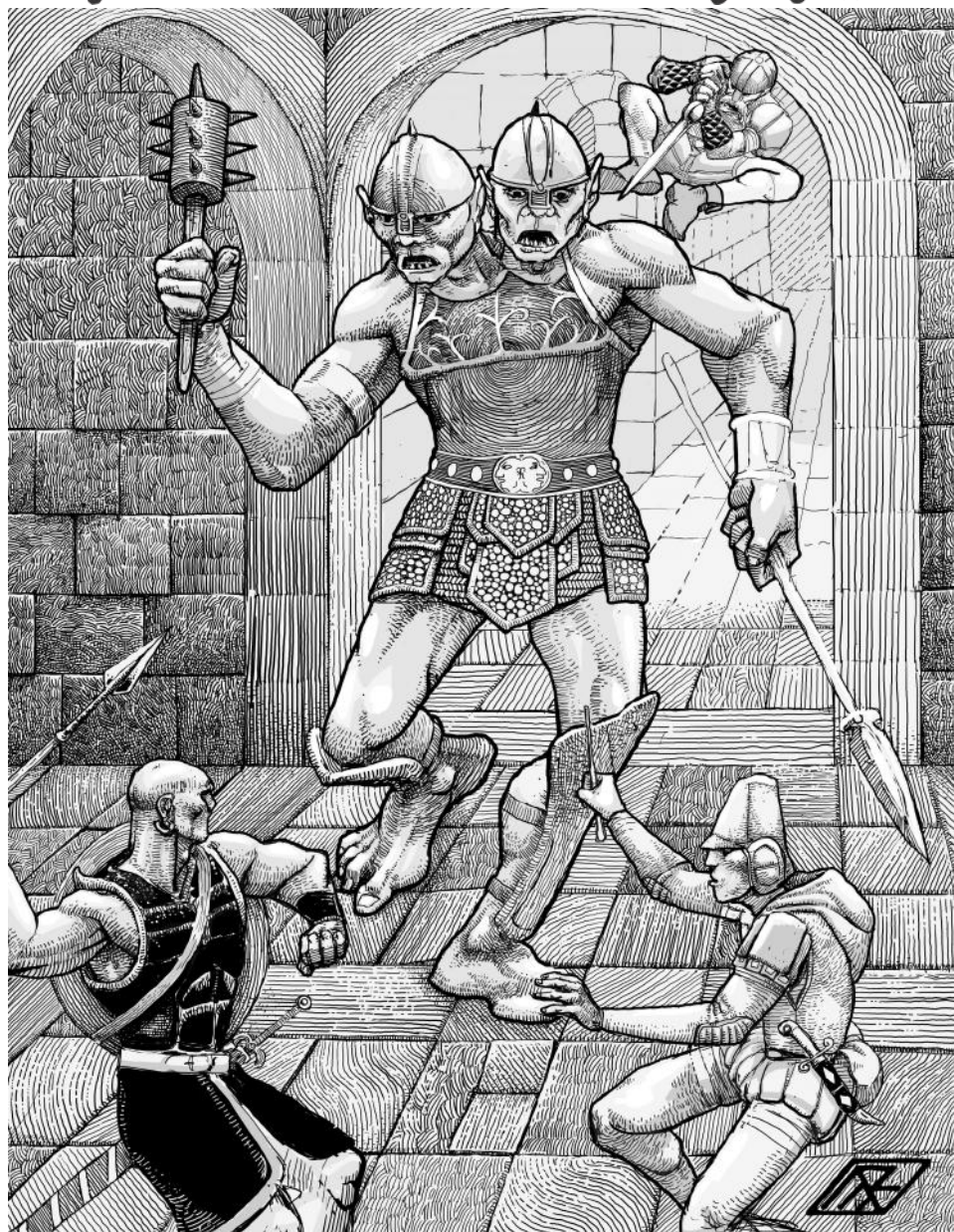


# Back to BasiX



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

## Adding Homebrew Rules — A Note from the Fanzine Creator

Every game master—at one time or another—has likely had to modify an existing rule or create a rule for a unique situation. Perhaps the rules as written (RAW) were too strict for the encounter or the player's ideas were not covered in the rules. What did they do? Did they create or modify a rule to better handle this particular situation or did they just go with the best RAW option?

For most GMs, changing rules on the fly is a matter of preference, experience, and need. There are some that prefer to run RAW sessions to give the players a taste of how the original game creators wanted encounters to be handled or effects to be resolved. Others bend rules to better fit their campaign, style of play, or their player's experience. But if we look to the foreword of the basic rules (Moldvay Edition), we can read how the TSR staff viewed their own game. In the 5<sup>th</sup> paragraph, Tom Moldvay states, "In a sense, the D&D game has

no rules, only rule suggestions." He continues, "No rule is inviolate, particularly if a new or altered rule will encourage creativity and imagination."(1) Well said, Mr. Moldvay!

Whether you are running RAW, a fully homebrewed system or something in between, you're still playing in the spirit of the game — to provide your players a setting and framework that allows them to have fun, exercise their ideas, and create wonderful memories!

In this and future issues, I'll include some of my own homebrew rules that I've used throughout the years. I don't claim that they are uniquely mine—someone, somewhere may have published the same idea—but I can say that I've used them in my games often enough.

*Thom Wilson*

(1) Tom Moldvay, December 3, 1980, D&D Basic Rules, TSR, page B2 (Foreword Section), 5th paragraph.

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# Back to Basics

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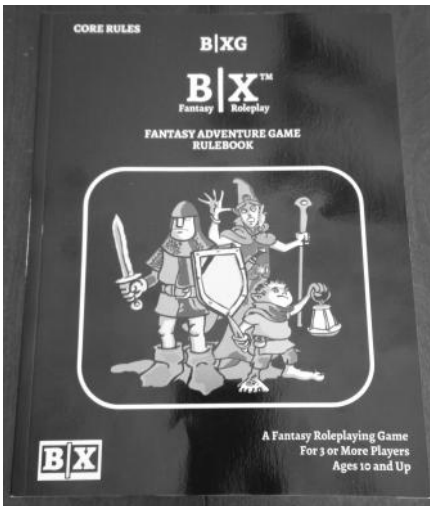
#6 — September, 2018 - PoD, PDF

#7 — December, 2018 - PoD, PDF

## Publishing News

As a lifelong fan of B/X, I'm always curious about products that inject new interest into our niche hobby. When I saw the **BX Fantasy Roleplay** (B|XFRP) book on the internet, I wanted to look it over. I'm a fan of print so I purchased a paper copy on Lulu for \$14.95.

If you're looking for a set of rules that combines Basic and Expert (Moldvay, Cook) into a single book, the B|XFRP book may be for you. It is laid out just like the original books with nearly identical section headings, similar section order, and a retro font that is reminiscent of the TSR fonts used in the original B/X products. Flipping through the book, I was eerily reminded of those early days...the B|XFRP book definitely sparked some nostalgia as I turned the pages.



However, its similarity to the originals may be its downfall too. It's *too* close to the first rulebooks. If you like using the B/X books you have, this may not be the purchase for you.

But, if you've always wanted both the Basic and Expert rulebooks in one book, it's as good an option as any.

What are things I liked? I definitely liked the single-book feel with all the rules of B/X content blended together. Finding first- through sixth-level spells for clerics and magic-users (and elves) combined in their own sections was useful. Maybe putting both spell lists in a single section organized alphabetically would have been a better option. At least it may have differentiated itself from the originals that way. I did like that the B|XFRP book was less total pages than the two original books—84 pages instead of 128. There was no redundancy of experience point and class tables, attack and saving throw charts, or equipment and gear lists, either.

Although the B|XFRP book tries to faithfully capture the original rules without major modifications, it still has a few changes that purchasers may not like. The low d6 rules for finding secret doors and hearing noises were switched to high-roll preference. A few wording changes are also found throughout the book—speed is used instead of move and “Dragon Master” replaces Dungeon Master (for obvious reasons). The rule text is often reworded or rephrased to avoid being too close a resemblance to the original work.

The layout is clean and organized, making it easy to find what you're looking for. The art is mostly of the stock or

shadowed picture (silhouette) variety with a few originals thrown in. The trim of the book is a bit tight, with page numbers and the back cover close to losing some of their text.

Overall, the book is a good table reference for players and game masters alike.

## Product Spotlight

Most of the early Basic adventures kept characters underground, exploring vast labyrinths and large cave systems. Wilderness travel was inserted into a session only as an afterthought, to get adventuring parties from dungeon to dungeon or from their adventure to town. The first real wilderness adventure book by TSR was released in the Expert rules boxed set, **The Isle of Dread**. This is what players had been looking for in D&D—a hex crawl!

I fell in love with that island map the moment I saw it—all those different locations set within jungles, mountains, swamps, and villages made it feel like the book had dozens of different adventures! My players' characters could spend months exploring hundreds of square miles of the island. Sure, there were some areas that needed additional fleshing out, but the framework for awesome adventures was there.

Labeled as a “special introduction wilderness module”, TSR gave us a book that starts our journey into outdoor travel and exploration. With islands to explore and a continent to use as a campaign world, B/X game-

masters finally had their first resource for broader-scale adventuring. Many of the principalities and regions listed on page 3 were fleshed out in their own detailed Gazetteer books later produced by TSR (see the GAZ1-14 series).



I've run this adventure countless times—can you tell?

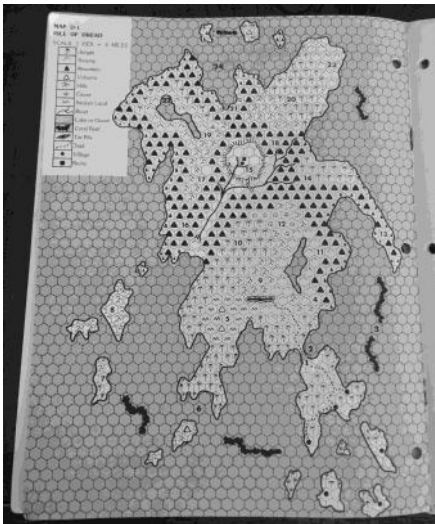
The adventure booklet is 32 pages in length, made up of 9 pages of maps, 3 pages of new monsters, a 2-page handout, a couple of pages of novice DM help, and about 13 pages of actual adventure material. Additionally, there are three wilderness encounter tables, several optional plot hooks, and a good mix of outdoor and dungeon adventures. Many of the encounter locations are only a few paragraphs with just enough detail to get the GM's imaginative juices flowing. Other areas, like the temple on Taboo Island, have detailed encounter areas that can be run as is.

Reading the art credits is like seeing the who's who of early TSR artists: Dee, Diesel, Otus, Sutherland and Willingham all

draw art for this fantastic book. I'm not sure who made the island and continent maps, but they should get an award for that work!

Let's not forget the book was designed by Moldvay *and* Cook, the editors of both Basic and Expert rules—a collaborative masterpiece!

*X1, The Isle of Dread*, written by David Cook and Tom Moldvay. ISBN: 0-935696-30-X; #9043, 1980-1982 (blue cover), 1983 (red cover); First printing lists 1981 date and incorrect product code; some early copies list a \$5.50 price; for 6-10 characters of 3rd to 7th level.



I loved that map!

### Homebrew Rule #1:

Fighters and Dwarves gain extra experience points for taking damage. For each hit point taken, they gain 10 experience points. Note that the XP is awarded when the character is engaged in real combat. Training or allowing foes to strike without defending negates the additional experience point bonus.

## Interview with a Legendary Author—Stephen Marsh

Rounding out our B/X rulebook interviews, this issue we talk to **Stephen Marsh**, author of and contributor to the Expert Rules.

*[Thom] What role were you initially hired to fill at TSR and what other things did you get to do there during your tenure?*

*[Stephen] Gary hired me to just come on board between my first and second year of law school and help out in the design department. They set me to work for the summer. I had a job offer to come back after law school that was rescinded by Brian Blume. Lots of things were worked on by me as an outsider: nothing ever quite completed, a good deal was lost when Gary was locked out of his office, and then all the papers in it were burned as detritus including the completed Star Strands project.*

The last drafts of the Planes of Reality went up in a house fire that took out Mike Gunderloy's collection as he was helping me work on a draft after Judges Guild went out of business. All that was left and that I had was my working copy which was sold by Paul Stormberg a while back to collectors.

*[Thom] What is your earliest and/or fondest memory of playing B/X or other systems? Were you a GM or player, and can you recall any details from those days (e.g. the adventure played, who other players may have been, your character, etc.)?*



[Stephen] Well, I just wrote the system, I didn't play it before I wrote it. Since then I've been more likely to play AD&D or various variant OD&D (brown box rules) though I am running a B/X game at the upcoming NTRPG Con. I tend to see the systems as somewhat interchangeable. I've also played a number of OSRIC-type systems since.



Artwork by William McAusland © Used with permission

[T] *You say that you wrote the system before you played it... does that mean that the Gygax/Arneson "by line" in the credits really refers more to the OD&D work but you rewrote sections to fit the Expert system, as it relates to Moldvay's work?*

[S] "D&D" was "by" Gygax/Arneson. Arneson's intent is pretty clear from the mimeographed rules he released at the end of the 70s (at a time when quality mimeograph was still very accepted as a publication tool). Fixed hit points, magic-users rise in level by learning all the spells at one level... that sort of thing.

I pretty much sat down and wrote the Expert set. Moldvay had already done the Basic set. The idea was that we would do three books. Basic, Expert and another (to take the levels from where Expert left off to about level 20). For example, Giant Sea Serpents were originally going to be in Expert, but were reserved for the later book (20 hit dice, magic and melee, level 20 spell casters).

People tend to kind of over-think the differences between ver-

sions. AD&D was complex and aimed at having tournament rules that covered everything. It was really Gary/Tim Kask/Lawrence Schick's very specialized rules with lots and lots of detail.

[T] *Can you detail your editorial responsibilities with respect to the Expert Rulebook? What is it that you did, working with Zeb Cook?*

[S] I actually wrote most of the text, Zeb edited it all. To be honest, the editing was much harder as the rules had to be typeset to match up with the Basic Set (so that you could pull out pages and match them up one to one). Remember, this is with typewriters and I honestly did not think that it was possible to get done—what Zeb got done—in the time he had. The actual rule-writing was pretty easy.

If they had a different vision of the project, the writing would have been harder.

[T] *What do you mean, "a different vision of the project?" Can you elaborate on that last point?*

[S] That is, if the project was supposed to be more than an OD&D (Brown Box Set, before Monks and Psionic powers) rewrite—albeit in clearer terms and with rough edges smoothed off, it would have been harder. However, a rewrite of the original rules but in the style of what Tom had done with the first few levels—to make them accessible and clear but without any of the additional “stuff” that was in AD&D – that was pretty easy to do.

That made for a nice, clean, and easy to write project, if that makes sense. That is why the editing was a superhuman task—which Zeb Cook did. People don’t appreciate just how hard the editing was with the tools available.

*[T] What are some of the things that you added to or changed in the Expert rules? E.g. did you modify any of Gary and Dave’s initial rules for simplification or clarification?*

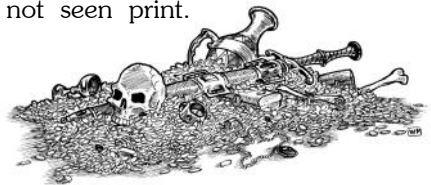
[S] We were supposed to just express the rules without trying to fill in too many gaps and to do the least amount of changes possible. The idea was that AD&D would be technical and B/X would be for fun play, kind of a clearer version of the Brown Box materials. The only “modification” I did was to fill out some spell tables (e.g. the melee weapon enhancement spell for clerics I added), add and flesh out monsters (though I was overruled on doing intelligent woolly rhinos—I wanted them to be able to coordinate combat tactics and such), and race-as-class to flesh out some rules for Elves to make them a little more

specific as fighter/magic-users. The math on tables and such was just tweaked to make things a little smoother.

*[T] What are you working on these days, specific to roleplaying games work?*

[S] I’m working on Shattered Norns, a setting I developed. At present I have pending a book on the Plane of Shadows that also includes some adventures (and lots of monsters and terrain rules) that New Big Dragon games is finishing up (the project is post initial distribution of editing copies). I’m probably going to do The City in Shadow next and some other materials if I find the desire to complete what I started on there. I admit that I’m somewhat depressed by delays in having Into the Shadows see final print; the delay’s effect on my interest in working has bled over into my interest in doing more updates of the materials I did before, such as City of the Revenant or to continue on newer projects.

I’m really sensitive to feedback, and to the lack of it. If Into the Shadows had come out last year and done ok, I’d be neck-deep in additional material. With the delays, I feel kind of weighted down until it either gets released or just goes under. Most of my history as a writer is with projects that have gone under and not seen print.



## Mythology

The two new monsters in this issue's Mythology section are also found in the *Dungeon Crawl* (on page 10) and within the *Crimson Abbey of the Broken God* adventure on page 16.

### Rat, Undead

Undead rats are the product of malicious spells or unholy curses uttered by evil priests. Once created, the undead rat seeks to chase and kill any living thing, following the orders of its creator. They are the size of a giant rat but are found with exposed flesh and bone peeking through their ragged fur. Their eyes are often a bright red or blue.

The bite of an undead rat will send a chill through the victim, sapping their constitution in addition to dealing 1d3 damage. Each bite temporarily drains 1 point of Constitution for 24 hours. The victim dies when their Constitution reaches zero. They will become a zombie that will slowly begin to look like an undead Ratling over time.



Art by Gary Dupris

Armor Class: 7  
Hit Dice: 1+1\*  
Move: 120' (40')  
Attacks: 1 Bite  
Damage: Bite 1-3 + cold  
Special: Immune to cold; bite saps Constitution.

No. Appearing: 3-18  
Save As: Fighter: 1  
Morale: 12  
Treasure Type: Nil  
Alignment: Chaotic

### Minotaur, Crystal



Art by Brett Neufeld

Armor Class: 4  
Hit Dice: 6+1\*  
Move: 60' (20')  
Attacks: 1 Gore or  
Weapon  
Damage: Gore 2-8 or  
Weapon weapon type.  
Special: Regeneration.

No. Appearing: 1-2  
Save As: Fighter: 7  
Morale: 12  
Treasure Type: Nil  
Alignment: Chaotic



Crystal minotaurs are bound to serve their wizard masters, protecting castles, towers and lairs with fearless intensity. They are made from a single-colored crystal, forming into the shape of a man-bull after several weeks of incantations. A crystal minotaur is mindless, obeying a simple, simple command until death. It alternates between using a weapon and goring its victims.

When damaged, the crystal minotaur may rejoin separated pieces of crystal to itself, regenerating 1d4 hit points each combat round. Being mindless, it is immune to most control spells.

## Crystal, Animated Fragment

Damaged crystal fragments from magical creatures may sometimes try to rejoin to their host after separation. Small to mid-sized “pieces” will often move along the ground or through the air as they seek to reattach themselves, impaling or cutting living creatures that get in the way. Any living beings that get in the way of moving crystalline shards may be struck for 1-2 hit points of damage (roll to-hit as a normal attack). Most shards should be treated as AC 9 with 1 hit point if a character wishes to strike the crystal fragment.

## The Magic Shop

In this issue of The Magic Shop, we take a look at rare gem and crystal treasure types.

### Crystal Dagger of Light

Crafted from crystal and imbued with a permanent *Light* spell, this dagger has razor-sharp edges that deal an extra point of damage on a successful strike (1d4+1). Additionally, the dagger illuminates a 10' radius area.

*Value: 1,000 GP*

### Onyx Orb Necklace

This ornate necklace consists of a silver thread and 1d10 onyx beads. When an onyx bead is removed and thrown, the area around the bead's impact becomes an impenetrable, magical darkness. Only the owner of the necklace may see within the 20' cubed space of absolute darkness. The darkness lasts 10 minutes. Once all the orbs have been used, the silver thread disappears, never to return.

*Value: 10,000 GP*

### Diamond Eye

Made from a flawless diamond and shaped into an eyeball, this item can be used two ways. First, it may be inserted into an open eye socket, replacing a lost eye. When used in this manner, it provides infravision and double natural sight distance. Second, it may be used once per day like the spell *Wizard Eye* (X16).

*Value: 5,000 GP*

### Emerald Snake Rod

This two-foot long, solid emerald rod would be extremely valuable just for its weight in gems. However, its magical properties give it its true value—the rod may be broken once per day to create two small, green snakes. The snakes are venomous and will follow the mental commands of the rod's owner as best as they can. The snakes return to rod form after 10 minutes or if one of them is killed. Use the *Spitting Cobra* (B42) statistics for each snake.

*Value: 2,500 GP*

## Quarterly Dungeon Crawl #1

### Fury at Fossilbone

by Thom Wilson. An adventure for 4-6 characters of 3th to 5th level.

*Background:* The town of Fossilbone is known for its unique lighthouse made from the femur of a deceased Titan. The lighthouse is an important beacon for ships along the coast, clearly illuminating the edge of the land and dangerous reefs.

Recently, the evil wizard Gilgarax has captured the lighthouse, intent on stealing the light source at its peak. A timeless artifact of great power illuminates the crystal roof of the tower which never ceases to provide light to sailors at sea.

### Lighthouse Exterior

The lighthouse is made of fossilized bone, hardened to stone over hundreds of years. An entry at the lowest level provides access to the lowest level of the lighthouse interior. Characters will see a winding staircase around the exterior of the giant femur.

Gilgarax has stationed half of his loyal minions, a band of merciless **minotaurs**, outside the lighthouse. Characters will easily spot the fearless creatures as they patrol the area outside the towering structure.

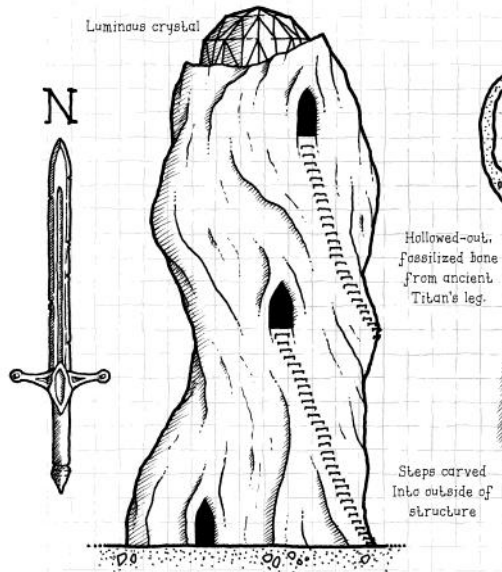
**Minotaurs (6):** (AC 6, HD 6, HP: 30 ea, #AT 1 gore/1 bite or weapon, D 1-6/1-6 or 1-8 (battle axe), Save F6, ML 12, XP 275 ea)

If the party looks challenging, one of the minotaurs will flee to

the ground floor to fetch the rest of his band of warriors.

### External Staircase

Two separate staircases wind around the exterior of the lighthouse—there is no way to access the upper floors of the structure from within. One staircase leads to the first floor, the other to the top floor.



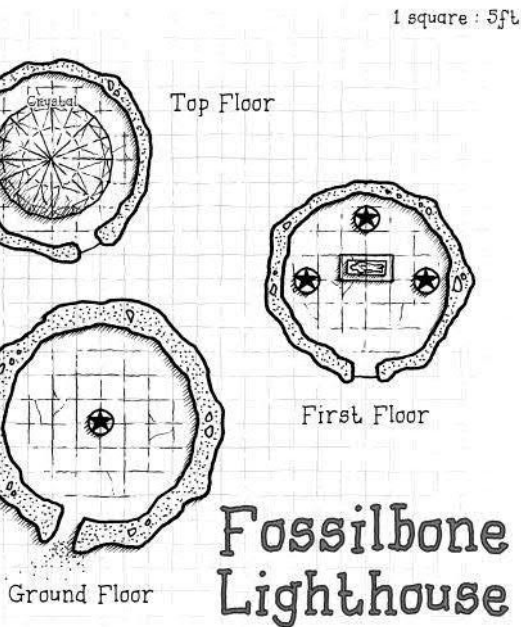
### Ground Floor

A single statue in the middle of the hollowed out leg-bone stands triumphantly, seemingly unaffected by the **six minotaurs** as they use it for target practice. The statue is that of a beautiful woman, garbed in a long, elegant robe. Several light scratches upon the statue show the worst of the minotaur's strikes. The arms of the woman are folded

across her chest and her face shows a look of disgust as she seemingly watches the beasts as they try to chip her exterior.

**Minotaurs (6):** (AC 6, HD 6, HP: 24 ea, #AT 1 gore/1 bite or weapon, D 1-6/1-6 or 1-8 (battle axe), Save F6, ML 12, XP 275 ea)

A chest in the back of the room holds **500 gp** and **1,000 sp** of donation money left for the goddess of the statue.



### First Floor

The burial chamber of the mysterious goddess of the statue below is guarded by **2 crystal minotaurs** (pg. 7). Their instructions are to kill any who enter the room without their master, Gilgarax. Three cherub statues gaze upon the burial coffin in sadness. A single crystal dagger (**Crystal Dagger of Light**, pg. 8) lies atop the coffin.

**Crystal Minotaurs (2):** (AC 4, HD 6+1\*, HP: 33 ea, #AT 1 gore or weapon, D 2-8 or 1-8 (battle axe), Save F7, ML 12, XP 650 ea)

If the burial coffin is opened, the lighthouse shakes in fury for 10 seconds, also dimming the artifact at its top temporarily.

### Top Floor

**Gilgarax** will be working diligently on the crystal device in the center of the room, attempting to remove it without destroying it. He is protected by **3 crystal minotaurs** who are intently watching the door for intruders. Irritated with the interruption, Gilgarax will immediately try to destroy characters with his *magic missile* and *lightning bolt* spells first.

**Crystal Minotaurs (3):** (AC 4, HD 6+1\*, HP: 33 ea, #AT 1 gore or weapon, D 2-8 or 1-8 (battle axe), Save F7, ML 12, XP 650 ea)

**Gilgarax, 7th level M-U:** (AC 7, Lvl7, HP: 15, #AT 1 spell, D variable, Save MU7, ML 10, XP 1500); spells: *magic missile*, *charm person*, *shield*, *detect invisible*, *mirror image*, *web*, *hold person*, *lightning bolt*, *polymorph self*

Gilgarax is trying to remove the artifact that sits upon a marble pedestal. This artifact, the "*Heart of the Goddess*" is what provides continual light for the lighthouse. It cannot be removed by any known means and is only dimmed when the goddess's coffin is opened or if the crystal roof is destroyed.

A hidden niche in the pedestal holds a **Diamond Eye** (pg. 8), a **Horn of Blasting**, a **Potion of Treasure Finding**, and a bag of **100 pp**.

## Quarterly Dungeon Crawl #2

### Sepulcher of the God-King

by Thom Wilson. An adventure for 4-6 characters of 5th to 8th level.

*Background:* Travelers along the road near the Cliffs of the Dead hurry their pace to avoid passing the tombs and crypts during the night. The path between the lake's edge and hundreds of burial chambers along the cliff is a treacherous evening journey for all but the most stalwart and seasoned heroes. Rumors of haunting ghosts, shambling zombies and eerie spectres exiting their tombs under the moonlight are told throughout the land. If it is so well known, then it must be true...

Indeed, the dead do exit their final resting places each evening to gaze at the moon and lake-waters. Although the path along the cliffs is a foolhardy trek at night, it is relatively safe during the day. However, entering the tombs themselves is another matter entirely.

One such tomb is that of an ancient king and self-proclaimed god. **Hunkultak the Vile** was an evil king that ruled a lost empire several centuries prior. His greed, mercilessness and deceit were well known during his life, traits that followed him to the grave. He has become a *spectre* that haunts and hunts alongside other foul undead near the lake's edge. He is a dangerous foe that has retained many of his precious items and spells from his time as a living god and evil king.

### A1. Stairs to Tomb

Marble stairs lead up from the foot-path to an ancient stone door. The door is secured but a lock cannot be found. Only magical spells or brute force will open the door.

**Brute Force:** roll under half Strength score.

### A2. Murdered Attendants

Hunkultak wanted his entire council of advisors and his personal servants buried with him when he died. Unfortunately for his attendants, they were very much alive when the god-king died. Hunkultak's own son made sure that his father's final wishes were kept. After they were murdered, the twelve attendants were placed here to guard and assist the king's needs in death.

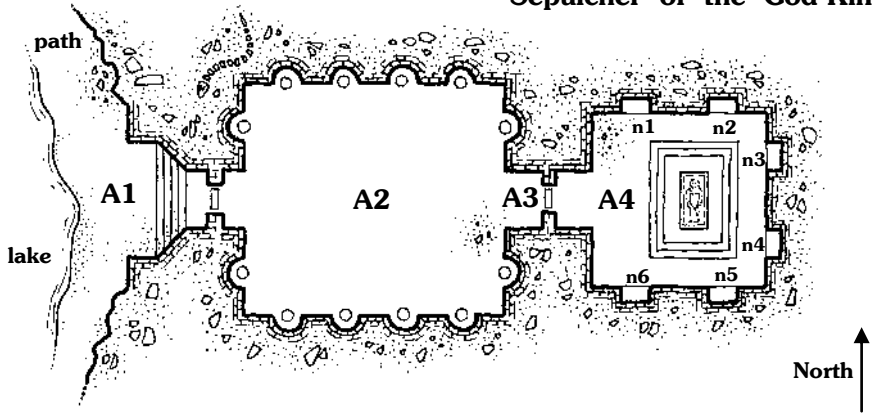
His four advisors were entombed in glass sarcophagi that stand upright in niches in the east and west walls of the antechamber. His eight personal servants were propped up in similar niches along the north and south walls. All twelve of the attendants emerge from their places to prevent intruders from disturbing their king.

The antechamber is empty of furniture, decorations and light.

**Advisors, Mummies (4):** (AC 3, HD 5+1\*, HP: 25 ea, #AT 1 touch + disease, D 1-12 + disease, Save F5, ML 12, XP 400 ea)

**Servants, Ghouls (8):** (AC 6, HD 2\*, HP: 10 ea, #AT 1 bite/2 claws, D 1-3/1-3 + special, Save F2, ML 9, XP 25 ea)

## Sepulcher of the God-King



### A3. Passphrase Door

Unless magic is used to open this ornate, stone door, it must be opened by speaking the passphrase, “*Hunkultak the Vile*”. No amount of brute force may open this magically sealed door.

### A4. Sepulcher of Hunkultak

A glass sarcophagus on a raised dais is illuminated by a single orb of green light that floats above it near the ceiling. The ghostly form of a withered man rests within the sarcophagus, his bony hands folded upon his chest. Even the lightest sound will awaken the god-king, raising him from his crystal coffin.

He will mock intruders, treating them as lesser beings. He urges characters to leave while they still have their heads. Any defiant or insulting behavior causes Hunkultak to attack.

#### **Hunkultak the Vile, Spectre:**

(AC 2, HD 6\*\*\*, HP: 40, #AT 1 touch + special or Spell, D 1-8 + 2 level drain or spell, Save F6, ML 11, XP 950); spells (used twice daily): *hold portal*, *mirror image*, *hold person*, *confusion*. Items: special (see notes).

Six wall niches hold Hunkultak’s favorite magical items. He is able to use one each round, magically teleporting it to his hand (or body) at the start of his turn. Previous items return to their niches just before his next turn begins.

Hunkultak’s Treasured Items	
Roll (1d6)	Item
n1	+2 dagger, +3 vs. Lawful
n2	Wand of Magic Missiles
n3	Rod of Cancellation
n4	Ring of Invisibility
n5	Girdle of Giant Strength
n6	Staff of Power

Hunkultak may use any of the abilities of the item he has on that turn. Note that any damage inflicted with the dagger, wand or staff does not include the level drain bonus. GMs may elect to use the spectre’s touch attack and level drain ability instead of the item that round.

Additionally, a secret floor recess under the sarcophagus contains **1,500 pp** and 10d10 large gems, each worth 5d10 gp.

## Spellbound

Whether your characters pick, choose at random, or are given their spells, there are plenty that seemed to go unused or ignored. This issue's article will take a look at underused spells that may often be often overlooked. *Note that the comments that follow are my opinion only and come from my experience as a GM throughout the years. Your experience may say otherwise.*

We can easily group spells into two categories—those that players always take and those they infrequently take. This likely stems from players trying to maximize their character's chances for survival. Automatic spells like *magic missile* and *sleep* are always great choices for your low-level magic-user or elf—and what cleric doesn't want *cure light wounds* when they get their first gift from their god? [Note: if you run your games where the cleric can cast any spell from that level, then this is less of a factor—for this reason, we'll focus on magic-user and elf spells in this article.]

I've seen a tremendous amount of fun generated from the first-level *ventriloquism* spell. If you get a player who wants to utilize every tool in their toolbox and they only have that low-level spell left (or have reserved it for the right occasion), they can really create a lot of imaginative encounters and roleplaying from its effects. The fearful can be made to sound brave, the silent can be made to speak, and foes may think your group has turned down a different alley with

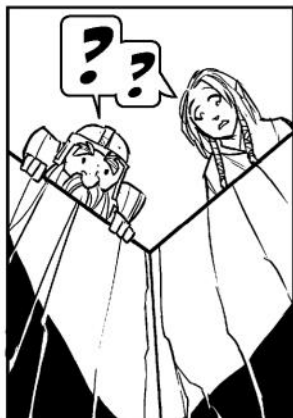
phantom footfalls. Almost any sound can be created to trick targets with this simple spell. I've seen it used to avoid sure death a couple of times.

In the last issue, we mentioned that the *locate object* spell could have made the “too powerful” list—this doesn't mean I've seen it picked or used that often. Many traditional adventure themes center around finding a location or finding a missing item or person. This spell really helps those objectives, especially if cast by a higher level magic-user or elf. This is a time when this spell would be nice to have in the spell book and memorized.

*Transmute rock to mud* is an underused but highly effective spell that can change an entire adventure in a single moment. Castle sieges, underground dungeons and impassable mountains are made simple with this spell. Yes, you could argue that there are other similar spells that might be more useful in the fifth-level list (e.g. *passwall* or *teleport*) but none are as destructive and frustrating to the GM as *transmute rock to mud*. Plus, you can reverse it!

There are many underused and overlooked spells in the Basic and Expert spell lists. When you're playing a system with a limited number of spells to memorize, you have to choose wisely. However, there are many that are great choices if players could look beyond the damage-dealing and protective spells that seem to always be picked.





I DON'T SEE HIM DOWN HERE. I HOPE HE IS ALRIGHT.

DID YOU HEAR SOMETHING?



## Crimson Abbey of the Broken God — Part 5

In the last issue of *Back to BasiX*, we saw Whystal the thief fall into a floor trap while Ensa and Bindor recovered from their battle with the skeletal monks. Being the curious creature that he is, Whystal quietly crept down the sloping tunnel to the area beyond...

### A5. Secret Room

Just before the tunnel ends in the large storage chamber (A6.), a small room hidden by a well-designed secret door can be found on the east wall. The door opens by pulling down on it, sliding it into the floor. After one minute, the door slides back up into the ceiling. The door can be opened from both sides.

There are several of these small, five-foot square rooms throughout the abbey. They were designed as hiding spaces for monks if the abbey was invaded by marauders or bandits.

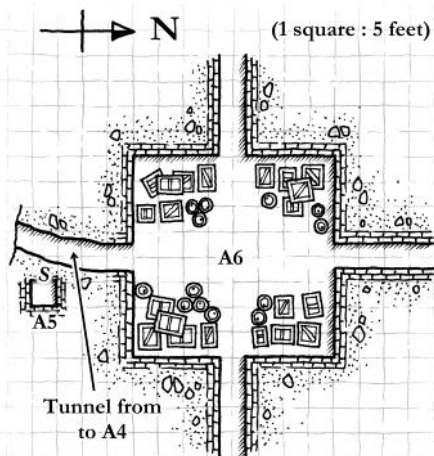
This particular secret niche holds more than the typical supplies left in most hiding spots—an unlocked chest in the back corner of the room seems out of place. Characters will find a crimson bag, a long, wooden box and a leather pouch within the chest. The pouch contains **100 gp**, and the box holds a two-foot long device, an **Emerald Snake Rod** (pg. 8). However, the greatest treasure is the mace found within the crimson bag. It is red-handled with a blackened steel head. This is the **Mace of the Broken God**, an artifact of great power, thought lost to thieves long ago.

*Mace of the Broken God:* A weapon blessed by the Broken God himself, this mace provides +1 to-hit and +2 to damage when used to combat Chaotic creatures. Once per day, the weapon grants its Lawful wielder the ability to cast *Cure Serious Wounds*.

A parchment in the bag states in a hastily scrawled hand, "*Hide the mace in the southern niche, the armor in the northern closet, the helm in the western hole and the shield in the eastern ceiling drawer.*"

### A6. Storage Chamber

This large room was used to store crates of food, barrels of beer, casks of wine, and boxes of vegetables for the monks of the abbey. They were loaded here from a secret access point to the east (found in a future issue). All of the perishable food and drink in their containers are spoiled and rotted. After a thorough search of the area, char-



## Crimson Abbey of the Broken God - Map 2

acters may find a small, steel box that contains a bag of 2d10 rubies (each worth 10gp) and two **Potions of Healing**.

A single set of footprints are found entering from the northern tunnel and exiting the room into the western tunnel.

There is a 50% chance for every 10 minutes spent in this chamber that a swarm of 3-18 **undead rats** will enter the room, attracted to the noise made by characters or the scent of living flesh.

**Rats, Undead (3d6):** (AC 7, HD 1+1\*, HP: 5 ea, #AT 1 bite, D 1-3 + cold, Save F1, ML 12, XP 19 ea) - see page 7.

The sounds of combat are likely to draw the immortal knight, Sir Cralnat to the area. He most often patrols the northern and western areas of the lower levels, where an increasing number of undead are stirring. He will assist characters in peril, but will quickly be on his way to resume his duties.

Other foul creatures wander the lower levels of the abbey—use the wandering monsters table to check for the chance that characters run into other foes.

**Sir Cralnat, Fighter [NPC]**

Strength: 17  
 Intelligence: 9  
 Wisdom: 13  
 Dexterity: 13  
 Constitution: 7  
 Charisma: 5  
 Level: 3, AC: 4, HP: 12

Gear: Rusted chainmail, **sword+1**, silver dagger.

Neither dead nor alive, the withered old warrior is the last defender of the abbey, tasked for all eternity to guard the lower levels from evil. He will offer aid to those who need it, provided they are not Chaotic in alignment. He cannot be healed and his condition cannot be reversed. He can assist characters with simple directions or fighting off evil, but will not join their group.

**Homebrew Rule #2:**

Thieves may use their Dexterity bonus (missile to-hit) to increase the “level” of their thieves’ abilities. For example, a 1st level thief with a Dexterity of 13 has thieves’ abilities (TA) of second level: 1st level +1 level for the Dexterity bonus.

Actual Level	TA Lvl DX 13-15	TA Lvl DX 16-17	TA Lvl DX 18
1	2	3	4
2	3	4	5
3	4	5	6

**Wandering Monsters—Abbey, Lower levels (roll 1d20)**

Roll	Creat.	No.	AC	HD	HP	AT	Dam	Align	XP
1	Wight	1	5	3*	15	1	ED	C	50
2	Ghoul	1-2	6	2*	12 ea	3	1-3 +	C	25 ea
3	Zombie	1-6	8	2	10 ea	1	1-8	C	20 ea
4-5	Skeleton	2-8	7	1	5 ea	1	1-6	C	10 ea
6-7	Rat, Undead	3-18	7	1+1*	5 ea	1	1-3 +	C	19 ea
8-20	Nothing encountered.								

(+) special ability; (ED) Energy Drain

Roll on this table every 30 minutes of game time...

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Special thanks to Matt Ray for the use of his wonderful cover illustration, Isa de Mendonca Silva for her logo work, and Travis Hanson for continuing to draw my *Dungeon Delvers* story!

Additionally, a very special thanks to author Stephen Marsh, for taking time to answer my questions!

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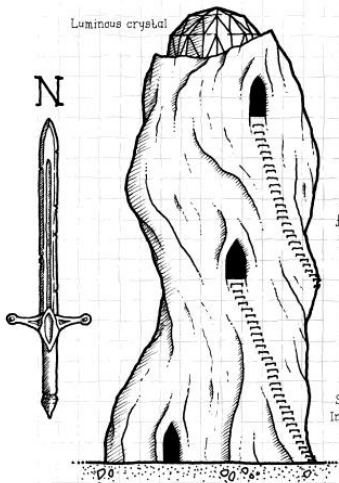
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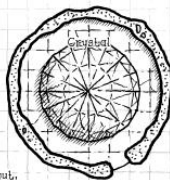
# Map for adventure on pages 9-10

1 square : 5ft

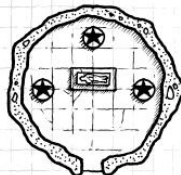


Hollowed-out, fossilized bone from ancient Titan's leg.

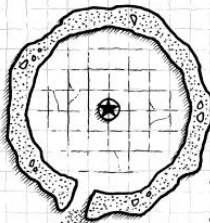
Steps carved into outside of structure



Top Floor



First Floor



Ground Floor

## Fossilbone Lighthouse



THANK YOU STRANGER, YOUR TIMING IS PERFECT.

INDEED, OUR THANKS. MIGHT WE ASK YOUR NAME?

I WAS KNOWN AS SIR CRALNAT.

THE LAST DEFENDER OF THE ABBEY.



I HAVE BEEN GUARDING THE LOWER LEVELS OF THE ABBEY SINCE ITS FALL.

CAN I ASK WHY ARE YOU HERE?

WE'RE INVESTIGATING THE ABBEY AND TRYING TO FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED.

WELL, I'M SURE THERE'S MORE TO YOUR STORY, YOUNG ELF.

BEWARE THAT BEING HERE TOO LONG AGES YOU.



THANK YOU FOR THE WARNING. WE SHALL BE GOING SOON.

WHAT?? NOT YET, ENSA.

YOU MUST GO NOW. ANY WAY BUT THIS WAY.

IT IS TOO DANGEROUS FOR YOU.




**HOOOOOWWWWIIII!**

TO BE CONTINUED...



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