was that once a copy of the *Field Notes* fell into the hands of the adventuring party, they'd begin to sift through it, following up on various leads, rumours and hints contained in its pages. In theory that would let me create the illusion of "infinite choices" while at the same time creating a limited series of adventuring locations that I could describe and stay at least half a step ahead of the players.

As for the Davendowns, this is just a borderlands region, the hills between the civilized, farmed (and rather boring) plains of the Kingdom of Illisal and the dangerous wilderness forests and mountains of The Reaches. It's the kind of place where humanity and the humanoids clash violently and repeatedly, communities and fortresses rise and fall, and villains of all types come to scheme at a safe remove from the King's Men.

I don't expect that a DM will use the *Field Notes From Davendowns* "as is", but I do hope that you find ideas to steal, elements to strip out and tinker with, and maybe something in here will fire your imagination and inspire a few adventures.

## Background

Tain Wehrcraft was a well-known resident of the Davendowns. A ranger and huntsman, he was constantly roaming the countryside, lending a hand to those in need, chasing away dangerous predators like the great lions from the high hills or hobgoblins and gnolls. In addition to his martial pursuits, Tain was an accomplished naturalist, a decent artist, and a dabbler in magic. His *Field Notes* is actually a collection of four leather

bound books. Each is filled with various observations, recipes for stew and gravy, comments on fellow travelers, drawing of plants (particularly leaves, which Tain seemed to have a fondness for sketching), and several rough maps and sketches of landscape features of note (like some hoodoos, a few waterfalls, etc.). Tain also used his *Field Notes* as a spell book of sorts, and there are a few magic-user spells scattered throughout the *Field Notes*. There seems to be no rhyme or reason to the order or nature of the spells, which has led more than one commentator to note that this likely reflects the haphazard order in which the ranger learned the spells.

This article provides a brief description of the 1st and 2nd of the *Field Notes*. The contents of the 3rd and 4th books are left to the individual DM to describe.

## The Contents of the First Book

The first of the four *Field Notes* is a simple book of 140 heavy paper pages, about 10" high, 7" wide, and 3/4" thick. The pages are stitched together and bound in a simple leather cover (bull hide). The cover of the book has some intricate tool work, a border of thorny vines, with the trail sign for "beware" tooled into the centre of the front cover. The book has clearly seen much use, and the corners of pages are dog-eared, some pages are bent, and a few pages have been torn out. The color of ink changes from page to page.

### Pages                      Contents

1 to 4                      Description of the geography of the Davendowns

5 to 9                      A description of helping a druid gather some herbal components and brewing a non-magical herbal healing draught, including notes on where the herbs can be found (the healing draught is taken before sleeping, and an additional 1d4 hps is recovered overnight in addition to any natural healing or healing from proficiencies)

10 to 13                      notes on differentiating sweet cherry, choke cherry, red berry (only edible if soaked, skimmed and mashed) and dark cherry (poisonous)

14 to 16                      missing pages

17 to 21                      notes on using various woods to smoke meat, and a description of using green wood from a red willow to smoke venison and trout over campfires

22 to 25 Notes on gnolls in the Davendowns, and the location of an old (presumably abandoned) gnoll hold

26 to 27 *Deep pockets*, 2nd level Magic-User spell

28 to 32 Description of some Knights of Illisal (including sketches of heraldry, coats of arms), and travel notes (Tain worked as a guide and scout, leading the knights to old ruins along the edges of the Shale Hills in The Reach. They encountered trolls but did not find the magical sword that the knights were looking for)

33 missing page

34 to 38 Notes about harvesting trees, made while protecting some loggers from owlbears (which Tain notes were unusually numerous & active), and stirges

39 to 40 *Dancing lights*, 1st level Magic-User spell

41 to 46 Notes on an anti-poison draught that Tain was provided by a druid when he accompanied a small band to investigate and clear out a giant wasps' nest; there are almost enough details to allow an anti-venom draught to be made (non-magical, and provides a +3 saving throw vs. poison for 1d4+1 hours after imbibing)

47 to 53 Notes on a guard job for a minor knight who "claimed" an estate (Raven's Hollow) and surveyed it. Notes about ettercap nest and ruins/caves occupied by lizard men; this also includes a supply list (wagons, draft animals, provisions for 80 men, fodder for 60 animals, chickens, shovels, survey equipment, etc.).

54 to 56 *Bird call*, 1st level Magic-User spell (new spell, see below), and a description of the elven scout that taught the spell to Tain, and how the spell was used to coordinate an ambush on a band of ogres

57 to 61 Notes on a ruined tower on the periphery of the Reach. Tain and his allies encountered some giant spiders and minor undead, but were unable to get past an ornate door in the first dungeon level. The runes on the door have been copied into the Field Notes

62 to 63 *Jump*, 1st level Magic-User spell

64 to 72 Sketch of a treasure map & notes on an old warrior, and a transcription of a song about the warrior, his son, and his life's tragedy (as well as some notes about the bard Shara Thorne)

73 to 81 Detailed notes and sketches comparing grizzly bears & owlbears: their size, physiology, habits and habitats, along with notes that owlbears seem far too common in the Thistleridge region

82 to 89 Notes on elven horses & harness, including speculation that the elves have managed to introduce pegasus and unicorn blood into their mounts. There are many sketches, with a focus on some of the fine decoration on the bridles and saddles.

90 A series of numbers, adding and subtracting them, with a few notes like "10 lbs., enough for 11 days", but nothing of meaning to a reader

91 to 92 *Mud walk*, 2nd level Magic-User spell (New spell, see below)

93 to 99 Sketches and descriptions of 14 various trail signs (such as tree blazings, and simple glyphs) in use in the Davendowns

100 to 104 Description of a fight that led to pursuit of a band of gnolls (including lycanthropic gnolls) and losing several allies to an ambush; built a cairn

105 to 116 Notes on eleven types of mushrooms, and the best way to use them in venison & rabbit stew (the sketches clearly identify poisonous mushrooms, and there are brief and incomplete notes describing how the gnolls and kobolds of the Reach use some mushrooms to make insinuating poisons, which cause 1d6+1 hps of damage (reduced to 1 hp on a successful save)

117 to 126 Observations on a trip into the Reach Mountains, and a foray into an abandoned dwarven hold (and a watch tower bypassed on the way), with maps and comments on good camping locations, and the location of a bandit "hold"

127 to 129 A description of hunting giant frogs for halflings (description of Frog Creek), notes on a discussion of tactics, and how to cook the giant frog legs

130 Notes on using green-berry to make a dye, and using that dye to camouflage one's self (these pages, and the remainder of the book have green smudges on them)

131 to 134 Partial spell notes (an unsuccessful effort at learning Invisibility)

136 to 140 Observations on ankheg, based on "hunting" a nest of them in the Willow Flats region of the Civilized Lands

## The Contents of the Second Book

The second of the Field Notes looks much like the first.

### Pages Contents

1 to 7 Notes on witchcraft & herbalism (including the formula for a herbal paste that heals burns, both fire & acid); there are sketches of each of the herbs and flowers that go into the paste (the paste heals 1d4 hps if applied to a burn within 1 turn of suffering the injury)

8 to 18 A history of the tactics of groll raiders, including 3 battles (and the direction the gnolls fled, carrying loot); sketches of the insignia used by four groll clans are also included (The Tattered Ear Clan, The Goblin Biters, The Long Hunters, and the Crow Feather Clan. The Crow Feathers are noted for their use of black fletched and poisoned arrows.)

19 to 23 Comments on a druidic circle in Davendowns (The Winterfall Circle), their standing stones and some thoughts on some "fallen" standing stones and the rumored dangers that lie there, such as undead, or servants of some evil power (with a cryptic map)

24 to 26 *Preservation*, 2nd level Magic User spell

27 to 31 Notes on an elven fletcher, from accompanying the elf to gather feathers from bloodhawks (also notes on bloodhawks, and where one can expect to find them, and some notes about gemstones that Tain recovered from a bloodhawk roost)

32 to 34 *Affect normal fires*, 1st level Magic-User spell

35 to 42 Sketches and comparison of wolf, coyote, wild dog, werewolf, worg, hyena and hellhound tracks

43 to 45 *Night bow*, 1st level Magic-User spell (new spell, see below)

46 to 47 missing pages

48 Drawing of a tower built into the side of a huge oak tree, and a note "tracked the wolves to this location; no evidence of tracks leading away, no occupants"

49 to 52 *Transmute stick to arrow*, 2nd level Magic-User spell (new spell, see below)

53 A list of supplies, presumably for dungeoneering (includes 50 ft of rope, sledge hammer, 12 iron spikes, 4 wooden

wedges, hooded lantern, 10 pieces of leather (noted as being 1 ft square), pry bar, 10 large sacks, and a sketch of a sled and harness)

54 to 57 Map of the River White, and three tributaries; a note that the "sylvan tower overlooking the shallow waters of White was not to be found on any of the promontories; was the map wrong?"

58 to 64 Description of the hunting and mating habits of giant owls, several sketches of giant owls and their nests and owlets

65 to 66 *Mount*, 1st level Magic-User spell

67 to 75 A sketch of the steps necessary to build a birch bark canoe, including notes on how to peel the bark off of the trees. The description is adequate to let a skilled carpenter or shipwright build a canoe, but an unskilled person is unlikely to be successful.

76 to 80 *Tain's rebuttal*, 2nd level Magic-User spell (new spell, see below), as well as some notes about having studied in the Hall of Theffin Tainted-Blood

81 to 84 A sketch showing the location and layout of a ruined keep, and a description of the assault led by Tain to root out the gnolls that were living there; Tain notes that he felt "something" under the ruins, and chose to block the entrance rather than descend into the dungeons

85 to 86 A sketch of seven runes (neither elvish or dwarven), and a note that the order is water, earth, wood, fire, smoke, air, and ash which gains access to the "Delve of the Elders"

87 to 88 *Taunt*, 1st level Magic-User spell

89 to 91 A drawing of a longsword and scabbard, with notes about the decorations; it is described as the longsword carried by the elven fighter/magic-user Arvanior. Tain notes that the expedition into the forests of the western Reach and exploration of some troll mounds searching for the matching sword were unsuccessful

92 to 95 *Whispering wind*, 2nd level Magic-User spell, incomplete (Tain was unable to learn this spell)

96 to 102 Description of a thorn cotton harvest and the subsequent festival; Tain apparently learned about the use of bitter nut in ale and stews to help ward off illness (such use of bitter nut provides a +2 saving throw vs. disease, and reduces the recuperative time by 25%)

103 to 104 *Run*, 1st level Magic-User spell

105 missing page

106 to 111 A description of fiery streaks in the sky, and a subsequent expedition to track these fallen stars into the northern Shale Hills. The wizard leading the expedition found hunks of strange metal and strangely altered (and violent) animals

112 A list of items and the merchants that Tain was purchasing those items from in preparation for a winter journey; items include skis, a toboggan and tow harness, winter clothing, a thick canvass tent, small shovels, dried foods, and lumps of black fire stone (coal).

113 to 124 A travelogue and map describing a winter expedition to Icewall Lake and the glacier above it, searching for ruins of the legendary Kingdom of Three Crowns (and the clues to "look for the second great wall", and that the "castle lies behind crystal walls", to which Tain added, "frozen in ice?"). Tain describes the route, the need to ascend ice walls and traverse crevasses, and the frustration at not finding any ruins. He does describe encounters with yeti, and how to carefully skin a winter wolf.

125 to 126 *Shocking grasp*, 1st level Magic-User spell

127 to 130 *Wizard mark*, 1st level Magic-User spell, incomplete (Tain was unable to learn this spell, but there are notes about researching an alternate to make magical trail glyphs—provides a bonus to research)

131 Several sketches of an amulet and insignia, with a note to "ask Brother Theodilus if these are representative of some religion" and that "the brigands wearing these symbols lurked near the swamps and fallen keep of Wytchmere"

132 Six words, seemingly nonsense, copied from the inside back cover of a spell book recovered in an abandoned dwarf way-tower from an ettin's hoard (suspected to be the book of an apprentice of Lonimahr, the Wand Wizard, last known to be seeking the Tower of Doors)

133 to 140 Notes about the Company of the Silver Trumpet; Tain tracked them at the behest of a Baron, found remains, burned foes and buried ashes and remains, was unable to recover a sword and shield (of Baron's family); some of fallen were ogres and a pair of brutish humans, unable to track into the Cascade Valley

## Tain's Fate

Fitting having lived his life there, Tain perished in the Davendowns, fighting troglodytes who had emerged from deep caves and begun raiding the outlying farms and communities of the region. As Tain had no family, his possessions were spread amongst his companions. The magic-user Aralent the Contemplative took possession of *Field Notes from Davendowns*, copying it himself (as well as making each of his apprentices copy it). The original copy of *Field Notes from Davendowns* was then passed on from Aralent to a young ranger of some renown, Lyssa Whitdotter. Lyssa disappears a few years later, while exploring the Shale Hills north of Davendowns. The fate and current whereabouts of the original *Field Notes from Davendowns* is unknown, although several copies exist in the Davendowns region. Copies are easy to identify, as they tend to be bound in a single volume, rather than as 4 separate notebooks.

The originals are rumored to have a number of treasure maps contained inside, secret routes or ciphers that were not copied by Aralent or his apprentices. These rumors make the originals much sought after items.

## Bird Call (Divination, Enchantment)

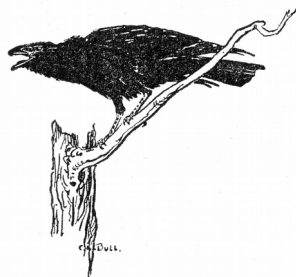
Level: *Magic user 1* Components: *V,S,M*  
 Range: *Touch* Casting time: *1 seg*  
 Duration: *1 turn/level* Saving throw: *None*  
 Area of effect: *Caster & one other creature*

Explanation/Description: Tain doesn't record where he learned the bird call spell from, other than to record that it was taught to him by a veteran ranger. The bird call spell was crafted to allow two individuals to magically communicate with each other through whistles, twittering and other bird sounds. In an environment where there are no birds, this spell will take on the audible characteristics of chirping crickets, croaking frogs, the skittering of mice, etc.

The caster and one recipient are magically endowed with the ability to "speak" with each other, and while others can "hear" the conversation, they are unable to understand it. The bird call allows two scouts to exchange information, coordinate an ambush, or carry on a conversation. Despite the seemingly limited range of noises, an entirely detailed conversation can be held. Once cast, the effective range of the conversation is about 12" to 18", depending on background noise, cover and weather conditions.

To outside listeners, the bird call is indistinguishable from natural bird calls (a druid may be able to tell, on a successful Wisdom check). It should be noted that a tongues spell allows a listener to understand the conversation; as will several other magical or supernatural methods of communications.

The material component of this spell is a pair of feathers, from the same bird, one carried by each benefactor of the bird call spell.



**Mud Walk** (a.k.a. Wilderness Boots)  
(Alteration, Enchantment)

Level: *Magic user 2*      Components: V,S,M  
Range: *Touch*              Casting time: 2 seg  
Duration: *1 hour/1d*      Saving throw: *None*  
Area of effect: *One person (see below)*

Explanation/Description: Another spell of great use to a ranger or other wilderness wanderer, the Wilderness Boots spell (known to Tain and most rangers as Mud Walk) allows the recipient to move through rough or impassable terrain without penalty. Thus a ranger with a movement rate of 12" could move through a swamp at a movement rate of 12", or through dense forest, or across rugged, rocky hill, etc. The Mud Walk spell is effective in mud or snow of any depth, but it is not effective in water greater than thigh deep (approximately 2' deep), although a recipient could move up or down a shallow stream unhindered (possibly evading pursuit). The Mud Walk spell has no effect on the trail left by the recipient; while they move quickly they may well leave a very obvious trail.

Once the caster has reached the 7th or greater level, the Mud Walk spell can be cast upon a horse or similar sized mount, allowing the caster to reap the benefits of the spell while also retaining the benefits of being mounted.

The material component of the spell is a feather which is tucked into one of the recipient's boots or shoes.

**Night Bow** (Alteration)

Level: *Magic user 1*      Components: V,S,M  
Range: *0"*                  Casting time: *1 seg*  
Duration: *See below*      Saving throw: *None*  
Area of effect: *See below*

Explanation/Description: Partially inspired by the effects of a faerie fire spell, a ranger collaborated with a magic-user ally to create this spell. A modified version of the dancing lights spell, the night bow spell is cast upon a bow (a bow only, the night bow spell will fail to take effect if cast upon a crossbow). While the spell is in effect, each arrow that is fired from the bow will be "lit up", casting light equivalent to a dancing light (a lantern or torch), although the caster has no ability to make the light move; it is affixed to the arrow.

This allows an archer to illuminate an area or a target from a distance. The night bow spell has been used to assist in combat (giving archers an illuminated target), track a target (following a troll with a glowing arrow sticking out of its back can be relatively simple), mark a trail or path, or illuminate an area from a distance.

The night bow spell has the ability to place a light aura on 1 arrow/2 levels of the caster (rounded up), to a maximum of 6 arrows (at 11th level). The enchantment will remain in effect for 1 turn per level of the caster, so the bearer of the bow under the effects of the night bow spell has some time to be patient and selectively use the magic illumination provided by the spell. The night bow spell has no effect on missile combat (i.e. there are no attack or damage bonuses or penalties, the arrow is not considered magical, etc.), although the light effect may reduce attack penalties accruing from darkness or concealment.

The material components of the spell are a bow (mundane or magical, the night bow spell does not have a lasting effect on the bow), arrows (which are used normally), and a bit of phosphorous, wytchwood or a glow-worm.





### **Tain's Rebuttal** (Necromantic, Invocation)

Level: *Magic user 2*    Components: *V,S,M*  
Range: *Touch*            Casting time: *2 seg*  
Duration: *See below*    Saving throw: *Neg*  
Area of effect: *One arrow*

Explanation/Description: Despite his intensely private nature and quiet demeanor, the ranger Tain had a bit of a vengeful streak, as proven by this spell. A spell of very limited application, Tain's Rebuttal allows the caster to take any arrow that has struck them (and only the caster) and send it back at the archer who fired it, unerringly striking. The arrow so fired back will twist and turn around obstacles and cover, weaving through narrow arrow slits, as long as there is a clear path (i.e. it cannot return to the target if the target was to close a door behind them and there were no open entrances or windows to the room they were hiding in). The arrow also strikes with a damage bonus of +1 hp of damage for every 3 caster levels (rounded down).

While this spell has limited application, Tain was quite proud of it. He used it to gain some notoriety, carrying an arrow fired at him by the gnoll war-shaman Furzgh'gh'aal for many moons, and ultimately using it to bring down Furzgh'gh'aal at a range of 200 yards, breaking the morale of the Broken Bite gnoll clan and saving the village of Alderglen from destruction.

The material component is an arrow that has struck the caster.

### **Transmute Stick to Arrow** (Alteration)

Level: *Magic user 2*    Components: *V,S,M*  
Range: *Touch*            Casting time: *2 seg*  
Duration: *1 rd/lvl*        Saving throw: *None*  
Area of effect: *1 stick/lvl*

Explanation/Description: This spell is of great utility to archers far from home and resupply. When cast upon a bundle of sticks (which must be at least 2 ft long and relatively straight), the sticks are temporarily turned into arrows. One stick per caster level is turned into an arrow, and the spell duration continues for 1 round/caster level. The material component is an arrow head, which is not consumed in the casting.



# Kung Fu Monk

By Stuart Marshall

**Re-using this material:** *The following article is Open OSRIC content.*

The Kung Fu monk is a class inspired by Kwai Chang Caine in the 1970s TV series of the same name. In a conventional fantasy game based on Northern European legend, Kung Fu monks should be extremely rare: these characters are far out of place. They should hail from some Shaolin-esque monastery in a distant Orient (or possibly on an alternative Prime Material plane).

Kung Fu monks suffer the following restrictions:

First, the monk may never possess more than five magic items.

Second, the monk must give away a tenth of any money that he or she receives to some Lawful cause, and if there is any money remaining after paying the monk's basic living costs, this surplus must be likewise donated. "Basic living costs" means very basic, for Kung Fu monks eat and drink very simply, and are accustomed to living in a plain cell.

Third, the monk loses all special powers while encumbered. The monk powers below only apply to unencumbered monks i.e. those carrying less than 35 lbs weight.

Fourth, the monk must be human.

The Kung Fu Monk may use those magic items usable by thieves, and no other classes.

## The Kung Fu Monk Character

**Minimum Scores:** Str 14, Dex 15, Con 7, Int 7, Wis 14, Cha 6

**Hit Die Type:** d6 (max 14)

**Alignment:** Any lawful

**Experience bonus:** None

**Armour/Shield Permitted:** None

**Weapons Permitted:** Staff, dagger, spear, trident, javelin, crossbow

**Weapon Proficiencies:** 1 + 1 every 3 levels

**Penalty to hit for non-proficiency:** -3

**Weapon specialisation:** N/A

## Kung Fu Monk Level Advancement

Level	Base xp required	Hit dice (d6)	AC	Move	Bare hand atkks	Bare Hand Dmg (S-M)	Bare Hand Dmg (L)
1	0	2	7	+30 ft	1	1d6	1d4
2	2,100	3	6	+30 ft	1	1d6+1	1d4+1
3	4,250	4	5	+30 ft	1	2d4	1d6
4	8,600	5	4	+40 ft	3/2	2d4+1	1d6+1
5	19,500	6	3	+40 ft	3/2	2d4+2	1d8
6	40,000	7	3	+50 ft	3/2	3d4	1d8+1
7	81,000	8	2	+50 ft	2	3d4+1	2d4
8	124,000	9	2	+60 ft	2	3d4+2	2d4+1
9	256,000	10	1	+60 ft	2	4d4	2d6
10	500,000	11	1	+70 ft	5/2	4d4+1	2d6+1
11	750,000	12	0	+70 ft	5/2	4d4+2	2d6+2
12	1,000,000	13	0	+80 ft	5/2	5d4	2d6+3
13	1,350,000	14	-1	+80 ft	3	5d4+1	3d6
14	1,700,000	14+2	-1	+90 ft	3	5d4+2	3d6+1
15	2,050,000	14+4	-2	+90 ft	3	6d4	3d6+2
16	2,400,000	14+6	-2	+90 ft	7/2	6d4+1	3d6+3
17	2,750,000	14+8	-3	+90 ft	7/2	6d4+2	3d6+3
18	3,100,000	14+10	-3	+90 ft	7/2	7d4	4d6
19	3,450,000	14+12	-4	+90 ft	4	7d4+1	4d6
20	3,800,000	14+14	-4	+90 ft	4	7d4+2	4d6+1

**Kung Fu Monk Saving Throw Table**  
(as per clerics)

**Kung Fu Monk To Hit Table**  
(as per clerics)

### Kung Fu Monk Skills Table

Lvl	Climb	W Find	T Hear	N Open	L Tightrope	Long J	High J	Pole V	Fall	Quest to gain level	Notes
1	80%	25%	10%	30%	30%	15 ft	5 ft	8 ft	5 ft	No	Prone fighting
2	82%	27%	12%	33%	34%	16 ft	5¼ ft	8½ ft	10 ft	No	Feign death
3	84%	29%	14%	36%	38%	17 ft	5½ ft	9 ft	15 ft	No	Throw foe
4	86%	31%	16%	39%	42%	18 ft	5¾ ft	9½ ft	20 ft	No	Resist mind reading
5	88%	33%	18%	42%	46%	19 ft	6 ft	10 ft	25 ft	No	Blind fighting
6	90%	35%	20%	45%	50%	20 ft	6¼ ft	10½ ft	30 ft	No	Heal self
7	91%	37%	22%	48%	54%	21 ft	6½ ft	11 ft	35 ft	No	Resist fear
8	92%	39%	24%	51%	58%	22 ft	6¾ ft	11½ ft	40 ft	No	Resist poison
9	93%	41%	26%	54%	62%	23 ft	7 ft	12 ft	45 ft	No	Enhanced surprise
10	94%	43%	28%	57%	66%	24 ft	7¼ ft	12½ ft	50 ft	Yes	Stunning blow
11	95%	45%	30%	60%	70%	25 ft	7½ ft	13 ft	55 ft	No	Catch arrows
12	96%	47%	32%	63%	73%	26 ft	7¾ ft	13½ ft	60 ft	Yes	Hold breath
13	97%	49%	34%	66%	76%	27 ft	8 ft	14 ft	65 ft	No	Resist paralysis
14	98%	51%	36%	69%	79%	28 ft	8¼ ft	14½ ft	70 ft	Yes	Resist disease
15	99%	53%	38%	72%	82%	29 ft	8½ ft	15 ft	75 ft	Yes	Speak with animals
16	99%	55%	40%	75%	85%	30 ft	8¾ ft	15½ ft	80 ft	Yes	See invisible
17	99%	57%	42%	78%	88%	31 ft	9 ft	16 ft	85 ft	Yes	Resist psychic barrage
18	99%	59%	44%	81%	90%	32 ft	9¼ ft	16½ ft	90 ft	Yes	Resist petrification
19	99%	61%	46%	84%	92%	33 ft	9½ ft	17 ft	95 ft	Yes	Speak with plants
20	99%	63%	48%	87%	94%	34 ft	9¾ ft	17½ ft	100 ft	Yes	Vibrating palm

**NB:** Unlike thieves and assassins, the Kung Fu Monk receives no skill adjustments for race or dexterity score.



A monk using a weapon in a martial arts attack gets a choice: weapon damage +1hp/2 levels, or open hand damage +1hp (irrespective of the weapon used). With the first option, the monk gets one attack per round. With the second, he or she gets normal open hand number of attacks. With the first option, if the weapon is magic the monk gets full bonus. With the second, if the weapon is magic then that doesn't enhance the monk's "to hit" or damage rolls, but it does enable him or her to hit a target that would normally only be hit by magical weapons.

### KUNG FU MONK CLASS ABILITIES

**Prone fighting:** A first level the kung fu monk can fight without penalty from a prone position, provided the character's arms and legs are free.

**Feign death:** From second level, the kung fu monk can feign death, slowing his or her heart rate and breathing to near-zero. This process can be performed at will, but it takes one round. The monk remains alert to his or her surroundings but cannot otherwise act while in this state. He or she can return to normal at will, taking one round to do so.

**Throw foe:** From third level, the kung fu monk can perform a judo throw on a foe. The target must be human, demi-human or humanoid and its level or hit dice must be lower than the monk's level. The monk declares the throw before the initiative dice are rolled, and sacrifices all of his or her attacks or other actions that round. The monk must roll a successful "to hit" roll in melee to perform the throw. If successful, the target is thrown 1d10 ft in a direction chosen by the monk. The target will land prone and has a 50% chance of dropping anything it is carrying. It can get up next

round but will lose all its actions in the process. The throw foe ability is particularly useful when fighting near a cliff, chasm or river.

**Resist mind reading:** From fourth level, the kung fu monk gets a saving throw at +4 vs. any attempt to read his or her mind (whether via ESP or any other ability).

**Blind fighting:** Normally, fighting a target that cannot be seen (whether due to darkness, blindness, invisibility or any other factor) incurs a "to hit" penalty of -4. A kung fu monk of fifth level or higher has such keen hearing and such quick reactions that he or she disregards this penalty.

**Heal self:** Starting at sixth level, the kung fu monk can enter a healing trance. While in the trance, the monk heals 1hp of damage per round. The trance lasts 1d4 rounds, plus one round per level of the monk above sixth (so for example a 10th level kung fu monk's trance would last for 1d4+4 rounds). This ability may be performed once per day.

**Resist fear:** At seventh level, the kung fu monk's mental discipline is sufficient to control most forms of fear, even those induced by magic. The monk gets a saving throw against any fear effect that would not normally permit one. If the fear would normally allow a saving throw, the monk gets bonus of +4 on the roll.

**Resist poison:** From eighth level, the kung fu monk's control over his or her body empowers the character to resist venoms and toxins. The monk gets a saving throw bonus of +4 against poison of any kind.

**Enhanced surprise:** A kung fu monk of ninth level or higher reaches a new plane of alertness, such that he or she can only be surprised on a d6 roll of "1".

**Stunning blow:** From tenth level, the kung fu monk can perform a stunning strike on a foe. The target must be human, demi-human or humanoid and its level or hit dice must be lower than the monk's level. The monk declares the stunning strike before the initiative dice are rolled, and sacrifices all of his or her attacks or other actions that round. The monk must roll a successful "to hit" roll in melee to perform the strike. If successful, the target is incapacitated and unable to act for 2d4 rounds.

**Catch arrows:** At eleventh level or higher, the kung fu monk masters the discipline of yadomejutsu. He or she learns to avoid arrows, crossbow quarrels or hurled missiles, by dodging them, by knocking them aside

with a hand, or even by catching them. The monk must have complete freedom of movement and at least one hand free; if so, he or she gains a saving throw against all launched or hurled missile attacks. The roll needed is 13 or higher on 1d20, reducing by 1 for each level the monk attains thereafter (so a nineteenth level monk would need a 5 or higher to avoid a missile attack). A roll of "1" is always a fail, and the monk cannot avoid very large missiles (e.g. those launched by a catapult or hurled by a giant). The power is also ineffective against arrows of slaying or spells of any kind (so a flame arrow or acid arrow spell would be unaffected).

**Hold breath:** From twelfth level, the kung fu monk can hold his or her breath for three rounds, increasing by one round for each level thereafter. (The monk can already reduce his or her breathing to near-zero by feigning death, but the hold breath ability enables the monk to act as normal without air.)

**Resist paralysis:** When the kung fu monk reaches thirteenth level, the character achieves such perfect muscle control that paralysis of any kind is less likely to affect him or her. If the paralysis effect would not normally have a saving throw, then the monk gets a saving throw at normal chances. If the effect would normally allow a saving throw, the monk gets a bonus of +4 on his or her roll.

**Resist disease:** A fourteenth or higher level kung fu monk achieves such purity of body that he or she is able to shrug off diseases. If a disease effect would not normally have a saving throw, then the monk gets saving throw vs death to avoid it. If the effect would normally allow a saving throw, the monk gets a bonus of +4 on his or her roll.

**Speak with animals:** A kung fu monk at fifteenth level is so in tune with nature that he or she can communicate with animals, as the druidical spell Speak with Animals, at will.

**See invisible:** From sixteenth level the kung fu monk's senses become so preternaturally sharp that he or she can perceive invisible creatures and objects within 30 ft purely because of the way they affect air currents around them. The monk can effectively "see" invisible.

**Resist psychic barrage:** From seventeenth level the kung fu monk is protected from the psychic barrage power possessed by certain monsters, rolling saving throws

against it as if he or she has both intelligence and wisdom of 18.

**Resist petrification:** An eighteenth level kung fu monk becomes harder to turn to stone. At this level the monk gets a saving throw against petrification, even if the effect would not normally allow one. If a saving throw would normally be allowed, the monk rolls at +4.

**Speak with plants:** A nineteenth level or higher level kung fu monk can communicate with vegetable life, as the druidical spell *Speak with Plants*, at will.

**Vibrating palm:** At twentieth level, the kung fu monk achieves the ultimate monkly

power of the vibrating palm. This is the power to stop a creature's heart with a single, light touch of the fingers. The target must be human, demi-human or humanoid and its level or hit dice must be lower than the monk's level. The monk declares the vibrating palm strike before the initiative dice are rolled, and sacrifices all of his or her attacks or other actions that round. The monk must roll a successful "to hit" roll in melee to perform the strike. If successful, the target's heart stops. It is incapacitated at once and will die in ten rounds. The monk can restart the creature's heart within the ten rounds by touching certain secret pressure points known only to the monk. No other force can save it.



## Magic items for Assassins and Other Dirty Fighters

By C. Wesley Clough

Some characters are paragons of virtue on the battle field, reveling in the opportunity to overcome their opponents in valorous combat. The magical items listed here are not for such characters. Cavaliers and Paladins would not be caught dead using most of these items - to even consider doing so would tarnish their shining honor. No, the items listed here are for the other characters: the assassins, thieves, and more brutish fighters who do not care about honor and fighting fair. These items are for those characters that want to end fights quickly and decisively, while giving their opponents little chance to save themselves.

Whether first encountered in a long lost treasure hoard or in the hands of a fiendish foe, these items can be a helpful addition to a DM's bag of tricks. An assassin or a thief with a far blade can make an interesting opponent, as he strikes at a player

character from hiding and then vanishes down an alley way with a good head start. A few basilisk bolts in the case of a low level crossbow-armed bandit or mercenary suddenly make him much more dangerous; even, potentially, to higher level characters. Without further ado, here are some items for the blackguards and reavers amongst us all.

### Acid Dart

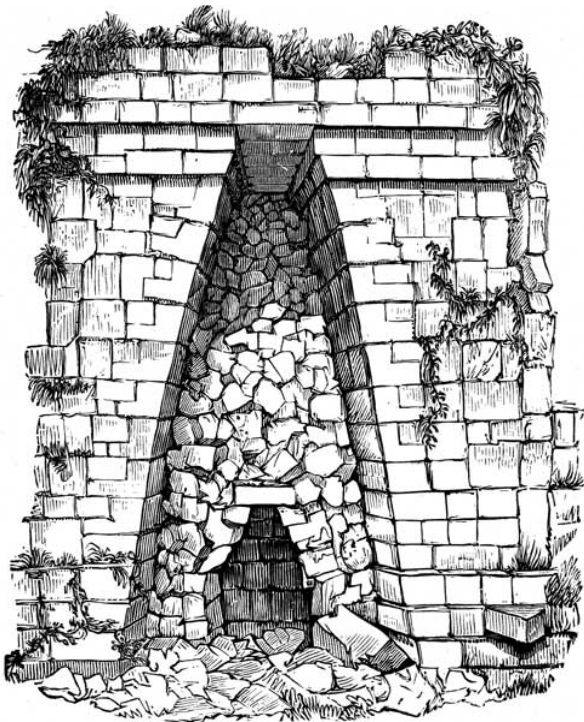
Most often found in bunches of 2-5, these magical black darts transform into globs of acid when thrown. An acid dart can be thrown just like a standard dart, having the same range and weapon characteristics. Acid darts grant the thrower a +3 bonus to hit. Should the dart successfully strike the target, it deals 2d4 points of acid damage and continues to deal 2d4 points of acid damage on each of the subsequent two rounds. Acid darts are destroyed when used, whether they hit an opponent or not.

Experience Point Value: 250; Gold Piece Sale Value: 3000

### Basilisk Bolt

These crossbow bolts are uniformly dull gray in color. Designed originally by the evil cabal of spell casters known as the "Umbral Spark", these dangerous weapons have begun to proliferate in the hands of assassins. Sized for light crossbows 75% of the time, basilisk bolts function as +1 crossbow bolts. On a successful 'to hit' roll of 20 or more, considering only the bolts +1 bonus, the target must save vs. petrification or instantly turn to stone. From 2-8 basilisk bolts will be found.

Experience Point Value: 450; Gold Piece Sale Value: 3500



### Crippling Dagger

This short, thick bladed dagger is made of solid iron and has a pommel shaped like a human skull. Vile runes are etched into the blade and handle. The first recorded appearance of these daggers was in the hands of scarlet horde assassins about a century ago. Since that time, many evil organizations have begun to arm their agents with such weapons.

A crippling dagger is a +2 weapon that on a successful 'to hit' roll of 20 or more, considering only the daggers +2 bonus, will slow and enfeeble the target for 1d4 rounds. While slowed and enfeebled the target will move and attack at half value, and all damage scored will be reduced by 25%.

Experience Point Value: 3000; Gold Piece Sale Value: 15000

### Far Blade

The origin of these ornately crafted short swords of magically hardened silver is lost to the mists of time. Often found in ancient burial crypts and the remains of cities long since fallen to ruin, far blades are highly sought after by assassins. Each far blade is a +1 short sword. The wielder may strike opponents up to 3" away, as if the far blade were a thrown weapon; however, the sword never truly leaves the wielder's hand. The wielder gestures as if striking with the blade and the effects of the strike are felt at a distance. The target of the attack must be visible to the wielder. The first such ranged attack against a given opponent is always considered to be by surprise, unless that opponent already knows the blade's capabilities.

Experience Point Value: 1750; Gold Piece Sale Value: 17500

### Scabbard of the Spider

Often found on the belts of assassins, villains and drow, these lacquered black sheaths are inscribed with silver web-like runes and spider symbols. Some 90% of those found are sized to fit a short sword, but other sizes, from dagger to two handed sword, do exist. Upon command, up to 3 times per day, the scabbard can coat the blade held within it with large spider venom. This venom is good for the next attack made with the blade. An opponent hit while the blade is so coated must save vs. poison at a +2 bonus or die, exactly as if that opponent had been bitten by a large spider.

Experience Point Value: 1500; Gold Piece Sale Value: 5000



# King Rat

by Michael Davis

This villain and monster were originally designed as drop-in encounters for DF23: The Haunted Keep (available for free download from Dragonsfoot). They are generic enough to drop into any dungeon of your choosing.



## Walter Rodemus

Like the other Rodemuses (see DF23), Walter is a wererat. He is the most hideous of his clan and will always be encountered in ratman form. He wears decaying robes (made of once-fine velvet, trimmed with giant ferret pelt) and exudes an unhealthy stink of urine and decayed flesh. He wears a gold medallion with an embossed image of a rat skull on it (worth 200 gp).

AC 6, HD 3+1, hp 24, MV 12", #AT weapon or bite (1d3), surprise on 1-4, hit only by silver or magic weapons, Int Very, AL CE

Notable stats: Str 7 (-1 to hit in melee if using a weapon), Int 16, Cha 4

Walter is a necromancer who can command undead as a 5th level cleric. Instead of summoning normal rats, he will summon 2d6 undead rats to his aid:

## Giant Undead Rats

Rat Skeletons AC 8, HD 1-1, MV 12", #AT bite (1d4), SD ½ dmg from edged weapons, AL N

Rat Zombies AC 9, HD 1+1, MV 6", #AT bite (1d4), always lose initiative, AL N

Rat Ghouls AC 7, HD 1+1, MV 9", #AT bite (1d4 + paralysis), AL CE

Undead rats take 2d4 damage from holy water and can be turned at +1 on the dice. Zombie and Ghoul rats inflict disease as normal rats.

Walter can cast the following spells: L1: Chill Touch (treat as Shocking Grasp that does cold damage), Darkness, Spider Climb; L2: Reaper's Scythe (treat as Spiritual Hammer), Scare, Shatter, Ray of Enfeeblement; L3: Animate Dead

**Tactics:** keep distance (perhaps with Spider Climb); summon rats; get rid of spell casters with Scare; disable missile weapons with

Shatter/Ray of Enfeeblement; fight at range with Reaper's Scythe; if forced into melee, use Chill Touch; if reduced to less than 12 hp, change to Giant Rat form and flee (possibly under cover of darkness).

Walter has been engaged in a project to create an unspeakable horror, a King Rat. His daemonic experiments have summoned demonic spirits into 9 rats which have swollen to prodigious size:

Monstrous Rats AC 6, HD 2, MV 12", #AT bite (1d6), Int Low, Size M, AL CE

Some of these monstrous rats have been intertwined with giant rats and normal rats to create a hive-mind, the King Rat.

## KING RAT

FREQUENCY:	Very rare
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	5
MOVE:	10 ft
HIT DICE:	See below
% IN LAIR:	100%
TREASURE TYPE:	C
NO. OF ATTACKS:	See below
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d3
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Disease, Psionics
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Regen 3 hp/round
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Standard
INTELLIGENCE:	Average
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic evil
SIZE:	L
PSIONIC ABILITY:	139
Atk/Def Modes:	A, F

The King Rat is a crawling abomination created by intertwining the tails of 1d6+1 Monstrous Rats, 2d6 Giant Rats and 3d6 normal rats. The necromantic ritual which creates the King Rat unites their minds into a hive mind with increased intelligence and psionic abilities. The King Rat can speak in the common tongue.

If it is threatened, the King Rat can protect itself with a **psionic blast** in a 30' diameter sphere centred on itself (cost 20; see DMG p.78). It also has the psionic ability of **domination**, which allows it to completely control the actions of a single creature (range 30', cost equal to dominated creature's level or HD, Save vs. Magic negates). The King Rat prefers to use this latter ability on animal minds, which it finds easier to understand and control. If there are no animals within range, it will attempt to dominate a higher intelligence. The King Rat will have an additional 1d4-1 minor psionic disciplines.



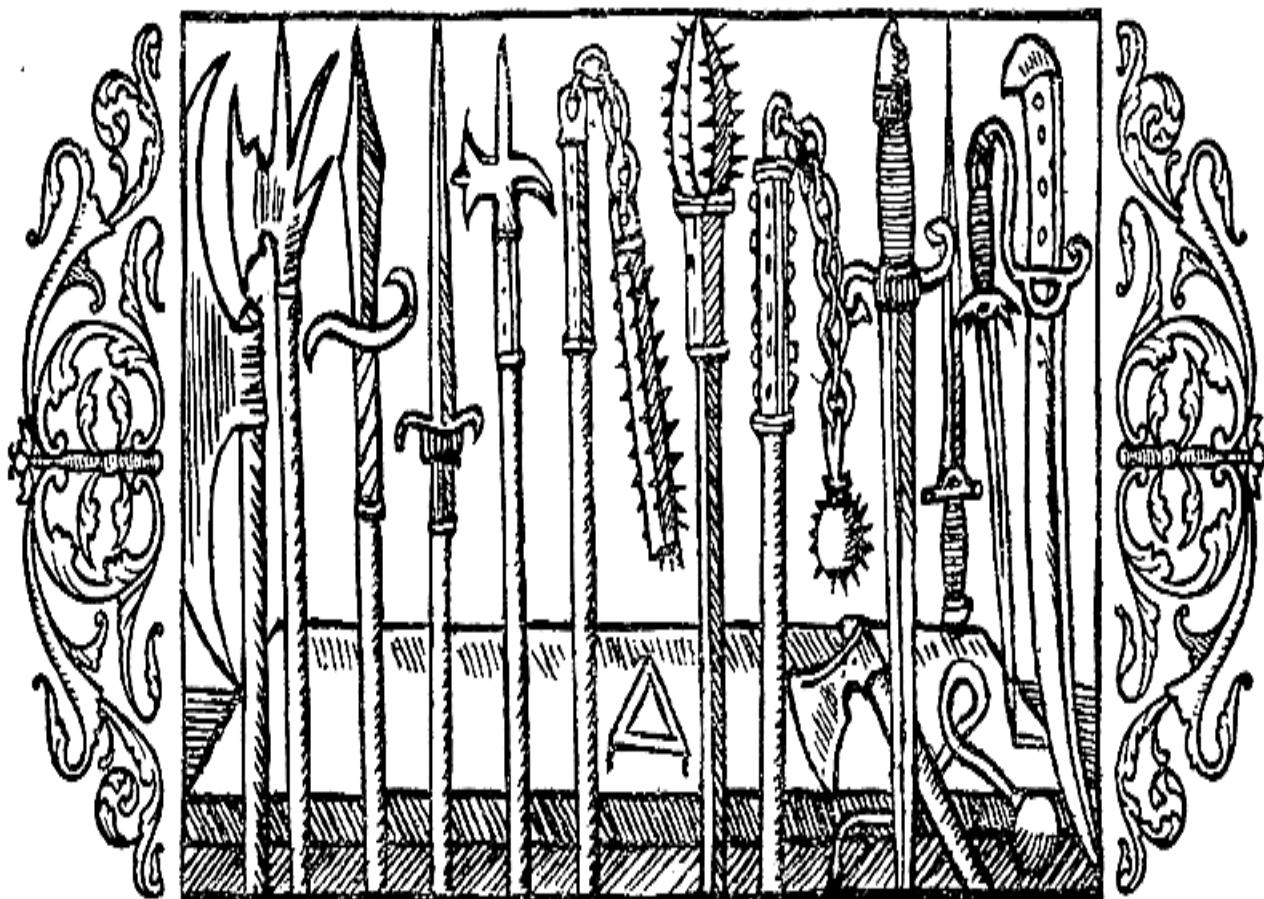
As the King Rat is a tangled mass of bodies, it has limited ability to make melee attacks. To determine the HD of the King Rat for the purpose of bite attacks, count 1 HD per 2 Monstrous Rats,

1 HD per 4 Giant Rats and 1 HD per 8 normal rats in the composite body. Anyone attacking the King Rat with a melee weapon can be attacked by up to 3 bites per round (1d3 damage each, with the usual 1 in 20 chance for disease). Attackers using missile weapons or weapons with long reach such as a spear are safe from bite attacks. However, the King Rat can choose to disentangle some of its giant rat bodies to defend itself, and can summon 2d6 Giant Rats once per day.

To kill the King Rat, it is necessary to kill the bodies in the composite individually; or an attempt can be made to separate the tails (which will likely expose the attacker to bite attacks). The tails can be treated as AC 4 with 1 hp per intertwined creature. If the tails are cut or there are less than 2 Monstrous Rats left in the composite, the King Rat separates and each of the remaining rats attacks individually. In this case, the rats attack in an insane frenzy at +2 to hit and will fight until slain.



The King Rat can regenerate 3 hp/round, but it cannot raise rats which have been slain. The 3 hp can be divided as required between any wounded but surviving rats in the composite.





# Create Food and Drink

by Nicole Massey

After getting inspired by the prior installments of this column, I decided to submit some of my own recipes for use by y'all. So here they are for your enjoyment and gastronomic pleasure. First we'll start with a couple of snack options, then do a main dish—everyone likes hamburgers, right?

I'd love to hear from folks who make any of these, so send me an email at [nyyki@gypsyheir.com](mailto:nyyki@gypsyheir.com) with feedback.

## **Spades Mix**

This is a great collaborative snack option that also adds variety and helps to keep folks from getting burned out on a single snack item flavor. The other stuff in it also cuts down on the problem of what's sometimes called "Orange Mold". And it's also a lot more appetizing than iron rations, too.

Servings: 1 (for use in building a shopping list only, there's far more than one serving here)

### **Ingredients:**

1 bag chex mix, your choice  
1 can puffed cheese balls  
1 box bugles  
1 bag Ghardettos snack mix  
1 can mixed nuts  
1 bag Cheddar, Parmesan, or pizza Goldfish crackers

This is a good mixed salty snack for card playing or other gaming groups. The standard mix comes from each member of the group bringing a bag or box of one ingredient. Other ingredients can be substituted at group discretion. Note that popcorn isn't recommended, as it tends to get soggy quick in this mix for some reason. A large bucket is useful, preferably with a lid, for mixing the ingredients. This also prevents spillage when the bucket is passed around. Other options are Cheetos, Cheese-its, seasoned croutons, and slightly crushed nacho cheese or cool ranch Doritos or Funyuns.

## **Build Your Own Trash Recipe**

We call it Chex Mix these days, but back when my grandmother made it it was known as "Trash". Here's a recipe for building your own blend. And just think...you don't have to roll on the potion miscibility table for it, either.

Servings: 1

### **Ingredients:**

1 cup Rice Chex  
1 cup Corn Chex  
1 cup Wheat Chex  
1 cup Goldfish Crackers  
1 cup Sesame sticks  
1 cup salted peanuts or mixed nuts  
Marinade:  
4 tbsp. Butter or margarine  
4 tsp. Worcestershire sauce  
½ tsp. Creole Seasoning or Ranch Dressing Mix  
½ tsp. Garlic Powder  
½ tsp. Onion salt

**Oven Method:** Preheat oven to 250°F. Melt the Marinade ingredients until warm and blended. Cover a large cookie sheet with foil. Pour all of the remaining ingredients into a large Ziploc bag. Pour in the marinade and mix in the closed bag so that the marinade covers all of the dry ingredients evenly. Pour the mixture onto the cookie sheet, distributing evenly, and cook for 1 hour, turning every 15 minutes.

**Slow Cooker Method:** Combine the first six ingredients in the slow cooker. Mix melted butter and Worcestershire sauce and pour over the dry ingredients, then mix the seasonings and sprinkle over the top, stirring well to spread spices evenly. Do not cover! Cook on high for 2 hours, and stir well every 30 minutes. Turn to low and cook for 2 to 6 hours.

**Variations:** I don't care for pretzels, so I replaced them with sesame sticks. Ditto with Cheerios, so I substituted the goldfish crackers, which also add a different flavor to the mix. I've also tried Chinese noodles, and fried onions in a can might also work well. The core of this is six cups of something you like that's a grain or nut based snack, then the butter and the Worcestershire sauce. One salty seasoning is probably mandatory, but feel free to try other things. I've also seen spoon-sized shredded wheat as an ingredient, so let your imagination fly.

## **Industrial Strength Burgers**

This is a recipe my dad makes, and they're my absolute favorite burgers. I prefer them with cheddar cheese; the sharper the better, but other folks have other opinions. If you want a smaller burger, make them into more patties per pound. I've not tried any other meats, though I suspect ground venison mixed half and half with ground pork, or a more fatty ground beef, ground buffalo, ground lamb, ground elk, or possibly even ground catoblepas would work.

Servings: 6

**Ingredients:**

2 lbs. ground beef  
1 packet dry onion soup mix  
1 tbsp. Worcestershire sauce  
1 tsp. season salt

Mix all ingredients well. Divide into six equal

patties and shape. Grill, fry or bake until done to proper amount for each person's taste. Serve on hamburger buns, either toasted or untoasted depending on taste, and cheese can also be melted on top by placing it on the cooking burgers for a minute or so until it starts to melt. Use the regular condiments and fixings.



# Troubadour

By Stuart Marshall

**Re-using this material:** *The following article is Open OSRIC content.*

Troubadour is a masculine word. Its feminine form is "Trobairitz". Historically, they were a movement of poets and musicians from southern Europe who used certain Occipitan verse forms. In-game they represent a class of wandering poets, musicians and storytellers who feature heavily in OSRIC's source literature—Fflewddur Fflam, Taillefer, Snorri Sturluson and Alan a Dale could all be represented by Troubadours.

Troubadours have a few unique abilities of their own, which they combine with the ability to cast druid and illusionist spells.

Troubadours suffer the following restrictions:

First, the troubadour may not wear rigid armour. Flexible armour types such as chain or scale are permitted, so the armour types a troubadour may not wear are plate, banded and splinted.

Second, troubadours must be human, half-elven, elven, or (rarely) gnomish. Humans are unlimited in level. Half-elves are restricted to level 8, elves to level 6 and gnomes to level 5 as troubadours.

A demi-human troubadour may multi-class

as a fighter/troubadour or thief/troubadour. Half-elves may also multi-class as assassin/troubadours or ranger/troubadours. No other multi-class combinations involving the troubadour are permitted. A multi-classed troubadour suffers the troubadour's restrictions on choice of armour, but may wield any weapon permitted by his or her other class.

The troubadour may use those magic items which are usable by thieves, druids, and illusionists.

## The Troubadour Character

**Minimum Scores:** Str 9, Dex 10, Con 7, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 13

**Hit Die Type:** d6 (max 11)

**Alignment:** Any

**Experience bonus:** None

**Armour/Shield Permitted:** All but plate, banded and splinted

**Weapons Permitted:** Club, dagger, dart, scimitar, short bow, sling, spear, staff, longsword, broadsword, shortsword.

**Weapon Proficiencies:** 2 + 1 every 3 levels

**Penalty to hit for non-proficiency:** -3

**Weapon specialisation:** N/A

Level	Base xp Required	Troubadour Level Advancement				
		Hit Dice (d6)	Charm	Mesmerise	Lore	Read languages
1	0	1	5%	10%	10%	10%
2	1,800	2	8%	14%	15%	16%
3	3,600	3	11%	18%	20%	22%
4	6,500	4	14%	22%	25%	28%
5	13,500	5	17%	26%	30%	34%
6	28,000	6	20%	30%	35%	40%
7	58,000	7	23%	34%	40%	46%
8	120,000	8	26%	38%	45%	52%
9	240,000	9	29%	42%	50%	58%
10	480,000	10	32%	46%	54%	64%
11	720,000	11	35%	50%	58%	70%
12	960,000	11+1	38%	54%	62%	75%
13	1,200,000	11+2	41%	58%	66%	80%
14	1,440,000	11+3	44%	62%	70%	85%
15	1,680,000	11+4	47%	66%	74%	90%
16	1,920,000	11+5	50%	70%	78%	92%
17	2,160,000	11+6	53%	74%	82%	94%
18	2,400,000	11+7	56%	78%	86%	96%
19	2,640,000	11+8	59%	82%	90%	98%
20	2,880,000	11+9	62%	86%	94%	99%

**Troubadour Saving Throw Table**  
(as per thieves)

**Troubadour To Hit Table**  
(as per thieves)



#### Troubadour Skills Table, Charisma effects

Charisma	Charm	Mesmerise
13	-5%	-5%
14	-	-5%
15	-	-
16	-	+5%
17	+5%	+10%
18	+10%	+15%

#### Troubadour Skills Table, Intelligence effects

Intelligence	Lore	Read languages
12	-10%	-10%
13	-5%	-5%
14	-	-5%
15	-	-
16	-	+5%
17	+5%	+10%
18	+10%	+15%

#### Troubadour Skills Table, Racial effects

Race	Charm	Mesmerise	Lore	Read languages
Elf	+5%	-5%	-	+10%
Gnome	-5%	-5%	+10%	-
Half-elf	+5%	-5%	-	-
Human	-	-	-	-

#### Troubadour Spells Table

Level	Casting level	Druid lv 1	Druid lv 2	Druid lv 3	Druid lv 4	Illus lv 1	Illus lv 2	Illus lv 3
1	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	2	1	-	-	-	1	-	-
4	3	2	-	-	-	1	-	-
5	4	2	1	-	-	2	-	-
6	5	3	2	-	-	2	1	-
7	6	3	3	1	-	2	1	-
8	7	3	3	1	-	3	2	-
9	8	4	3	2	-	3	2	1
10	9	4	4	2	1	3	3	2
11	10	4	4	3	1	4	3	2
12	11	5	4	3	2	4	3	2
13	12	5	5	4	3	5	4	2
14	13	5	5	4	3	5	5	3
15	14	6	5	4	3	6	5	3
16	15	6	6	5	4	6	5	4
17	16	6	6	5	5	6	6	5
18	17	6	6	6	5	6	6	5
19	18	6	6	6	5	6	6	6
20	19	6	6	6	6	6	6	6

**NB:** Troubadours do not gain bonus druid spells for having high wisdom. This ability is limited to "true" priests, i.e. clerics or druids.

#### Troubadour class abilities

All troubadour class abilities are available from level 1. The troubadour may only use one ability at a time. Make friends and influence is automatic, but all the other skills require a roll to use.

**Make friends and influence:** A troubadour shifts the initial reaction of monsters (excluding undead, golems and the like)

one step if they hear his music before encountering him; this applies to monsters of lower level or hit dice to the troubadour. So, a troubadour of level 3 would shift the reaction of any monsters less than level 3 or 3 hit dice, from hostile to unfriendly for example. Hit point bonuses count as an additional hit die for each complete multiple of 4, so for this purpose a monster with 2+3 hit dice would count as 2HD, 10+4

hit dice would count as 11HD, and 12+36 would count as 21HD.

**Charm:** Charm resembles the magic user spells Charm Person and/or Charm Monster. It affects a maximum of one creature at a time. The target must be of at least animal intelligence, neither undead nor extraplanar, and up to the troubadour's level in HD. The target receives a saving throw vs. magic, modified by its wisdom bonus if applicable, to avoid the effects. If the saving throw is failed the charm lasts only while the troubadour continues to play and sing. A charmed creature believes the troubadour is a good friend, and behaves accordingly. If there is a shared language then the troubadour can "sing" instructions which the creature will tend to follow, provided such instructions are not against the creature's nature or obviously self-destructive.

This ability can also be used to counteract charm-like effects produced by creatures like harpies, sirens or vampires, provided the charming creature is of the troubadour's hit dice or less. If the troubadour makes a successful skill roll the charm or charm-like effect is cancelled.

**Mesmerise:** "Mesmerise" affects one or more creatures of at least animal intelligence, neither undead nor extraplanar, up to double the troubadour's level in HD. Target creatures receive a saving throw vs. magic, modified by their wisdom bonus if applicable, to avoid the effects. If the saving throw is failed the mesmerisation lasts only while the bard plays and sings. Mesmerised creatures will stand quietly, rapt and absorbed by the music, and ignoring other stimuli.

Both mesmerisation and charm automatically end on one of the following events:-

- a) The creature is attacked, meaning someone rolls a "to hit" roll with a melee or missile weapon where the creature is a target. If the creature feels it needs to defend itself, it is free to do so.
- b) The creature loses one or more hit points. Any kind of pain breaks a troubadour's charm or mesmerisation.
- c) The music is interrupted. This happens if the troubadour is struck by a weapon or missile (they can keep playing if the attack misses), or if the troubadour fails a saving throw of any kind, or moves at more than half-speed.

Neither skill is of infinite duration. If the

troubadour uses them for protracted periods, re-check the skill with frequency according to the following table:-

HD of monsters charmed/mesmerised (as a fraction of the troubadour's level)	Recheck skill frequency
Half or less	Every three turns
Half to one	Every turn/ten rounds
One to one and a half	Every three rounds
One and a half to two	Every round

**Lore:** This skill simulates the troubadour's knowledge of poetry, literature, history and music. A successful Lore skill roll enables the troubadour to glean information about a legendary or famous person, creature, object or locale. The information gained will be whatever is set out in myth, story or song (and thus may be out of date, exaggerated or even totally inaccurate).

It is also the troubadour's chance to identify commonplace magical items by examining them. "Commonplace" means all potions and scrolls, common miscellaneous magic items (if the OSRIC rules are in play then this means items from the Common Miscellaneous Magic Items table; if other rules are in play then it is GM discretion whether a miscellaneous magic item is "common"), and magical weapons and armour of up to and including +3 value. In the case of a druid scroll, an illusionist scroll, a non-spell scroll, a potion or a common miscellaneous magic item, the troubadour learns exactly what it is and does. In the case of a magic-user or cleric scroll, the troubadour learns that it is a spell scroll but cannot determine which spell. In the case of a weapon or armour, the troubadour learns its bonus but not its special powers.

Occasionally troubadours may glean command words, true names, or other well-hidden knowledge with this skill, the chance being ten percent of the lore percentage (or alternatively, rolled on a d% rather than a d%). For example, a 9th level bard with 17 Intelligence urgently wants to learn the true name of a certain six-armed demoness. His lore percentage is 55%, so his chance to determine her true name is 5.5%.

The command words of artifacts and relics, and the true names of unique demons and devils, may not be divined by this method.

**Read languages:** This skill exactly resembles the thief skill of the same name.

# Into the Shrieking Hollow

A small dungeon adventure compatible with the AD&D game system, for 4-6 characters levels 1-3

By C. Wesley Clough

## INTRODUCTION

Into the Shrieking Hollow is a short dungeon-based adventure designed for 4-6 characters of first or second level. Most of the adventure takes place in a natural cavern environment, so a dwarf or gnome PC could prove useful.

## BACKGROUND

When he was younger, the wizard Holcomb was well known for his mighty deeds of magic in the service of good. As he aged, he adventured less and less, and spent more time working on magical research and training apprentices. One of those apprentices, Reynard by name, has just betrayed his master, and fled after stealing something of extreme value to the old wizard.

Chaffing under the limitations that Holcomb is known to yoke his apprentices with (no studying of necromantic or "evil" magic, for instance), Reynard has been of late consorting with Kalamán, a long-time rival of Holcomb. Kalamán has, for some time, sought entrance into the lost Leichegarten, once a great school of necromancy, now long since abandoned to the undead that were created there. Leichegarten is said to have seven entrances, each through a set of doors which open only for one holding the proper key. In his studies Kalamán learned that one set of these "doors unopenable" is in the cellars of a wizard's tower that once stood near the small town of White Rock; the same small town which the goodly Holcomb now calls home. The wizard's tower is gone, razed in a magical duel more than a century past, and most of its cellars have collapsed, but a natural cave system, known locally as the Shrieking Hollow, lies very near the tower's former location. Kalamán suspects that the cellars may have once connected to the caverns. A month and a half ago, Reynard told Kalamán of a spell he had seen while perusing one of the few books in Holcomb's home forbidden to his apprentices. This spell, called Nyzimm's Key, created a magical key that would unlock a "door unopenable".

Feeling that his time was at hand, and finding it fitting that Holcomb's book and student should be the cause of his greatest triumph, Kalamán put a plan into motion. He used a spell scroll to summon a lesser demon, and sent it to attack Holcomb. He then hurried to the Shrieking Hollow to search for a way to the "doors unopenable". While Holcomb was dealing with the demon, Reynard managed to slip away with the *Librum Arcanis*, the tome that contained the Nyzimm's Key spell. He too made his way toward the Shrieking Hollow to deliver the book to Kalamán and claim his promised reward.

After the demon was driven off and the danger passed, Holcomb realized what had transpired; he cast a spell to locate the *Librum Arcanis*, and discovered it was being taken to the Shrieking Hollow. Holcomb is unable to go after it himself, as the demon may return at any time, so he is turning to adventurers to help him retrieve the book.

## INVOLVING THE CHARACTERS

The easiest way to involve the characters in this adventure is to have them approached by Holcomb or his representative. The initial offer to recover the *Librum Arcanis* from the Shrieking Hollow will be 1000 gp for the return of the book undamaged. If the party tries to negotiate, make one reaction roll for Holcomb using the reaction adjustment of the character with the highest charisma negotiating as a modifier to the roll. If the result is friendly, he will increase the offer to match their price up to 2000 gp; if the result is anything else, then Holcomb stands firm at 1000 gp. Holcomb (or his representative) can tell the characters how to get to the hollow, and will give them up to 10% of their payment in advance if asked for it.

## THE DUNGEON

The shrieking hollow is entered through a sinkhole in a slightly sunken forest glade about two miles from the town of White Rock. The terrain around White Rock is mostly lightly forested hills. Characters not from the area will have little trouble getting directions to the sinkhole from local townsfolk if they failed to get them from Holcomb. In fact, an overgrown trail leads to the glade it is located in, showing the people do go there on occasion; though the locals generally give the shrieking hollow a wide berth, especially around dawn and dusk when the cavern is most likely to "shriek". Local lore says that the shrieks are

the undying echoes of the last screams of a pair of star-crossed lovers who threw themselves into the sinkhole more than twenty years ago. Other than some normal forest birds and small animals, such as squirrels, there are no encounters while travelling to and from the hollow during the day. If the characters decide to go to the hollow by night, they have a 1 in 6 chance of encountering 1d6 stirges (HP 5 each).

From the ground of the glade, it is a 40 ft drop from the top of the sinkhole to the floor of the cavern below. Any character falling in takes 4d6 points of damage, although there is no particular danger of falling, as the edges of the sinkhole are quite stable. A knotted hemp rope has been tied around a stump about ten feet from the edge of the sinkhole, and the rope enters the sink hole and runs all the way to the cavern floor. Investigating the stump reveals that it is slightly rotted, but fairly sturdy, and the rope should be able to hold the weight of one character at a time climbing down it (if more than 300 pounds is ever put on the rope, the stump gives way with a crash, sending everybody on the rope hurtling to the cavern floor below; damage is based upon how far down they are when it breaks). If the weight limit is not exceeded, a character can climb up or down the rope automatically, taking two full rounds to do so. Characters can do the same climb in a single round if they succeed on a strength or dexterity check (whichever ability score is higher), or a climb walls roll. A failed check means they fall off the rope at some point during their climb (roll 1d4 to see how many tens of feet up from the bottom they are when they fall).

### **THE SHRIEKING HOLLOW (Level One Key)**

1. Light filters into this cavern through the sinkhole in the ceiling, but other than the area right beneath the hole the chamber is dimly lit at best. The floor is rough and uneven and the walls glisten with mineral formations. A dozen giant rats, all of them dead, lay scattered by the southern wall. There is nothing of danger or value here. A tracking check determines that a single set of human tracks lead away to the south-east. A dwarf or gnome can see that the south-east passage slopes slightly upwards while the south-west passage slopes slightly downwards.

2. The passage from room one starts sloping more steeply downwards after just a few feet, and then levels out as it gets to this

chamber. Unfortunately, the chamber is low enough that about a foot and a half of mucky, cold water has collected there, and characters wishing to continue on have to wade through it. At the place marked x on the map there is a ten foot deep depression in the cavern floor, hidden by the scummy water. A character who does not probe ahead could be in for a shocking plunge. Near the far wall of the room is another depression, this one about four feet deep. From this depression a five foot high, totally submerged, tunnel leads away from the cavern (see area 3).

Three two foot long giant leeches (HP 6, 4, 4) swim in the dirty water here, ready and willing to get some fresh blood from adventurers that happen to be wading through. Another giant leech, a four foot long monster (HP 21), lurks in the deep depression, but only attacks if dropped in upon. There is nothing of value in this room.

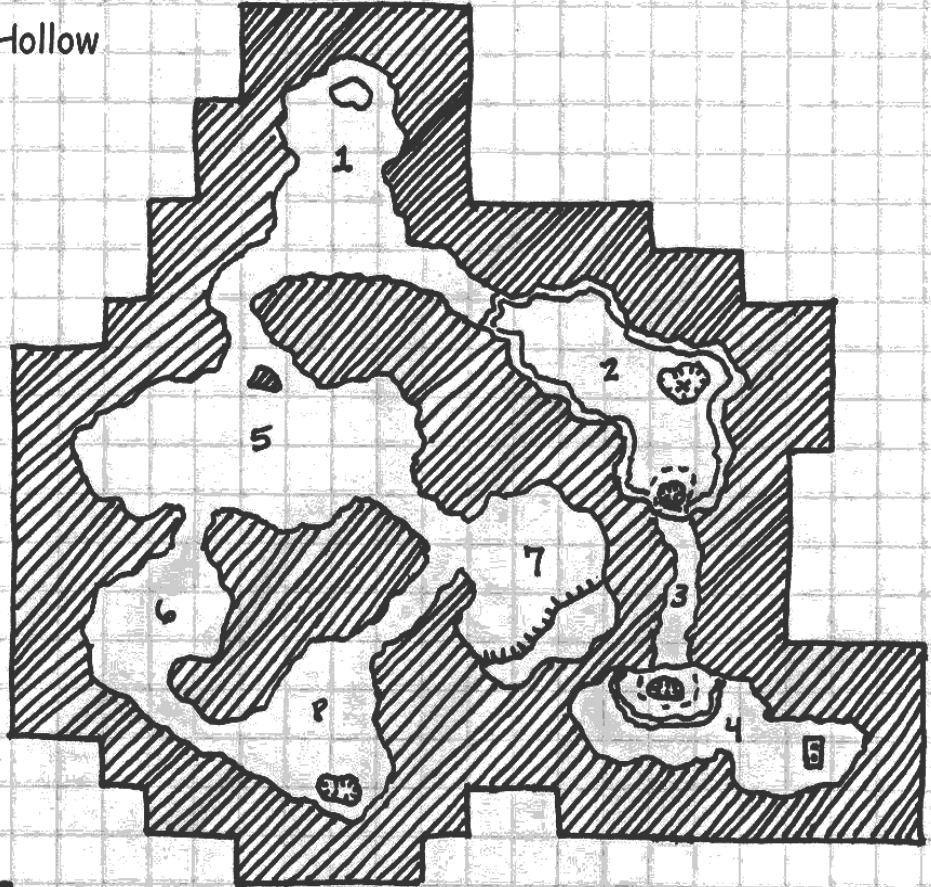
3. This submerged passage is only about 30 ft long, although the characters will not have any way of knowing that in advance. Characters will have to hold their breath and swim underwater to pass through the tunnel here. Any character can hold his or her breath for 1/3 of the character's constitution score in rounds (rounded up); after that time, the character will have to make a constitution check each round to keep holding his or her breath. This check gets progressively harder; each check after the first has a cumulative -2 penalty applied to it. If a check is failed, the character must breathe, and if he or she is unable to surface to do so the character drowns.

A swimmer who attempts to navigate the tunnel automatically takes two rounds to do so if they are unencumbered and not wearing metal armor, or three rounds to do so if they are encumbered or wearing metal armor. Thus, only a swimmer in metal armor (or encumbered by lots of gear) with a very low constitution score actually risks drowning in the flooded tunnel. There are slimy algae growths on the walls of the passage, but nothing of danger or value.

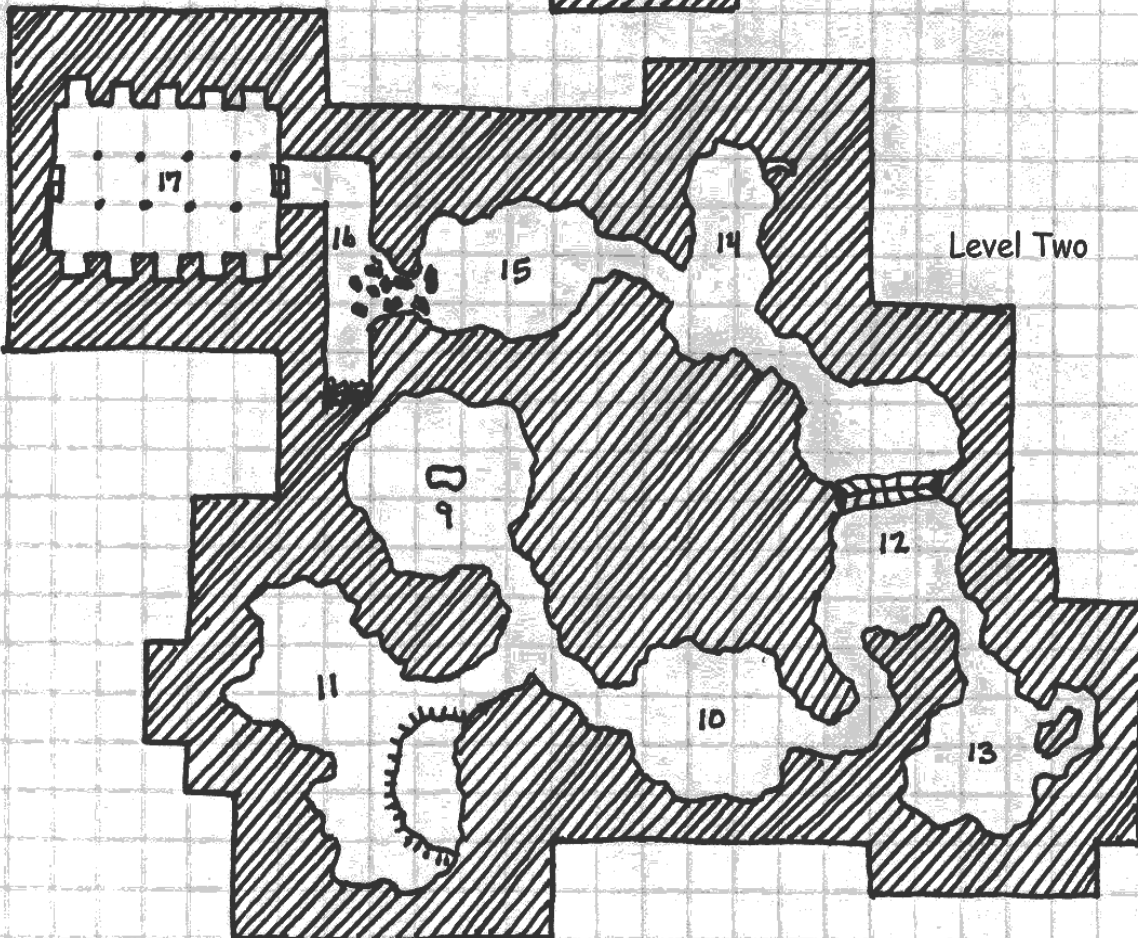
4. The submerged tunnel opens into a pool along the northern wall of this room; characters of good alignment immediately feel that there is something wrong here. The walls of the room have veins of hideous green and purple rock shot through the normal gray of the surrounding stone, the colors seeming to blend and swirl together into an almost hypnotic, though revolting jumble.

# The Shrieking Hollow

Level One



Level Two





In an alcove on the eastern side of the chamber rests a three foot high, six foot long, and four foot wide block of green flecked mauve stone. Set into the top of the altar stone are a number of small aquamarine stones; these stones form a triangle with an inverted Y within (the branches at the corners of the triangle's base, and the stem meeting the apex). The symbol is sacred to an incredibly ancient and little remembered primordial elemental god of great evil. 100 aquamarines, in all, make up the symbol. Each is worth 5 gp, and they can be pried up with little trouble. Of course, the primordial deity will not be pleased if his shrine is defiled, but there is only a 10% chance that he can rouse himself from his lethargy long enough to curse the defilers (if he does curse them, then from that moment on, all creatures native to the elemental planes encountered by the cursed will automatically be hostile. This effect can be removed via a wish or limited wish spell or by a remove curse spell cast by a 14th or higher level cleric).

Behind the altar, a gray ooze (HP 18) is resting. The slimy horror waits until the characters are preoccupied by the altar before attacking. Note that because it looks like wet stone, the gray ooze is difficult for characters to detect before it attacks.

5. The floor of this large cavern is covered with a spongy loam-like material composed of decomposing organic matter (mostly fungus). Mushrooms of all shapes and sizes sprout throughout the cavern, some reaching close to six feet tall, although most are normal sized. Seven shriekers (HP 12 each) inhabit this room, three by the eastern wall, and four clumped slightly west of the south-western exit; in fact, the movement of bats and stirges at dusk and dawn trigger the fungal shrieks which give the shrieking hollow its name. Amidst the western group of shriekers is a violet fungus (HP 10) which attempts to attack characters in the confusion caused by the shrieking.

If characters search the westernmost end of the chamber they find a rusted shield partially buried in the loam. Characters digging up the soil there for at least 1 full turn will find a silver ring set with a moonstone. The ring appears to be worth about 100 gp, but is actually much more valuable, being an enchanted ring of warmth.

6. The floor of this cavern is rough and uneven with lots of scree, fallen from the ceiling, along the walls. The cavern is dry and dusty with only a few small tracks, like

those of giant rats, to show that it is ever visited at all. There is nothing of danger or value here.

7. This cavern is damp, with several puddle-sized pools on the lower floor, and stalactites hanging down overhead. Characters searching the ceiling might see furtive movements. There are about two dozen largish bats (1 hp each) hanging from the ceiling during the day, each with a wing span of about a foot. The bats are non-aggressive, and will flee if threatened or attacked. They fly out of the cave each evening at dusk, and return at dawn. Guano deposits can be found here and there on the floor, and the upper ledge at the back of the room (about 12 feet above the floor level and halfway up to the ceiling height) is covered with guano. Buried in a shallow hole on the ledge, loosely covered with stones (and guano), is a two foot long, eighteen inch wide, foot high iron trunk which has rusted shut. It will take at least a half hour of searching to discover. It contains 200 gp, of a style that has not been minted for about a century, and a silver necklace set with small moonstones (worth 300 gp).

8. The floor of this cavern slopes gradually down toward the sink hole at the south-eastern end, though only a dwarf or gnome can determine this. Like the sink hole that leads into the shrieking hollow, the one in this room has stable edges. An iron spike has been driven into a crevice in the wall near the sink hole, and a hemp rope tied to it, but the rope only stretches to the edge of the hole before ending in a frayed broken end. Passing through the sink hole will put characters into room 9 on the lower level; the drop from the top of the hole to the cavern floor below is about 30 feet.

Five rounds after characters enter the room, a group of twelve hungry giant rats (2hp each) enter the room from the passageway that the characters did not enter through. These rats are very hungry, and attack at once. There is nothing of value in this room.

### **THE SHRIEKING HOLLOW (Level Two Key)**

9. There is a pile of broken stone beneath the sinkhole in the ceiling of this roundish cavern, and about 45 feet of hemp rope lies loosely on top of it. One end of the rope is frayed and broken; the other is tied around an iron spike. Two burnt out torch stubs can be found to the right of the pile. There is nothing of danger or value in this chamber.

10. The southern wall of this cavern is covered with gypsum flowers, causing the entire chamber to light up brightly if a light source is brought into it. Along the north wall, the bones of at least one hundred individuals, all human and demi-human in origin, are piled and jumbled together, forming a long, low, ridge like pile at the base of the wall. Despite this macabre spectacle, there is nothing of danger, or value in this chamber.

11. This chamber has a ceiling height of nearly forty feet, with small stalactites hanging down, and small stalagmites on the floor reaching up. The ledge just south of the entrance is about twenty five feet in height, and atop it is a nest-like construction of sticks, bones, and loose stone (not visible from the floor) which serves as the lair of two cave fishers (HP 15, 12). The cave fishers are old and experienced. They will not attack any party containing members dressed in plate mail or better armor, nor will they attack parties with over 6 members. If they do decide to attack the party, each chooses a random party member and fires its filament at the character, attempting to ensnare the victim and drag him or her back up to the nest for devouring. Note that because the base of the ledge is so high, it is probable that the characters will think it is simply part of the wall unless they specifically look up when enter the chamber. If the characters do not realize that there is a ledge there, the cave fishers automatically gain surprise (and even if the characters do realize that there is a ledge there, the fishers surprise at normal chances).

The fishers' nest contains the remains of several previous victims, including a goodly amount of equipment, although time and the cavern's damp environment have brought ruination to much of it. 22 cp, 17 sp, 14 ep, and 12 gp can be found, along with three rusty but still serviceable broad swords, a long sword, two daggers, a horseman's mace, and two shields. Buried deep in the nest is a small belt pouch holding three small metal vials, their tops stopped with wax. The vials are un-marked, and each contains liquid. These are magical potions: the first two hold potions of healing, while the third holds a potion of fire resistance.

12. The ceiling in this chamber is fairly low, only about 12 feet up. The floor and ceiling of this chamber are free of stalagmites and stalactites, and there are no wall deposits either. Although the lower reaches of the walls have lots of small cracks, the floor is remarkably smooth and level for a natural cavern as well.

The cavern is bisected by an eight foot wide chasm. The chasm is 20 feet deep, and anybody falling into it takes 2d6 points of damage. Some parts of the edge of the chasm are crumbling and unstable, so any character approaching it must make a saving throw vs. Breath Weapon (modified by his or her dexterity reaction adjustment) or fall in as part of the floor gives way under the character's feet. A dwarf (using the ability to detect stonework traps) or a gnome (using the ability to detect unsafe floors) can determine the spots where it is safe to approach the edge of the chasm, and warn other characters appropriately.

13. This cavern opens up, with a soaring ceiling nearly forty feet high. The ceiling is covered by small bristling stalactites, and the floor has many small stalagmites as well. The entire floor slopes subtly down to the north east, and this can be detected by those demi-humans capable of discerning such things.

In roughly the center of the room, although not visible from the entrance because of the stalagmites, the characters can find the bloodless corpse of Reynard, the wizard Holcomb's treacherous apprentice. The body has been drained dry by the stirges that dwell up among the stalactites on the ceiling. One round after the characters find Reynard's body, 10 stirges (HP 5 each) attack. Because of the rustling of wings and the rain of small pebbles dislodged as they launch themselves free from the stalactites, the characters cannot be surprised by the blood sucking beasts.

A search of Reynard's body will reveal that he was carrying 18 gp and 2 smallish yellow crystal gems (citrine gems, worth 50 gp each) in his belt pouch. A second smaller pouch on his belt holds a small crystal prism, some dried rose petals, some split green peas, and some phosphorescent moss. A long tapered wooden stick, capped at either end with brass, is stuck through his belt. This is a wand of magic missiles (12 charges remaining); the command word to activate the wand is etched in tiny magical runes around one end cap, and requires a read magic spell to decipher. Reynard's back pack contains enough iron rations to feed a single person for two days, a half full wineskin, a couple of large burlap sacks, and a leather case containing a thick book, the *Librum Arcanis*.

14. The floor of this chamber has several small puddles of water, the walls glisten with mica deposits, and the ceiling has dozens of

tiny stalactites scattered about it. Every once in a while, one of these stalactites will drip water into one of the puddles below, making the sound of dripping water echo throughout the otherwise silent chamber.

In the north-eastern most part of the chamber, the characters can find what appears to be a vein of gold running from the ceiling to the floor. It is obvious that somebody has used a pick to break some off near chest level, but there are no such tools around, nor are there any fragments of the vein lying on the floor. A dwarf or gnome can make an intelligence check to realize that the vein is really made up of worthless pyrite.

If characters insist on mining the vein, a single character can work it at a time (it is too narrow for more than one, although clever characters could design and build a scaffold or something which would allow one character to work the ground level area of the vein while another worked up closer to the ceiling). A single character with the proper tools (such as a mining pick) can gather 1 pound of mineral from the vein in an hour, while a character working with suitable, though improper tools (e.g. an iron spike for a chisel, and a hammer or a military pick), works at one half of this rate (A character without suitable tools will not be able to gather any at all). The vein runs out of mineral after 350 pounds of it has been excavated, unless the characters want to follow it into the floor or ceiling (and start a full scale mining excavation). For all of this work, characters will find that they can sell the pyrite back in town for the meagre sum of 2 cp per pound.

15. This cavern is dusty. There are no stalactites and stalagmites here, and the walls are dull. A single set of human footprints, along with three sets of dog tracks, leads across the dust toward the pile of rubble and dark opening in the west wall where a collapse has revealed another passage. A ranger that checks the tracks can tell that there was something wrong with the dogs that made them. As soon as the characters enter the room, the three war dogs come out from behind the rubble pile and advance in eerie silence toward the party on stiff legs. The dogs have bald patches all over their bodies, and in places sinew and bone peak out through rotted skin. The war dogs have been turned into zombies (HP 15, 10, 4). Kalamán left the dogs here to guard his back while he went on to examine the "door unopenable". Their orders are to kill everyone, except Reynard or Kalamán, who

intrudes upon the chamber. There is nothing of value to be found here.

16. This passageway is obviously not natural: the walls have been hewn from the stone, and then covered with mortared masonry. Characters examining the mortar will notice that it has a strange reddish tinge to it. The walls rise eight feet up from the floor and then form an arch overhead, being about 12 feet high at the crown. The floor is covered with well-fitted bluish-gray flagstones that are long and narrow. The hall is clear of dust and debris except at the southern end which ends in a wall of rubble, and at the place where part of the eastern wall has collapsed, forming a hole about 7 feet round between the natural caves and this passage. Near the hole, some broken masonry lies scattered in the hall. In the corner where the passage turns to the west, a black iron torch sconce (empty) has been set into the wall.

Gnomes can use their ability to detect unstable floors, walls and ceilings to know that digging through the rubble at the south end of the passage is a bad idea. If the characters attempt to dig through the rubble anyway, they will find, after 6 turns of digging (one hour), the lip of a step. Evidently there were stairs leading up to here at some point in the past. Any further digging proves fruitless, however, as after 2 more turns of digging the unstable ceiling collapses, undoing all the work that the characters have accomplished to this point and dealing 2d6 points of damage to any characters working on clearing the rubble; a character caught in the mini avalanche of fist-sized stones can attempt a saving throw vs. breath weapon (modified by the character's dexterity reaction adjustment) to sustain half damage.

Following the passage around the corner to the west, shows it to end after ten feet or so at a pair of plain wooden double doors, the doors are bound with bands of iron, and each side has a brass handle. The door on the left side is open about two inches, light spills out into the hallway from the crack.

17. This long room is well lit by two continual light spells, one centered in each half of the room.

The floor is the same long, narrow, blue-gray flagstones, each fitted so well with its neighbors that not even a sheet of paper could be inserted in between. A double row of white marble Doric style columns runs the length of the room, each rising to help support the vaulted ceiling thirty feet over

head. The ceiling is painted with frescoes of angels and demons battling over the souls of men; close inspection shows that the demons have the upper hand. The walls are of the same masonry-covered hewn stone as the hall, with the same strange red tinged mortar between the blocks. The north and the south walls each hold five, five foot wide, seven foot high, five foot deep alcoves. The back wall of each alcove is not covered with masonry, being bare stone into which a sculpture has been carved in half-relief. Each sculpture is of a human skeleton wearing chain mail armor and armed with a halberd.

Directly opposite the entrance doors is another set of double doors. These are made of white marble and are ornately carved with the depiction of an angel on one door and a demon on the other. The lintel above the door is carved to resemble a row of human skulls looking down at any person standing in front of the doors. These are the "doors unopenable", said to be one of the known entrances into the famed Leichgarten. An ornately carved lock, shaped like a skull, with its mouth open to receive a key straddles the two doors. The lock is magical, and will only accept the key created by the unique spell Nyzimm's Key (see New Magic). The doors and lock are immune to any other magic, and spells cast upon them always fail. They are also immune to any sort of physical attack. Character who try to teleport or dimension door to the other side of them are in for a horrible (and perhaps fatal) surprise as well, as the doors, when opened, actually form a magical portal to the Leichgarten. The dungeon is not actually on the other side of them; indeed there is nothing there but solid rock!

Lying on the floor in front of the doors is the remains of a man: most of his face has been blasted away, revealing a tangle of horribly burned flesh and a blackened skull; his once rich black robes are both burned and tattered, as if torn apart by a blast of great force, and most of his equipment has been similarly ruined. These are the remains of the fell sorcerer Kalamán. The wizard penetrated this far, planning on waiting at the unopenable door for Reynard to bring him the *Librum Arcanis*, so that he could use its secrets to open the doors. He fought off the guardians, slaying all but one who fled invisibly (see below), and then noticed that some previous explorer had stuck a rolled up piece of parchment into the skull-mouth keyhole on the doors. Curiosity got the better of him, and Kalamán pulled the parch-

ment out, unrolled it and proceeded to read, not realizing until too late that the scroll was protected by an explosive runes spell which killed the evil wizard instantly. A search of the body will uncover 7 sp, 6 ep, and 12 gp, along with a solid steel dagger that survived the blast unscathed. The dagger's pommel is shaped like a skull, and two tiny onyx gems are in the eye sockets. This makes the dagger seem to be worth about 75 gp, but in reality the dagger is a magical dagger +1. Two shattered vials are all that is left of the potions in the dead wizard's back pack, and the liquid they once contained has rendered two scrolls in a cracked wooden scroll case illegible. The liquid has mostly ruined the travelling spell book in the back pack as well; however, the following spells have survived destruction and can be gleaned from it: detect undead, sleep, feather fall, protection from evil and web.

The sole remaining guardian of this room, a smoke mephit (13 hp) bound to protect the "doors unopenable" long ago, waits invisibly in one of the alcoves (determine which alcove randomly when the party enters). The smoke mephit is one of a group of five once bound here, and the only one to survive Kalamán's onslaught. It tried to flee, but found that the magic that bound it to the room was still as strong as ever. It was coming back for a magically forced second try at Kalamán when the sorcerer managed to blow himself up. When the party arrives, the mephit will not want to attack, being a coward at heart, but will be magically compelled to by the terms of its enslavement. It will seek to stay out of melee as much as possible, flying around near the ceiling, weaving in and out of the pillars, and attacking with its breath weapon (since it is invisible, its first attack will always be by surprise unless the characters have some way of detecting invisible opponents). After its first attack, it will attempt to gate in more mephitis to aid it (only a 20% chance of success). If it is successful, then one more smoke mephit (16 hp) will arrive. This second mephit will automatically fail if it tries to gate in more reinforcements itself. If the mephit fails a morale check during the battle, it will flee for 1d4 rounds, only to be forced to return and renew the attack by the magic that binds it here (note that the summoned mephit, should it actually show up, is not so bound and if it fails a morale check, it will flee the combat for good).

## RESOLUTION

If the characters return the *Librum Arcanis* to Holcomb, he will give them the promised payment, and also agree to have his remaining apprentice identify any magical items they might have found in the shrieking hollow for free. Additionally, providing that the player characters were courteous in their dealings with him, Holcomb will look on them favorably, and may have more work to throw their way in the future.

## NEW MAGIC

The *Librum Arcanis* is a thick tome bound in faded black leather, with its title written in gold leaf upon its spine. It is mostly a workbook, rather than a true spell book, that belonged to Sabrani Darkwatcher, a wizard of note in the last century. How Holcomb came into the possession of the book is unrecorded, but he has owned it for at least twenty years. Because some of the topics and research recorded within are necromantic in nature, something that Holcomb himself has a great distaste for, he has forbidden his apprentices to study the book. Why Holcomb keeps the book around when he finds much of it abhorrent is a question open to debate, but it likely hinges on the fact that it contains one of the only known means of opening the "doors unopenable" and accessing the far famed Leichgarten.

Although not a normal spell book, the *Librum Arcanis* does have the following spells recorded within it: Detect Undead, (Evard's) Black Tentacles, Fear, Magic Mirror, magic jar, and the unique 3rd level wizard spell Nyzimm's Key (described hereafter).

### Nyzimm's Key (alteration-necromancy)

Level: *Magic user 3*      Components: *V,S,M*  
Range: *0*                      Casting time: *3 seg*  
Duration: *1 rd/lvl*          Saving throw: *None*  
Area of effect: *Special*

Explanation/Description: When this spell is cast a large skeleton key made of bone appears in the caster's hand. The key's primary purpose is to open the "doors unopenable" which lead to the dungeon known as Leichgarten, and the key fits the lock perfectly, always opening the doors. The skeleton key created by this spell may fit other locks as well, and has a 20% base chance of being able to open any given lock that the caster tries it on. For each level of the caster over 5th level, the chance of success increases by 5% (for example a 9th

level caster has a 40% chance of opening a lock with the key). The material component of Nyzimm's Key is a finger bone taken from a human skeleton that had once been animated.

## MONSTER STATISTICS

Cave Fisher: AC 4; MV 1; HD 3; Thac0 17; #AT 2; Dmg 2d4/2d4; SA adhesive trapline; SD special; SZ M (7' long); ML Steady (12); Int Semi (2-4); AL N; XP 85 +3/hp.

Fungus, Violet: AC 7; MV 1; HD 3; Thac0 17; #AT 1; Dmg -; SA rot; SD none; SZ M (6'); ML Steady (12); Int Non (0); AL N; XP 135 +4/hp.

Gray Ooze: AC 8; MV 1; HD 3+3; Thac0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2d8; SA corrodes metal; SD immune to spells (other than electric), fire and cold; SZ M (6'); ML Average (10); Int Animal (1); AL N; XP 200 + 5/hp.

Leech, Giant: AC 9; MV 3, SW 3; HD 1; Thac0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; SA blood drain, disease; SD nil; SZ S (2' long); ML unsteady (7); INT Non (0); AL N; XP 26 +1/hp.

Leech, Giant (larger): AC 9; MV 3, SW 3; HD 3; Thac0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; SA blood drain, disease; SD nil; SZ M (4'); ML Elite (14); INT non (0); AL N; XP 95 +3/hp.

Mephit, Smoke: AC 4; MV 12 Fl 24 (B); HD 3; Thac0 17; #AT 2; Dmg 1d2/1d2; SA breath weapon; SD spell like abilities, dies in a flash of flame (1 point of damage to all within 10 feet); SZ M (5'); ML Average (10); Int Average (8-10); AL CE; XP 105 +3/hp.

Rat, Giant: AC 7; MV 12 SW 6; HD 1/2; Thac0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d3; SA Disease; SD none; SZ T (2'); ML Unsteady (7); Int Semi (2-4); AL N; XP 7 +1/hp.

Shrieker: AC 7; MV 1; HD 3; Thac0 17; #AT 0; Dmg 0; SA none; SD noise; SZ M (5'); ML Steady (12); Int Non (0); AL N; XP 5+1/hp.

Stirge: AC 8; MV 3 Fl 18 (C); HD 1+1; Thac0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d3; SA Blood Drain; SD none; SZ S (2' wingspan); ML Average (8); Int Animal (1); AL N; XP 36 +2/hp.

Zombie War Dog: AC 8; MV 6; HD 2; Thac0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8; SA immune to sleep, charm, hold, death magic, cold-based spells, and poison; SD none; SZ M (5' long); ML never checks morale; Int non (0); AL N; XP 20 +2/hp (Note that other than being dogs in form, these creatures are just standard zombies).

# Ecology of the Cave Blinder

by Bryan Fazekas

Jake was sick and tired of Bisonbit. The young priest had been quizzing him for more than forty minutes about the reign of Hazzat the First, a merchant autocrat who briefly ruled Kerr seventy years before in between the Selkan and Wandsor monarchies. "Pay attention Jake! You have an exam tomorrow and you have not memorized your lessons!" At age 12 it was near impossible to care about someone who was executed 60 years before he was born.

Jake sighed, but before he could retort a black shadow fell across the boy and the teenager. Both spun to face the source of the shadow: a huge, bulky figure with a misshapen head that loomed over them.

Both recoiled in shock, but Jake quickly recognized the woman, an old friend of his grandparents. She was very tall and had a humped back, and wore a large floppy hat and a long cloak, even in the warmth of summer. Jake immediately volunteered to escort her to his grandparents' home. Bisonbit started to protest, but gave it up. "I'm going with you. We have more to prepare you for tomorrow's exam!" Jake sighed, but enjoyed the reprieve.

They chatted lightly as they walked the short distance, mostly the woman asking the youngsters about their recent days. Bisonbit noticed that she left no opening for questioning her. Knowing that she wasn't human, the surprisingly perceptive young man considered this was a normal tactic to keep the attention off her.

They found Trajan in his garden, on his knees weeding. A big smile creased his aged face as he creakily straightened up. He led the way into the house where his wife was making bread. The visitor immediately divested herself of the hat and cloak, displaying small horns on her forehead and bat-like wings on her back. She was on the slender side but the cloak that hid her wings made her look humped back. Neither of the youngsters showed any surprise; they knew what she was. If it didn't bother Trajan or his wife, it didn't bother them.

"What brings you through Kerr?" the old man asked.

"I'm on a commission to capture a cave blinder, and I know you", meaning both Trajan and his wife, "have faced them before."

The old couple locked gazes, trading an unfathomable stare. Looking back at his visitor the old soldier replied, "Yes, a nasty piece of work they are."

\* \* \*

Trajan looked around. The tunnels were rough, varying from 5' to 30' wide, with a ceiling anything from 3' ranging up to more than 40'. Mostly they could walk and had room to swing a sword, but both he and his right-hand partner Etjar also carried a short sword, really a long knife, handy for the tight places. Trajan favored a hand-and-a-half bastard sword, but it required room to swing. Etjar's long sword was shorter and lighter, but it, too, was not a weapon for tight places. Both kept their short swords loose in their sheaths.

Something tracked them.

This area was rotten with tunnels, many far too small for the chain mail clad men to climb through, although their charge, the sage Petteri could easily manage most of them. Even the dwarven brothers, wide and bulky as their shoulders were, could fit through amazingly small spaces. Marissa, the slight wizard, a foot shorter than Trajan; she could fit through a lot of the spaces, although she was more likely to get stuck than the non-humans. Trajan visualized her trapped in a tight tunnel. As much as he disliked the bitch, that was nothing he'd wish on her or anyone.

Trajan led, watching up and down and side-to-side. Etjar followed ten feet behind, with the sage another ten feet behind him. Marissa and the dwarf brothers brought up the rear. The soldier did not trust that they watched the back well, but there were two of them between Marissa and anything that hit from the rear. As much as they disliked each other, he'd never put the small woman in harm's way.

Trajan glanced back at Etjar. Both knew something was shadowing them. Too many years of adventuring in bad places for their instincts to be wrong. He looked farther back at the wizard; from the way she scanned around her, she knew too. But the dwarves and the gnome? No clue.

The tunnel constricted ahead, certainly wide enough for his armored figure, but tight for swinging a sword. Sheathing the bastard sword, he drew the smaller weapon. Nothing appeared unusual, but old soldiers become old soldiers by not taking unnecessary chances. After twenty feet, the tunnel widened out again. Etjar

caught up with him and both looked back at the gnome and woman coming through.

Snick! That slight sound of claw on stone spun both men around in time to see a lithe figure drop off the wall almost in front of them. Trajan brought his sword up to fend off a tentacle when the sun stabbed through his eyes into his brain. Somewhere in the distance his mind registered a scream.

He covered his eyes and blinked repeatedly. The brightness faded and he could see, sort of. The creature was no longer in front of them. Spinning he took count. Etjar, gnome, dwarf, dwarf—something was wrong.

His paralyzed mind took an extra beat, then another to realize Marissa was gone. Her staff lay on the stone floor.

One of the dwarves picked himself off the stone floor. Both were farther back and had not been as badly blinded, recovering faster than the humans. "That thing grabbed the woman and knocked me over. It ran that way carrying her," he jabbered, pointing over his shoulder the way they had come.

Trajan's mind froze in horror but his body moved of its own volition, bowling the dwarves over again as he plowed through them in pursuit of Marissa. The thing was obviously strong, but still a 120 lb woman wasn't easy to carry, especially if she was struggling. His mind avoided the possibility that she was already dead.

Having no place to go, but back down the tunnel, he charged, bouncing off the walls once or twice in the narrow area until he got his stride. The thing was fleet, but he barely caught sight of it in the light of the flickering torch he carried. Redoubling his pursuit he bellowed a hoarse, incoherent roar that caused the thing to slow and turn its head back, flaring its ears.

It looked sort of human, the way an orc looks sort of human, except this thing had dark green, rough looking skin, and had a long tentacle protruding from the middle of its upper back. The face was less human: it had a normal looking nose and a wide mouth filled with fangs, but there were no eyes, just skin where eye sockets should have been. Bat-like ears framed the face. The tentacle pointed back at him and he could see a clear bulb at the end. Instinct made the soldier clamp his eyes shut, but the bright light penetrated his eye lids, stabbing into his brain again.

The difference? This time he was prepared. He threw himself forward at the thing, sword high as he didn't trust himself to not stab the woman in his blind rush.

The shock of crashing into the thing jarred his short sword from his hand. He heard it skitter across the fairly smooth stone floor. Eyes still clamped shut he found its head with his left hand, and slammed his mailed fist into whatever was between his hand and opposing fist.

The thing squealed a high pitched scream, matched by his own screaming fit. As he drew back for another strike a cable wrapped around his chest and flung him away. Another squeal punctured his darkness and as he rolled to a stop he realized he had a piece of the thing's ear in his left hand. "Bet that hurts," he thought muzzily. Struggling to his feet he saw the thing bolt into the darkness.

Marissa lay on the floor where it dropped her, her open, blank eyes staring upward. Moaning in horror Trajan scrambled across the floor to her body. She had a ragged bite on one shoulder; it bled lightly but was mostly a matched pair of puncture wounds. He ripped her blouse open and planted an ear on her chest, listening for her heart.

The pounding in his ears made it hard to hear so he carefully swallowed and relaxed. Her strong heart beat pulsed in his ear. He felt, more than heard, the dwarves go thundering past him. He also felt Etjar approach. Trajan looked up at his friend, and belatedly thought to cover Marissa's naked chest with her ripped blouse. He gently patted her face and chafed her hands, trying to rouse her.

Petteri spoke, "She will be ok. The bite is poisonous, but it's a light paralytic. In another five or ten minutes she will rouse. The sightless cave blinder lives up to its name, it blinds its foes with a burst of light, bites and paralyzes a victim small enough to carry, and takes the prey back to a lair for its meal. If you had not given chase so quickly she would be dead already."

Squeals, shouts, and howls echoed down the tunnel. The sounds continued for a minute or so, then tapered off. A dragging sound grew louder.

As the dwarves entered the torchlight Marissa blinked her eyes and focused. A moment later Trajan helped her sit up.

The body was humanoid, but certainly not human. It looked far less deadly in a dead

heap than it did as a predator attacking from darkness. One of the dwarves stripped off his surcoat, it was wet and shredded. He swore in dwarven. Within knowing the language all knew he was swearing.

The gnome explained, "Ahh, the cave blinder can spit a stream of its digestive acid. Good that you were hit on the chest, rather than the eyes. If it was your eyes we would be hard pressed to save your sight." The dwarf blinked and didn't reply, but he stopped swearing.

Etjar asked, "What is it?"

"As I said, it's a cave blinder, a normally solitary beast that hunts Darkworld for prey. It usually attacks lone travelers, but will attack a group if it thinks it can take its prey and escape."

Marissa realized her blouse gaped open and rounded on Trajan. "You stupid fool! Just waiting until I was down to put you grubby hands on me!" Trajan looked aghast at the accusation. The others all stared in shock.

She started to yell more but Petteri cut her off, "Stupid human woman!" He spat on the stone, as strong an oath a gnome could make. "If he a step slower you would now be enjoying the pleasure of being eaten alive! These beasts do not kill their prey before consuming them!"

"Not understanding the poison, he feared for your life." In lower tones, he continued, "Be thankful not angry, your life you owe him." Swallowing to make his point he finished, "More than your life." With that he turned away.

Etjar hoped the pair would settle their long-running differences, but there was no hope of that. Scalded by her accusation, Trajan snarled something unintelligible at her and stalked off. She snarled back at him and weakly rummaged in her pack for an untorn blouse.

\* \* \*

"Petteri said cave blinders are normally solitary, but they do mate every few years, producing a litter of usually 3 or 4 young. They parents stay together for about eight months, then the male wanders off. The female drives the cubs away at about one year of age."

"And the young are dangerous?"

"According to the dwarves the young tend to be ravenous, so they may be more dangerous, killing more frequently. Grown dwarves are too heavy for them to carry

easily, but they will kill lone travelers. Of course, any place in Darkworld is not a place to be by yourself."

Changing subjects, the alu-demon slyly said, "So, did you like what you found in Marissa's blouse?"

Trajan turned red. Jake marveled. He had never seen his grandfather embarrassed by anything. The old man coughed, looked at his wife, and coughed again. "It wasn't like that at all."

\* \* \*

## CAVE BLINDER

FREQUENCY:	<i>Very Rare</i>
NO ENCOUNTERED:	<i>1 (1d6)</i>
SIZE:	<i>Man-sized</i>
MOVE:	<i>150 ft</i>
ARMOR CLASS:	<i>5</i>
HIT DICE:	<i>3</i>
ATTACKS:	<i>1 or 3</i>
DAMAGE:	<i>1d6 or 1d3, 1d3, 1d6</i>
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	<i>Light, grab, acid, paralyzation</i>
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	<i>Light</i>
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	<i>Standard</i>
LAIR PROBABILITY:	<i>15%</i>
INTELLIGENCE:	<i>Low</i>
ALIGNMENT:	<i>Neutral</i>
LEVEL/XP:	<i>IV / 225 + 4/hp</i>

The cave blinder is very rarely encountered, and even more rarely seen. The carnivorous blinder feeds on any form of life other than its own. It typically attacks lone travelers in the Darkworld, although in some circumstances one may single out what it perceives as the weakest member of a party, using its special attacks to disable and distract the party while fleeing with its dinner.

This terror of the dark can easily climb all but the smoothest surfaces, even crawling across cave ceilings although at reduced speed. Named for its primary attack mode, a blinder will often suspend itself on a cave or tunnel roof while waiting for victims to pass beneath.

Protruding from its upper back is a 12' tentacle with suckers on it for grip, and a clear bulbous organ at the end. Three times per day the blinder can produce a burst of light similar in intensity to Continual Light. In darkness this will blind sighted creatures for 1d4 rounds, and in torch lit conditions will blind for 1 round. Being sightless the blinder is completely unaffected by its own attack, or any natural or magical effects that affect sight. Note: Illusions that have aural and/or



other sensory components may affect the blinder.

Using the tentacle, the blinder may grab smaller creatures (under 150 lbs) that are weaker than it (18 strength). Pulling the victim to itself, the blinder will bite with a paralyzing venom that causes loss of voluntary muscle control for 4d6 rounds (victim must save vs. Paralyzation). It will bite and claw unparalyzed victims automatically each round after grabbing them unless the hold is broken, no roll for attack required. If attacking a group, the blinder will blind them, paralyze its selected victim, then flee with its dinner.

If forced to fight it will utilize two claw attacks in addition to its bite. In addition to its other abilities the blinder may spit a thin stream of acid at a single opponent at distances up to 30', causing 1d6 points of damage on the first round and 1d3 damage on the second unless the acid is washed off. This requires a successful hit at +4 and may be performed up to 3 times per day.

Normally encountered alone, on very rare occasion a temporarily mated pair may be encountered. The males and female, which are virtually impossible to distinguish apart, may have 1d4 young with them. The young are 1 HD and have lesser attributes (1d6+11 strength value, paralyzation saves at +4, acid can be spit 1/day) but are otherwise equally deadly.

Description: Cave blinders are humanoid in shape, standing 5' tall. The head is overly large compared to a human, having a wide, frog-like mouth filled with small sharp teeth. They have no eyes, using their exceptionally good hearing and a feel for vibrations to navigate through Darkworld. Their rough skin is dark green in color and their powerful hands and feet have short but sharp claws. A 12' tentacle grows out of the upper back. The tentacle, equipped with suckers on the underside near the tip, has great strength (18) and a bulbous organ on the tip from which the blinder may emit a burst of light.

Cave blinders care nothing for treasure, but some incidental treasure from victims may be found in their lair.

**Treasure:** Lair 1d6x100 cp (50%), 1d6x100 sp (45%), 1d6x100 ep (40%), 1d6x100 gp (35%), 1d4x10 pp (30%), 4d10 gems (50%), 3d10 jewelry (50%), 3 magic items (20%)

#### Note on XP:

When calculating experience I counted the following Special and Exceptional Abilities: Special Abilities (4): 3 or more attacks/round; special attacks (blindness); special attacks (acid); special attacks (grab). Exceptional Abilities (1): paralysis/poison.

Using the AD&D Dungeon Masters Guide table on page 85, the XP calculation is:

$$35 + (15 * 4) + (55 * 1) + 3/hp = 150 + 3/hp$$

However, I have been using Lenard Lakofka's 5% tables since they were published in The Dragon issue 80, in his Leomund's Tiny Hut column subtitled "New Charts, Using the '5%' Principle". Using that table the calculation is:

$$60 + (25 * 4) + (65 * 1) + 4/hp = 225 + 4/hp$$



# Thorks (8)

Terrain: Swamp

Total Party Levels: 20 (Average 4th)

Total Magic XP: 950

Total gp XP: 2032

Monster XP:

Kill: 1,645 Defeat: 1,234 Retreat: 411

## SETUP

- An armor smith has heard rumors of large birds with copper feathers dwelling in a nearby marsh; he hires the adventurers to bring him back at least 40 of these feathers so that he can assess their value in making a special suit of scalemail armor.
- A local wizardess is getting ready to create some magical scrolls, when she discovers that only quills made from thork feathers will do for this process. The wizardess knows of a swamp where some thorks live, but is far too busy to go there personally, and instead hires the adventurers to retrieve a dozen or so feathers for her.
- Having heard tales of bizarre metal feathered birds in a distant swamp, a decadent noble decides to hire some adventurers to capture one alive for his menagerie. The noble is willing to pay double if the adventurers can bring him some eggs as well.

## THE LAIR

Getting to the swamp where the thorks are dwelling shouldn't be a problem, but once there finding them will be much more difficult. The swamp covers about twenty square miles of area, and is a dismal morass of shallow stagnant water, muddy hummocks, and tangled mangrove patches. There are only a few tracks and trails winding their way through the swamp, and these have a disturbing tendency to simply lead to dead ends. The swamp teems with wild life, but most of it is harmless to adventurers, and an overabundance of muskrats can lead any character with wilderness oriented skills to conclude that there is a general absence of large predators in the swamp.

After about an hour of slogging through the swamp, the party will come across an old man, sitting on a rocking chair in front of his

small log cabin on a dry hummock. Dressed in ragged furs, the old man watches the characters with interest, while puffing on his pipe, and occasionally scratching his scraggly beard. If approached more closely the man will identify himself as Ol' Ar-Cee, and tell the party that he is a trapper that lives in the swamp, travelling to town every couple of weeks to sell his muskrat hides. If asked specifically about the thorks, Ar-Cee tells the party that he knows where they can be found, and will offer to guide them there for the modest price of 20 gp. If the party accepts him as a guide he will want to be off right away. If the party does not, he will give them some general directions toward the thork pond and send them on their way. At no point will he offer the group the hospitality of the cabin.

If Ar-Cee is followed he will lead the characters into a trap. If he just gives the characters directions instead, following his directions will lead the characters into the same trap. In this case he will follow along behind the characters once they are out of sight of the cabin, and come upon them from behind while they are dealing with it. There is a large patch of quicksand, beneath shallow water, crossing the path between the cabin and the thork pond; a fallen tree trunk, also hidden under the water, provides a safe path across the quicksand. Ar-Cee knows where the log is and uses that to cross (having done this countless times in the past he doesn't even break stride as he does so), giving the characters following him no warning of what lies ahead.

Ar-Cee plans on letting the characters drown in the quicksand, and then coming back later to drag the bottom with a rope and grapple to extract their bodies and equipment. Characters in the quicksand have a 1 in 10 chance per round of finding the submerged log, and if they do they can easily use that as an aid to escape the morass (Rules for quicksand can be found in the AD&D Wilderness Survival Guide. If that source is not available, treat the quicksand as deep water that characters can only swim or hold their breath half as long as normal in). While the characters are in the quicksand, Ar-Cee will stand around laughing at them and calling them fools. If any characters not stuck in the quicksand are on the same side as he is, or if he is attacked, Ar-Cee will attack, revealing himself to be a wereboar as he does so, and calling two "swamp razorbacks" (wild boars) to his aid.

Going back to search Ar-Cee's cabin reveals that the place is a mess. Garbage and spoiled food is strewn around everywhere and the table is heaped with old rusted weapons and armor, much of it covered in gritty sand and none of it valuable. Two 100 foot coils of rope, each set with a large grappling hook hang from one wall, and an assortment of rusted animal traps and skinning knives hang from another. On the back of the door a map of the swamp is pinned up, this map marks out dangerous locations (such as the quicksand pit that Ar-Cee lured the characters too) as well as a small lake deep in the swamp marked as the "steaming mere". A more careful search of the one room cabin allows characters to find a loose floorboard under Ar-Cee's sleeping cot; beneath the floor, the wereboar has hidden an iron box. The box is unlocked and holds 382 gp, 3 pale yellow crystal gems (citrines worth 50 gp each), a wrought gold necklace set with moonstones (worth 1300 gp), 2 glass potion bottles (a potion of heroism and a potion of fire resistance) and two broken copper (thork) feathers.

Characters following the map from Ar-Cee's cabin can reach the "steaming mere" after an hours travel with no chance of encountering any really dangerous terrain. Characters attempting to find it without the map will take from 2-5 (1d4+1) hours to do so, and have a 20% chance per hour of stumbling upon another quicksand patch.

The "steaming mere" is a large roughly oval area of clear water with thick rushes growing along the edges. There are a total of 8 thorks at the mere and 12 nests hidden in the rushes around the water's edge. The four abandoned nests each hold 5d6 cast off thork feathers, and the thorks will ignore characters searching them. Inhabited nests will have 5d6 loose feathers as well, plus 1d8 platinum pieces (there are a total of 40 pp scattered among all of the occupied nests. Once 40 pp have been found the characters will find no more. If less than 40 pp have been found by the time the characters search the final nest then that nest will hold enough platinum pieces to get

the total found to 40), but there is a 30% chance that an inhabited nest has a thork resting in it when discovered. A thork will always fight to defend its nest, but generally other thorks will ignore the commotion. One of the nests, however, always has a thork resting in it, and she is sitting upon an egg. If characters come within 30 feet of the nest with the egg, all of the thorks of the mere will converge on them within 1d4 rounds attacking viciously to drive the characters from the mere. In addition to the feathers and platinum, the thork nest with the egg has been built on top of a large shield partially sunk into the mud; this shield is actually a magical large shield +1, +4 vs missiles.

#### **Monster Statistics:**

Boar, Wild: AC 7; MV 15"; HD 3+3; hp 17; THAC0 16; #AT 1; D 3-12; SD Keep fighting at 0 to -6 HP for 2-5 rounds; SZ M; Int Semi; AL N.

Lycanthrope, Wereboar: AC 4; MV 12"; HD 5+2; hp 35; THAC0 15; #AT 1; D 2-12; SD +1 or silver weapon to-hit; SZ L; Int Average; AL N.

Thork: AC 3; MV 6"/6"; HD 3; hp 14; THAC0 16; #AT 1; D 1-6; SA Boiling Water Breath Weapon (4-32); SZ L; Int Animal; AL N.

#### **Notes:**

This adventure involves a monster from the Fiend Folio (the thorks) so that book is recommended for playing this adventure. Quicksand is a danger in this adventure so the Wilderness Survival Guide which has rules for quicksand would come in handy, though it is not strictly necessary to run the adventure. Like most of the short adventures in the Book of Lairs and Book of Lairs II, this one has been designed so that a map is not really necessary, though the Dungeon Master is encouraged to create a quick sketch map of the locations if he or she might find it helpful. The monetary reward amounts for the adventure hooks has been left unstated intentionally, so that a Dungeon Master can assign values that are more in line with the amount of money that he or she wants the characters to possess at the level they undertake the adventure at.

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