

Back to Basic X



**A new quarterly Fanzine dedicated to a simpler time of RPGs—
covering the Basic and Expert editions of Dungeons & Dragons.**

What System? Who Cares? — A Note from the Fanzine Creator

For all the social media banter about old and new systems, and which version ranks as the best or truest, our entire community supports the same thing: tabletop roleplaying games. Although the chatter can be both amusing and irritating at times, we all want the same thing - to sit down with friends and family and play a few good hours of a roleplaying game. I've seen even the most die-hard grognards relent to the pressure to play a different game just to get some long-sought-after time at the table. It gets harder and harder to find time to play these days, so why should we bicker about the system?

Although I love B/X the best and always return to it after short forays into other systems, I play the games my friends play because I want to spend time at the table with them. Memories are made not from the systems we play, but those people we play with. So what if the system has ascending armor class? Let's sling

the dice! Can you recall your favorite RPG memory? It probably wasn't about a gap in a rule or how you were able to maximize your character's abilities. I bet it probably included all your friends and how you all survived an encounter or worked together to outwit your foes. And did it matter what system you were playing? Hell, I can't even remember what system we were playing with some of my favorite memories of all time! But I can remember who was there and how I felt when we accomplished our goals.

We all love to play and we all have favorite systems. B/X is mine. That's why I write this fanzine - to put energy into something that has given me so much enjoyment over the years. It's the least I can do for something I love. But if your favorite system is something other than B/X, no worries. I can totally respect that. Just get out there, gather up your best friends, and have some fun!

Thom Wilson

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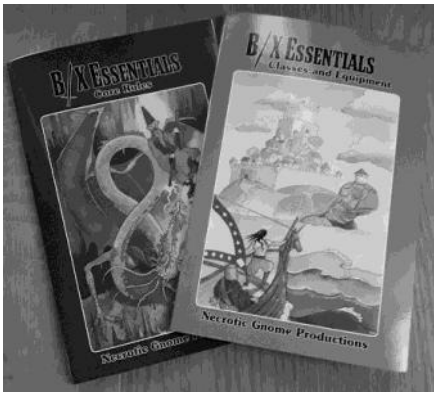
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Upcoming Issues:

- #5 — June, 2018 (also avail. NTX)
- #6 — September, 2018

Publishing News

Although we're a small group, there are a few of us out there putting together new material for an old game. Gavin Norman over at **Necrotic Gnome Productions** has created two B/X books for our enjoyment and plans on having the entire system in several volumes. I've purchased his first print on demand books, **B/X Essentials: Core Rules**, and **Classes and Equipment**.



First, let me say the dimensions of the books are great. They are US Trade paperback-sized, perfect-bound books with a bright, glossy cover. Each book has a manageable number of pages and is easily used at the gaming table. The separation of each book makes it simple for players to use them: core rules are in one volume, class and equipment information in another. I personally like this feature and can see how a several-book volume, split up by material, will make it easier for players and GMs during game play.

Players familiar with the Moldvay and Cook editions of Basic and Expert D&D will find these books very similar. The material

is organized neatly and is true to the original rulebooks. A few sections have been reorganized and split between volumes. But this is what makes these books great — the rules are split between topics and not levels. For example, you get all the Cleric abilities for Basic and Expert, and won't need to thumb through two books to check leveling and abilities.

I wasn't able to find anything that differed from the original books besides the obvious prose and artwork. Some of the important charts are found in both books (e.g. Ability Score Adjustments), which makes things easier when more than one player is looking for the same thing. Additionally, there is a lot of cross-referencing between books, i.e. book and page numbers are both listed when a topic is found in a different volume.

The material is presented with a retro font and in a very clean format. The pages are easy-to-read and the art is great. The Core Rules come in at 34 pages and the Classes and Equipment book is slightly larger at 44 pages. I've already started to use these in game prep and will have them at the table at the next gaming session.

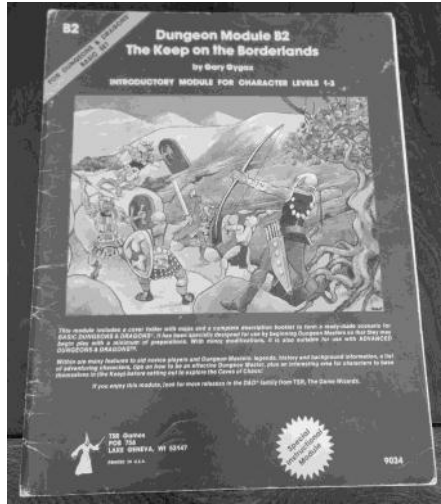
Necrotic Gnome's website reveals that work on the third volume has concluded. **B/X Essentials: Cleric and Magic-user Spells** is also ready for purchase! PDF and print on demand copies of all three volumes of the B/X essentials are available at RPGNow. I'm looking forward to what comes next!

Product Spotlight

Having looked at the Basic and Expert rulebooks already, I felt like it was time to review an early B/X adventure. Where better than to start with the king of them all, the one we've all played... **The Keep on the Borderlands!**

This adventure was the first I ever played and the first I ever ran as a new GM. I've run countless new players through the keep, the caves, and the wilderness surrounding the small castle. I've added the Keep to new campaign worlds and adapted it to different game systems. I've just started a new campaign at a public library and guess where we started? That's right, using the Keep as a base of operations in a wild, lawless land. This short but packed book has been within arm's reach of the game table since I started slinging dice in the early 1980's. It's a wondrous beauty by Gary Gygax.

As most of us know, this is an introductory adventure, highlighting rules for new GMs. The father of roleplaying guides GMs and players through an avalanche of material, providing just enough back story and rumors to whet the appetite of first to third level characters and new players. There are dozens of well-designed encounters, but Gygax leaves plenty of room for new GMs to flex their imaginative powers; several of the wilderness scenarios are bare-bones, perfect for GMs itching to put their own stamp on the classic.



A well-used first printing of the famous adventure!

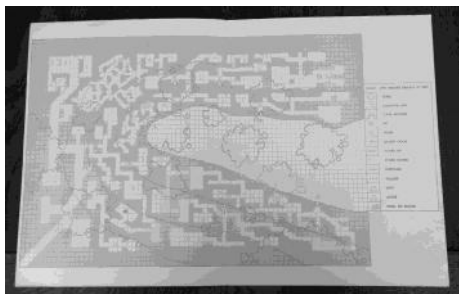
Keep on the Borderlands was designed with three sections in mind: the keep, the Caves of Chaos, and the wilderness. While many of us scoured the caves in search of treasure and experience, many players got most of their enjoyment by interacting with the detailed cast within the Keep. I've had groups try to rob the bank and others try to take the castle from the Castellan! I can't count how many times the gem merchant was robbed! Gygax gave us a great home base and so much more. The keep was a thriving, bustling place that players grew fond of and returned to it often.

Each encounter in the Caves of Chaos introduced new players to the varying races of the D&D fantasy setting. They met their first kobolds, orcs, stirges, bugbears, undead, owlbears... the list goes on! Gygax did a wonderful job of exposing players to all the creatures of this game, in one massive labyrinth of interconnected caves and tribes. Gygax also loaded the tunnels with

tons of treasure for the characters to discover. Coins, magic devices, and non-traditional items are found in plenty. Every turn the group takes uncovers another new creature and more fabulous treasure!

Gygax shows the new GM how to challenge players with an assortment of difficult creatures. The adventure is listed as “Levels 1-3”, but several encounters are deadly for the lowest levels of characters. Namely, a minotaur, an undead army, and a medusa make any group’s life expectancy a little shorter. However, new GMs will learn how to tailor adventures and encounters for their groups by seeing what is deadly and what is not.

Finally, the wilderness has several encounters for characters looking to explore above ground. They’ll face bandits and spiders, a hermit and some lizardmen. Most of these encounters, especially the lizardman mound, are presented as a basic framework without story and depth. It’s apparent that Gygax left these this way to let GMs flesh them out further. I’ve used these areas many times to expand adventuring and for my own personal campaign story lines.



The detachable cover map, created by none other than Diesel LaForce (spotlighted in this issue on page 5). One of the most recognizable dungeon maps of all time.

Of course, the big empty slate feature of the book is the Cave of the Unknown, an intentionally missing adventure area. Gygax points to the location within the nearby forest and hints to what may be there (linkage to the Caves of Chaos, perhaps) but leaves it undeveloped to encourage GMs to fully create their own work. Much like the other wilderness areas, I’ve created several simple and large tunnel complexes for players in this hidden location.

This adventure was an instant classic the day it was printed. It showcased Gygax’s talent for developing massive adventure material books in a small number of pages. It also demonstrated his tendency to have a couple of deadly encounters just in case the characters pushed too far or went the wrong way. Absolute brilliance contained in less than 28 pages.

If I had to recommend a starting adventure for new players, I’d suggest the Keep on the Borderlands, regardless of edition or rule system. Obviously, I’m biased to B/X, especially for this gem of an adventure.

First through Seventh Printings 1979-1983 with an Eighth Printing in 1999 (anniversary edition), written by Gary Gygax. ISBN: 0-935696-19-9; #9034, 1979 version (first printing) used in review, no price listed on the booklet. The Wizard logo was used on 1st and 2nd printings; the four line first paragraph on the cover identifies it as a first printing. DEX scores in the interior also identify the booklet as a first printing.

Interview with a Legendary Artist — Diesel LaForce

When I think of Keep on the Borderlands, I immediately think about the inside cover map. Everything about it is wonderful: its color, simplicity, and detail. Our interview this issue is with Diesel LaForce, the creator of the map and a few other pieces inside that legendary module.

[Thom] When did you get hired at TSR and was it solely as an artist or did you have other responsibilities?

[Diesel] I was originally hired in shipping. Ernie Gygax had recommended me for the job, he knew me from high school and my best friend, Ken Reek, ran the department. In fact he was the ONLY shipping employee. TSR was small, just 35 or so people working there, but was growing rapidly. I was hired just when the operation had moved from a small 2-story house to a hotel/bar/bowling alley which TSR had purchased downtown. That was 1979 I think.

After my first year, the art director Dave Sutherland found out I liked to draw. He asked to see some samples and I did 3 pieces over the weekend at home. Dave bought 2 of them for publication in the DMG for \$35 each and offered me a position as a staff artist. How could I refuse?!

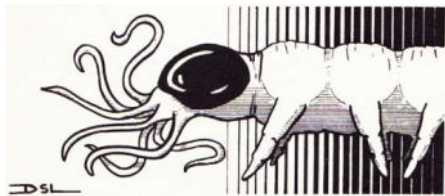
[T] Can you recall your first piece that made it into a TSR publication?

[D] Even though my first two illustrations had been purchased for the DMG, its initial printing

was delayed by quite a bit. So my first published pieces were not the first pieces I produced. The first printed art pieces were for the module C1 - HIDDEN SHRINE OF TOMOACHAN by Harold Johnson & Jeff Leason. The first piece I actually drew as a staff artist was the centaur with a spear.

[T] Do you recall any of the pieces in the early Basic D&D rulebooks or adventures, and any that you are especially proud of?

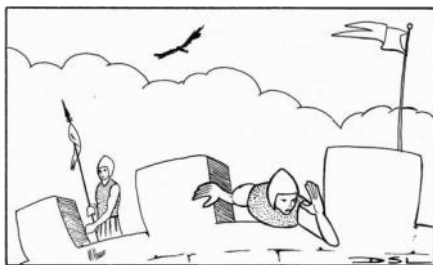
[D] The art I drew for those books were rather small, but I liked them for the most part. I was quite proud of all my work at the time, now most of it looks amateurish to me but still holds some kind of magic. I loved the Carrion Crawler monster so I took that opportunity to do one. It is a rather simple looking piece. The lined background was inspired by the art on the blank Maxell cassette tapes I used.



The Carrion Crawler from the Basic Rulebook (B32)

I did an illustration in the Basic Set of a guy (the DM) controlling the strings of a D&D character puppet (NPC). That was supposed to be me in the drawing.

There was a piece in B1 - KEEP ON THE BORDERLANDS that I was really kinda proud of the initial concept, but it bothered me in how it was handled



in later reprints. The illustration is of a fighter on horseback seen from behind in front of some castle gates. He is looking up. The drawing is supposed to be placed at the bottom right of the page and the character is looking up to the top left of the page. There, I placed a drawing of some castle guards on a turret shouting down to the rider. Kind of a story illo. They got it right for the first printing, but on newer copies the module had some text revisions which changed the location of the pictures. Now, they were just individual pictures that made no sense when out of placement. Even later printings removed the art of the castle turret guards altogether, which makes the illo of the rider looking up at nothing — and rather a head scratcher as to what he is doing.

Another of my Basic Set faves was a piece that depicted the different character classes. The halfling was my character. A couple of the others were player characters in our game as well. I since re-imagined this piece for Goodman Games a number of years ago.

[T] What were the time lines like for you and other artists at TSR? Was the work a grind at times with difficult schedules or was it more creative with artists developing an "art library"?

[D] When I first started I couldn't wait to get to work. I was 19 at the time. My desk was on the 2nd floor and the fire escape was just outside my window. I would leave it unlocked so I could get in (I had no keys). I had to jump on the trash bin to reach the ladder and up I would go. On a few occasions the police drove by but they never stopped to ask what I was doing up there. I always thought that was odd.

We were all pretty free to choose what we wanted to work on and what we wanted to put on a page. We received some direction from whomever was editing, but by and large it was up to the artist to do what he thought was appropriate on the page. We would be given a space to fill, we read the text, and created. Deadlines never seemed overly burdensome. As time went on, the product lines increased, deadlines shortened,



Recreating that B2 1st print scene!

workload was heavier. We started working more closely with an editor or writer as products got more specialized and the narratives got tighter on the adventures. After a time it became pretty common to pull late nights or sometimes all-nighters to make deadlines. Still, there was a lot of creative enthusiasm even then.

[T] What sort of things did you do to "recharge the batteries" or to spark artistic inspiration after a lengthy project or heavy workload?

[D] I always had to get up from my desk about once an hour and walk around, eye strain, stretch, relax the fingers. This also gave me the great opportunity to look at what the other artist were doing. Looking at other great art can be a fantastic way to jumpstart the desire to improve and maybe think outside the box sometimes.

[T] Are there any personal projects that you'd love to work on and haven't yet had the time to do?

[D] I have for a long time wanted to do my own rendition of Tolkien's maps. I am not sure what I could do with that because of copyrights. I would love to do some elaborate border art with it, like I did for some of the DragonLance maps.

[T] Is there a client that you'd love to work for, if they called you tomorrow?

[D] It really doesn't matter who I am doing the work for. As long

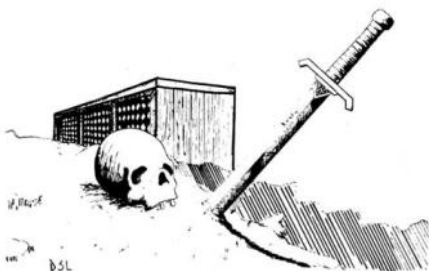


Character Classes, from the Basic Rulebook, page B10

as it is something I would be interested in working on. I recently completed a commission for a personal bookplate. It will probably never see print but was a piece that turned out to be extremely satisfying. So you never know...

[T] What are you working on these days?

[D] I am currently working on sculptures for NTRPG Con in Texas. I have been commissioned to do first, second, and third place trophies for their Circus Maximus chariot racing games they hold every year. I made a trophy for their gladiator games 2 years ago and they were quite pleased. This is a much more ambitious project.



One of Diesel's illustrations from the DM Guide

Mythology

The two new monsters in this issue's Mythology section are also found in the Dungeon Crawl on page 11.

Stone Gorilla

A magical union between a primate and a wingless gargoyle, the rare Stone Gorilla displays aspects of both creatures. They are often found in an unmoving, frozen state until they are activated, usually by touch or being in close proximity to the creature. Their skin is made of hardened stone, making them less susceptible to edged weapons (half damage) and fire or cold spells (immunity). Their nature makes them fearless foes, not to be taken lightly.

Armor Class:	4
Hit Dice:	4+1*
Move:	60' (20')
Attacks:	2 Fists 1 Bite
Damage: Fists	1-3/1-3
Bite	1-6
Special:	Immune to fire/ cold; edged weapons deal half damage
No. Appearing:	1-2
Save As:	Fighter: 4
Morale:	10
Treasure Type:	Nil
Alignment:	Chaotic

Chimpanzee Trickster

Vastly more intelligent than its lesser cousin, the Chimpanzee Trickster is the most evolved primate known to exist. Most are able to speak broken Common and can learn new languages as quickly as an average human. A small percentage of



their kind are also able to cast basic (1st level) Magic-User spells. The more advanced Trickster can also learn to use magical devices such as wands, rods, staves or scrolls.

Chimpanzee Tricksters normally come from two parents that are both Tricksters; a Trickster mating with a common chimpanzee produces normal offspring. It is possible for a common chimpanzee to be transformed into a Trickster through magic.

Armor Class:	6
Hit Dice:	3*
Move:	60' (20')
Attacks:	1 Bite
Damage:	1-4
No. Appearing:	2-8
Save As:	Fighter: 1
Morale:	8
Treasure Type:	I
Alignment:	Chaotic

The Magic Shop

Not every treasure can be found in a shop or store. Many are found in strange locales, created by hermit wizards and tinkers.

Medallion of Tongues

Set on a heavy chain of silver, this large medallion is worn around the neck. It is imprinted with the word, “knowledge”, in hundreds of different languages on both sides. When worn, the Medallion of Tongues allows the character to expertly read, write and communicate in any existing language, both currently used or long forgotten.

Value: 20,000 GP

Firedart Spell—1st level spell

Unlike other Magic-User spells, the *Firedart* incantation can be cast over several combat rounds, continuing the effects after the spell has been completed. Once cast, the *Firedart* spell automatically hits a chosen target for 1d4 damage. For two more combat rounds, the spell continues to create *Firedarts*, automatically striking a chosen target for the same 1d4 damage, even if the caster has moved on to another spell or activity. The caster may cancel the spell at any time after the first *Firedart*.

Value: n/a

Spellbound

We all know that spellcasters in B/X are limited in the number of the spells they can cast per day. But are any of those spells just too powerful? Let’s examine a few first and second level magic-user spells that seem to tip the scales quickly in the favor of the player characters.

Before we look at each spell in detail, remember that the “rule” with spells and saving throws in B/X is “The victim of a spell may only ‘save’ (make a saving throw) if the spell description permits a saving throw to be made.” (pg B15, Moldvay) This ruling helps categorize many of the spells that follow as powerful; victims are not permitted a saving throw in some cases.

A low-level spell that I’ve always felt was extremely powerful was *Charm Person*. A failed saving throw charms a creature for days, weeks or even a month,

depending on their Intelligence score. What? A first level spell makes a highly intelligent creature your servant for a whole day? Creatures that lack intelligence can serve the magic-user for days or weeks before getting another chance to break free from their charmed state. Considering a second or third level magic-user can cast this spell a few times a day and several times per week, they can amass an army of servants! Granted, they can’t charm “larger” creatures, i.e. bigger than an Ogre, but they can charm an intelligent foe as long as the targeted creature fails their initial saving throw. *Charm Person* is extremely powerful, at least until several of the charmed creatures make their saving throw at the same time.

Another spell that takes care of business in B/X is *Sleep*. Oh yes, does it ever; 2-16 hit dice (2d8) of creatures fall to sleep

for 4-16 turns. They must have HD less than 4+1, but in the Basic D&D world, that's more than half the monsters in the book. Of course, at higher levels, *Sleep* is less powerful but early on the magic-user or elf has a powerful group spell. The fact that victims of the spell aren't allowed a saving throw makes *Sleep* a necessary and most often chosen spell at early levels. Additionally the B/X *Sleep* spell is target based, not area of effect based, so "friendlies" aren't subject to the effects of the spell.

Although it's not overly powerful in combat, the *Invisibility* spell has one very ridiculous effect; the caster can remain invisible permanently! Now, that's not entirely true. If the caster attacks or casts a spell, he or she becomes visible again and the spell ends. But if the target does not attack or cast a spell, they can sneak around invisibly for days! At the very least, they can sneak about unseen until they have to engage in combat, perhaps hours after the spell was cast. Depending on how you interpret the words of the spell description, *Invisibility* can make one object invisible forever. Do you want to hide that item so it will never be found? There you go.



You could argue that any spell that automatically works with no chance of failure is overly powerful, especially when compared to modern games where checks and saves are permitted often, and effect durations are much shorter. With many B/X spells, the "automatic" effect makes up for the limited number of spells the caster gets per day. There are other first or second level spells that could have been added to this list for their automatic effect; *Magic Missile*, *Locate Object* and *Knock* (especially if you interpret the description to mean "all" locked devices within the 60' range) all fit in this category. They are powerful because they cannot fail to work.

Next time, we'll look at spells that are often overlooked. As always, if you have a spell you want me to discuss or cover here, just let me know.

Quarterly Dungeon Crawl

"It is hard for the ape to believe he descended from man." – H.L. Mencken, early 20th century American satirical author and journalist.

Ascent of the Apes

by Thom Wilson. An adventure for 4-6 characters of 3rd to 4th level.

Background: After years of cruel imprisonment, Grumnax, an intelligent ape, escaped his master and fled to a remote area of the region. Climbing the cliffs at the edge of civilization, the ape found a hidden sanctuary behind a rotted wooden door. Inside, he found dozens of lesser apes using the tunnels as their home. Their joyous reaction to his sudden appearance was at first bewildering, until the ape found statues within the sanctuary that bore a close resemblance to his own features. Was he a descendent of the ancient race of men idolized within the sanctuary or the other way around? Nevertheless, the man-eating ape took the mantle of leadership, organized the apes into a community and began teaching the most intelligent chimpanzees and baboons to speak and use sophisticated tools.

The apes have made several raids into nearby jungle villages to kidnap humans for their new leader. His appetite for human flesh is never-ending, and the apes have grown fearless in their battle prowess. Village leaders seek to stop the raids and end the apes' vicious attacks on settlers.

A1. Sanctuary Entrance

A narrow path winds dangerously upward along the cliff, until it reaches an old wooden door hidden in the shadows. Clumsy characters may fall from the ledge in several places during their climb if they aren't careful. The door angle makes it hard to see it from the ledge (found with a result of 1-3 on

a d6, or 1-4 on a d6 by an Elf or Dwarf). The apes have barred the door from the inside, requiring a forceful open door attempt (Moldvay, B21) to break through. There is a slight chance that an intelligent or dexterous character may be able to wiggle the handle and door latch to unbar the door from the outside.

Searching the area may reveal ape feces along the ledge and in the door alcove. Curiously, the word "ape" is roughly scrawled into the mountain wall near the door.

A2. Visitor's Hall

The long chamber beyond the sanctuary entrance was once used for visitors to pay their respects to the ancient men of the valley nearby. Six statues of once-great men line the two walls and an alcove with a mural epitaph at the northern end was used as an area to educate and collect donations from guests. The apes have broken the heads off the stone statues, replacing them with the skulls of dead primates. Fecal matter, rotted fruit and bamboo shoots are found in plenty throughout the hallway.

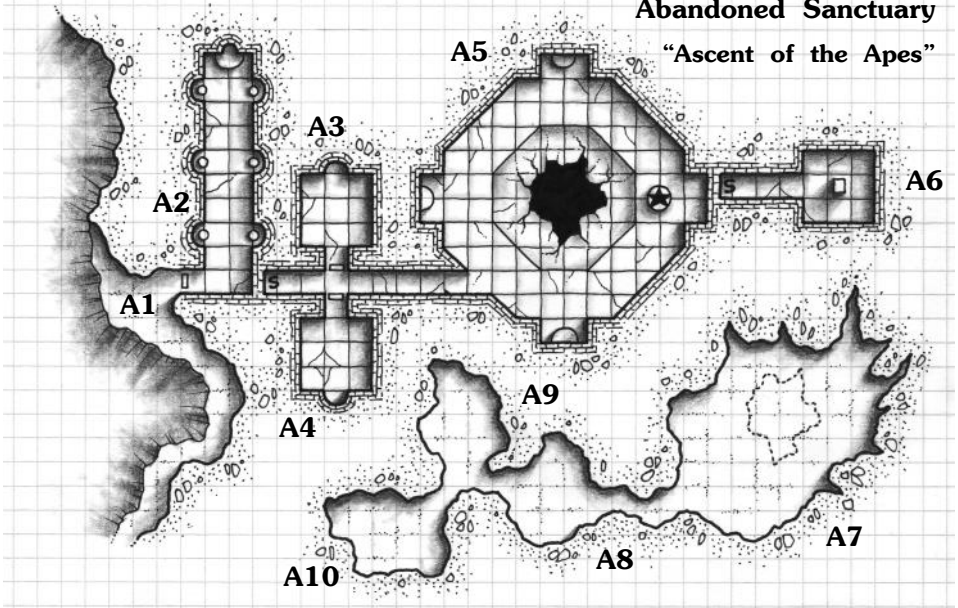
There is a 50% chance that 1d6+1 **Baboons** are found here, lounging amidst the statues and rubble. They will attack trespassers instantly, but will retreat to area 5 (through the secret door) if half or more of their number are killed.

Baboons: (AC 7, HD 1+1, HP: 5 ea, #AT 1 bite, D 1-4, Save F1, ML 7, XP 15 ea)

The stone platform at the northern end of the hallway is heavily damaged, with several cracks spreading across its entire length. A well-placed strike should break it apart, revealing the forgotten donation reservoir within. **26 gp** and **145 sp** will spill out of the broken platform. A crudely made secret door in the southeastern part of the hallway leads to the rest of the area.

Abandoned Sanctuary

“Ascent of the Apes”



A3. Acolyte Chamber

Once a sleeping chamber for guardians of the sanctuary, this square room is now home to many of the stronger Baboons of the complex. The Baboons frequently chosen to raid the surrounding jungles are given the semi-private room away from the masses that crowd together in area 7. Most of the area is destroyed; any furniture that was once here has been broken and scattered about the room.

There are $1d6+1$ **Baboons** in the room waiting for the next command by Grumnax, the new leader of their faction. If Area 2 was clear of Baboons, add another $1d6+1$ Baboons to the total.

Additionally, there is a 1 in 10 chance that one of the Chimpanzee Tricksters from Area 4 may be here communicating new orders.

Baboons: (AC 7, HD 1+1, HP: 5 ea, #AT 1 bite, D 1-4, Save F1, ML 7, XP 15 ea)

A thorough search of the rubble should reveal a bag of gold coins (**25 gp**).

A4. Guest Quarters

When visitors made the long trek to the sanctuary, the guardians would sometimes invite them to stay overnight. This room was used to house temporary guests when the complex was active. **Chimpanzee Tricksters** (more details in the *Mythology* section of this issue) now use the area as their private quarters. The room is currently empty while the Tricksters are in the main sanctuary (area 5) and serving their new leader (area 6).

Dozens of books, scrolls and empty potion bottles are strewn about the area. Four of the Tricksters are able to read, write, and speak, using the special medallions found by Grumnax in the glass case of area 6. The rest of the Chimpanzees mimic their smarter brethren and are able to use the magical devices they've accumulated with limited ability.

A large spellbook at the bottom of a book pile contains an ancient spell, *Firedart*. The spell is similar to *Magic Missile* except that it deals only $1d4$ hp damage three times (more details within the *Magic*

Shop section of the issue). One of the scrolls found in the pile of paper is a **Scroll of Invisibility**. The rest of the books and scrolls have ancient writings detailing the great men that were once honored here. The language used in the writing is archaic and forgotten, but the medallions worn by the Tricksters can be used to magically decipher their content.

A5. Main Sanctuary

A large, eight-sided room opens up after the narrow hallway from the main entrance ends. The floor has two tiers, with the inner portion sinking three feet below the upper tier. A great hole in the middle of the room drops to area 7 below. The domed ceiling once had several glass windows that revealed the sky, but are now broken and damaged after a terrific lightning storm struck the sanctuary. Three alcoves on the north, south, and west sides of the large room each contain a short pedestal with a shadowy figure. A great statue of a bent man with an ape's face stands before the empty eastern alcove.

The three shadowy figures in the alcoves are **Stone Gorillas**, a rare form of gargoyle-like apes that have come to assist the growing primate faction. The Stone Gorillas (more details in the *Mythology* section of this issue) will remain unmoving and inanimate until a non-ape moves within 5 feet of the large statue. They are immune to cold and fire damage and take only half damage from edged weapons.

Stone Gorillas: (AC 4, HD 4+1*, HP: 21 ea, #AT 3 - 2 fists/bite, D 1-3/1-3/1-6, Save F4, ML 10, immune to cold/fire, edged weapons deal half damage, XP 215 ea)

In addition to the Stone Gorillas, 1d4 **Chimpanzee Tricksters** are also here, practicing their limited magical abilities. They will try to hide from adventurers by climbing to

the top of the dome or into the hole in the floor until the Stone Gorillas awaken. Once the larger apes attack the group, the Tricksters will join the fray. The Tricksters have learned an old spell from the tome in area 4 called *Firedart*. Each Trickster can cast *Firedart* once each day.

Chimpanzee Tricksters: (AC 6, HD 3*, HP: 12 ea, #AT 1 bite or 1 "spell", D 1-4 or *Firedart*, Save F1, ML 8, XP 65 ea)

Each Trickster wears a medallion around its neck that allows it to speak and read multiple languages. Four magical **Medallions of Tongues** were found in the secret treasure chamber to the east and were given to the chimpanzees to help bridge the communication gap between the broad range of intellect amongst the primates in the faction. The Chimpanzee Tricksters are the leader's translators and order-givers.

A close inspection of the large statue will reveal that each dirty tooth within the grinning man's mouth is made of platinum. The twenty grimy teeth are each worth **5 pp**. A secret door in the dark eastern alcove leads to Grumnax's chamber (area 6).

A6. Treasure Room

Mystical treasures left behind by the ancient men honored in the sanctuary were once stored in this small room behind its western secret door. A single pedestal in the center of the room at one time held an ornate glass case that protected wondrous magic items. When the room was found by Grumnax, he quickly smashed the case and removed the valuable items.

The room is now used by "Grumnax", a **Man-eating Ape** and new leader of the primate faction within the sanctuary. He commands the growing group from a stone seat in his private lair, using the Chimpanzee Tricksters to communicate most of his orders. The man-

eating ape speaks broken Common but can communicate fluently with the rest of the apes, especially the Tricksters who are wearing the magical medallions (see area 5 for details). Grumnax prefers to communicate in Common.

Grumnax's arrogance shows through his physical attitude and how he grunts out orders to his minions. The large ape despises both humans and demi-humans and will immediately attack either on sight.

Grumnax, Man-Eating Ape: (AC 3, HD 5+1**, HP: 30, #AT 2 - 1 slam/bite, D 2-8/1-4, Save F4, ML 11, XP 460)

Two especially fierce **Gorillas** stand near the secret door entrance, ready to protect Grumnax from unwanted guests. They attack any non-ape and prevent any ape other than the Chimpanzee Tricksters from entering the room.

Gorillas: (AC 6, HD 4+1, HP: 21 ea, #AT 3 - 2 fists/bite, D 1-3/1-3/1-6, Save F4, ML 9, XP 140 ea)

Up to four **Chimpanzee Tricksters** may be here assisting their leader with plans. The number of Chimpanzees will be four minus the number found in area 5. The Tricksters will hang back, attacking with their *Firedart* spells until they need to join the fray physically. To increase the challenge of the encounter, you may choose to have one or more of the Tricksters using the two magical wands found behind Grumnax's stone seat.

Chimpanzee Tricksters: (AC 6, HD 3*, HP: 12 ea, #AT 1 bite or 1 "spell", D 1-4 or *Firedart*, Save F1, ML 8, XP 65 ea)

Grumnax keeps all the stored treasure captured from village raids and wayward merchants in a large chest behind his stone seat. The chest is filled with many non-valuable items but also holds **421 gp**, **1376 sp**, a **Wand of Webs**, a **Wand of**

Magic Missiles, and a **Potion of Healing**. Although intelligent, Grumnax is as equally fond of the non-valuable trinkets as he is of the magical items.

A7. Large Cavern

The hole in the floor of area 5 drops down into a subterranean cavern where many Baboons rest, eat, and groom each other while waiting for new instructions. The floor of the cavern is littered with human bones from the remains of Grumnax's meals.

2d4+2 **Baboons** will be found as soon as characters enter the cavern. They prefer to swarm one or two characters, attempting to inflict the most damage in the shortest amount of time.

Baboons: (AC 7, HD 1+1, HP: 4 ea, #AT 1 bite, D 1-4, Save F1, ML 7, XP 15 ea)

Some of the Baboons have yet to learn that the fungus in the next chamber (area 8) is hallucinogenic, causing them to act erratically after eating the glowing mushrooms.

A8. Fungus Chamber

A strange, glowing light pulses from hundreds of flat, wide mushrooms that grow along the base of the wall and floor in this area. Although the fungi generally pulses slowly, any warm bodied creature that gets within a foot of them causes the pulsing to speed up until they have a strobe-like effect.

Eating the mushrooms causes hallucinations, typically ranging from seeing things that aren't there to extreme fear. Failing to pass a Death Ray or Poison saving throw causes the consuming character to suffer the ill effects of the mushroom's hallucinations for 1d4 hours. During this time, they will be unable to speak clearly, fight, or cast spells. Passing the saving throw has a 50% chance of healing 1 hit point of damage.

A9. Solitary Guard

A grizzled old **Gorilla** maintains watch over the prisoners in the area to the west. He only takes orders from a Chimpanzee Trickster or Grumnax himself. He often beats prisoners who make too much noise, being careful not to kill them; the ape leader prefers his meals alive.

Old Gorilla: (AC 6, HD 4+1, HP: 21, #AT 3 - 2 fists/bite, D 1-3/1-3/1-6, Save F4, ML 10, XP 140)

A10. Prisoners

A dozen captured villagers, merchants, and defeated adventurers are found within this dead-end cavern. Each day, Grumnax sends for one prisoner at random to be selected for his midday meal. The kidnapped victims know that any that are drag-

ged away are never seen again. Only one prisoner is capable of fighting after their prolonged stay in captivity. A young guard who was accompanying a merchant when they were caught by the apes still has enough strength to fight if asked.

Borgal, the guard: (AC 8, F1, HP: 2, #AT 1 fists or weapon, D 1-2 or weapon, Save F1, ML 6)

Adventure Conclusion

Unless the characters defeat Grumnax and all the Chimpanzee Tricksters, the ape faction will continue to grow. They will range out farther and farther, capturing more human victims and recruiting more jungle primates to their cause. If the man-eating ape and chimpanzees are killed, the remaining primates will return to the jungle and resume their previous way of life.

Crimson Abbey of the Broken God — Part 4

In Part 3 of the *Crimson Abbey of the Broken God*, the intrepid heroes find themselves locked in a life and death battle with six undead monks. Luckily (as seen in this issue's comic by Travis Hanson), Whystal helps get the injured Magic-User out of trouble by taking down the skeletons with his bow and closing the door behind his exiting friends.

Ensa managed to grab one of the monk's headbands, a likely valuable and potentially magical item from the previous encounter area. Little does the group know how powerful the ruby fragment in the headpiece is and how valuable it will be to their survival later in the adventure.

Meanwhile, Whystal gets himself into trouble again, this time finding a pit trap in the hallway...

Ensa Rassal, Magic User

Strength: 9

Intelligence: 16

Wisdom: 12

Dexterity: 11

Constitution: 9

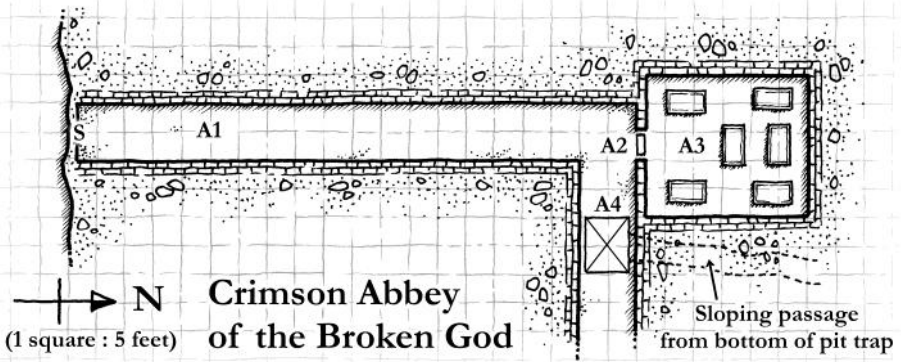
Charisma: 15

Level: 1, AC: 9, HP: 2 (1*)

Gear: Robe, dagger, Wand of Magic Detection, map of the Crimson Abbey. Spell: Magic Missile (used)

Ensa is a smart, young wizard's apprentice who has recently acquired the map of the Crimson Abbey. She has taken leave of her studies to pursue the fabled treasures of the deserted abbey. Like Bindor, she is fiercely loyal to her friends.

**after the battle with the undead monks, poor Ensa has but a single hit point left.*



Area 4: Floor Trap

After turning the corner in the hallway, characters may discover a pit trap in the floor. The trap is activated with less than 5 pounds of pressure, but due to its age is twice as easy to spot by Thieves (double % on Thief Abilities chart, page B8 [Moldvay] and Dwarves (1-4 on a d6). The ten-foot-wide trap drops characters into a 20' deep pit onto a pile of discarded straw and old clothing. Characters rolling under their Dexterity take no damage, otherwise take 1d4. A small, concealed door is found at the bottom of the pit on the northern wall.

The hidden door is not quite as hard to find as a secret door (in this case, 2 in 6 chance, 3 in 6 for an elf). It opens into a dark tunnel sloping downward in a northerly direction. It is possible that a character may roll into and through the hidden door after their fall.

Sloping Tunnel

A damp, dark tunnel winds downward for over one hundred feet before it levels off. The tunnel opens into a large room, nearly forty-foot square. Three other tunnels (on the other three walls) lead away into darkness.

The room is filled with hundreds of casks, crates, and wooden boxes, each covered with an inch of dust. A single set of footprints are found entering from the northern tunnel and exiting the room into the western tunnel. Otherwise, it looks like the room has not been used for a very long time. Only fossilized food, evaporated wine, and empty boxes are found in this area.

Whystal, Thief

Strength: 12
 Intelligence: 12
 Wisdom: 11
 Dexterity: 15
 Constitution: 13
 Charisma: 16
 Level: 1, AC: 6, HP: 4 (2*)

Gear: Leather armor, cloak, dagger, short bow, quiver w/ 10 arrows (used two in area 3).

Whystal is a rash young thief, preferring to think on his feet (often not thinking at all). He tends to rush into situations unprepared, forcing his compatriots to "save" him time and again.

**After his fall into the trap (luckily only taking 1 point of damage), Whystal has but two hit points left.*



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