

A fanzine dedicated to the Classic D&D® Game!

ENCOUNTER

Issue 4 • March 2011



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"Then, one day, a 'magician' in a flying 'egg' landed at a remote outpost of the realm. The magician was killed, but his egg was captured intact. Soon, the area was crawling with Froggies, and Froggie agents were heard to be asking questions about it throughout Blackmoor."

DA3 City of the Gods (1987)

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FROM THE EDITOR

The year that was and the year to be

WITH 2010 having been and gone, it's worth reflecting on a good year for Classic D&D®. The previous 12 months saw the introduction of some fantastic new additions to our corner of the gaming community, including the *Save or Die!* podcast, *The Oubliette* periodical, and the release of *Dark Dungeons*, a clone of the *Rules Cyclopedia*. *Labyrinth Lord*™ of course continued to power onwards and upwards, with excellent releases from Goblinoid Games, together with a range of other first-rate Classic edition compatible titles from numerous other publishers. All this activity is bringing a new vitality to an edition of D&D® that officially went out of print nearly two decades ago.

I'd like to take this reflective moment to thank the many

contributors who helped bring 2010's issues to fruition. Without their time and efforts in preparing articles to share *gratis* with fellow gamers, *Encounter* would simply not have been possible. I'd also like to express my appreciation to the artists who contributed their creative energy to the look and feel of *Encounter* – especially the cover artists who generously provided their fantastic artwork (speaking of cover artists, Greg Taylor, cover artist for this issue and #3, recently started an impressive custom PC portrait service at www.battlebrush.com that is well worth a visit). I would also like to finally thank *Encounter's* readers for casting an eye over each issue and particularly anyone who has written or posted comments on various

forums – your feedback has been invaluable. *Encounter* is a labour of love, in part a celebration of our shared interest the Classic editions of D&D® and their clones, and in part an attempt to return something to a hobby that has been a part of our lives for many years. I hope the 'zine continues to live up to everyone's expectations.

So what's in store for 2011? We will all have to just wait and see and find out together. But if 2010 was anything to go by, it should be another good year for the Classic editions and old school gaming in general. I for one can't wait. Cheers! ■



Jesse Walker

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REVIEW: HAMMERS OF THE GOD

Some secrets should remain forgotten

Written by James Raggi IV, *Lamentations of the Flame Princess* • Review by Jonothan Evans

THE LATEST release from Lamentations of the Flame Princess is *Hammers of the God*, a scenario for character levels 3–4 (which is fully compatible with the classic edition game of your choice). James Raggi has built something of a reputation for creating evocative products with a uniquely strange ‘vibe’. These inventive ‘weird fantasy’ accessories are some of the more interesting items coming out of the crop of old-school writers and micro-publishers, showing the pen and paper gaming world that ‘old rules’ doesn’t need to mean ‘old ideas’. *Hammers* continues with this theme, presenting a dwarven ‘dungeon’ with a twist.

The 36 page *Hammers* booklet is in A5 format with a full color detachable cover, which contains the black and white map of the adventure locale by Ramsey Dow on its reverse side. The cover art by Dean Clayton is attractive, but the LotFP logo is a little too dark and difficult to read against the background. To be honest, I am not a huge fan of the A5 format, but the style of booklet is beginning to grow on me (and I am guessing it probably reduces the cost of manufacture). The

interior is laid out in two columns, with a graphic sitting behind the text, and the sparse smattering of artwork is evocative, with some splendid images by Laura Jalo. On a side note, many OSR products, which are well written with good artwork, are often let down by their fairly mediocre overall presentation. If only publishers would seek out some graphic designers to take their products to the next level.

The adventure takes place in an abandoned dwarven underground complex and, like other LotFP products, the adventure’s great asset is the moody atmosphere imparted by the text. The evocative location has much to explore and discover, with a fair portion of the scenario being dedicated to describing the hundred or so books to be discovered within the ruin’s gloomy halls. Now, there’s also a secret behind the scenario and what occurred in the ruin that I don’t intend to reveal and consequently spoil the fun for potential players who may be reading this (or indeed Game Masters who want to discover it for themselves). But needless to say the dwarves’ shameful secret lives up to Raggi’s past offerings.

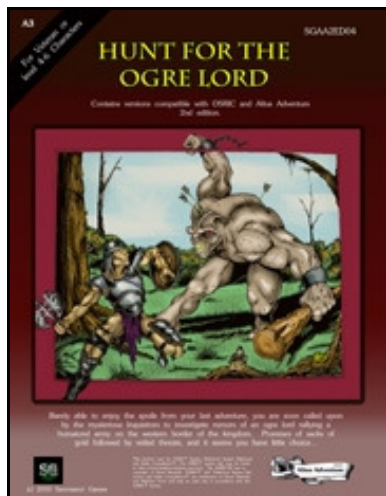
One thing that is reassuring about the revival of old school publishing over the last few years is that there has not simply been a rehash of what has gone before. Okay, so there are quite a few products out there that seek to imitate the old books from back in the early days of gaming, but there has also been a welcome injection of new blood into our ye *olde* hobby. *Hammers*, like other Raggi products, is one such item leading the new wave. Let us all hope that there’s more to come.

★★★★★

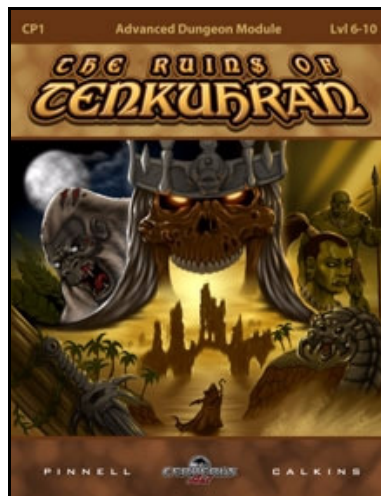


TREASURE CHEST

Take a peak at some recent Old School releases



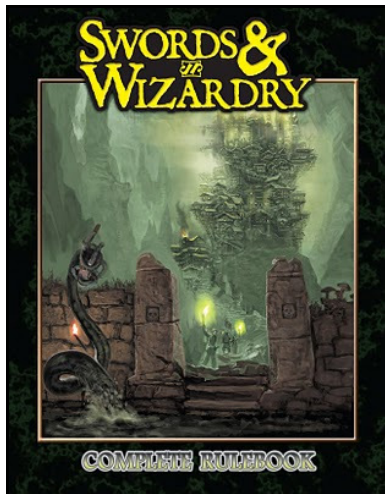
Barely able to enjoy the spoils from your last adventure, you are soon called upon by the mysterious Inquisitors to investigate rumors of an ogre lord rallying a humanoid army on the western border of the kingdom. Promises of sacks of gold are followed by veiled threats; it seems you have little choice ... From Sacrosanct Games comes A3 *Hunt for the Ogre Lord* by Roderic Waibel, an adventure for 5-6 characters of level 4-6 (or of Veteran status), and is compatible with both *OSRIC* as well as *Altus Adventum* 2nd Edition. To purchase your copy visit www.rpgnow.com



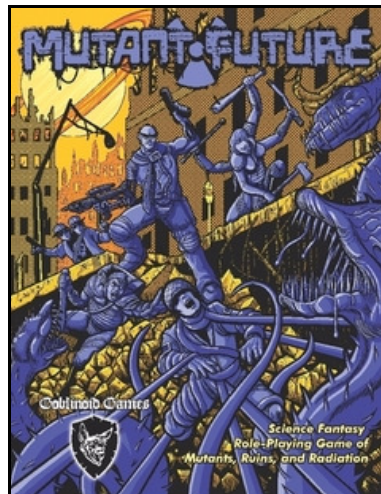
Tenkuhran, a wise and powerful sorcerer king, once ruled over a most prosperous realm. The king was an adventurer and often led dangerous expeditions in search of items of great power. Upon returning from one such excursion the king became reclusive and rumors that an ancient evil had overtaken him began to circulate. The once beloved king waged a murderous campaign against his loyal subjects, creating an army of undead, only to be ultimately defeated. Generations later, evil once again stirs in the jungle! *The Ruins of Tenkuhran*, by RC Pinnell, is an advanced edition adventure for character levels 6-10, and can be purchased from www.rpgnow.com



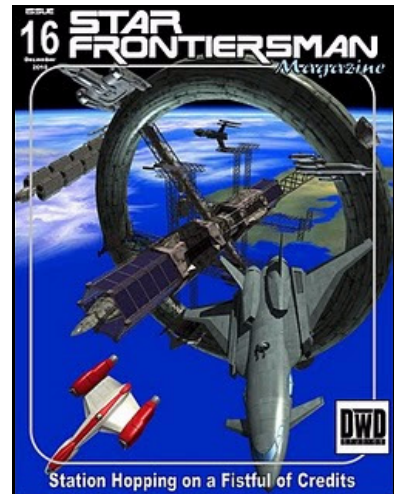
Stars Without Number, by Kevin Crawford, is a retro-inspired science fiction role playing game influenced by the Old School Renaissance. The contents are compatible with most old school clones and are designed to be easily imported to your own favorite gaming system. In addition to a complete pre-made stellar sector, *Stars Without Number* offers GMs and players the tools to create their own sandbox-style adventures in the far future. To learn more about the game or to download your *free* copy visit www.sinenomine-pub.com!



New from Frog God Games is the complete *Swords & Wizardry* core rulebook, which covers all of the early phase supplements of the Original Edition from the 1970's. It creates a one-volume resource allowing players and game masters alike to create and run adventures and campaigns that will last for an entire lifetime! Frog God Games intends to support *S&W* with a vast array of adventures, and other resources. For the latest information or to purchase a copy of the complete book visit www.talesofthefroggod.com



Enter a post-apocalyptic nuclear wasteland filled with mutants, ruins, and radiation! You can take the role of an android, mutant human, mutant animal, pure human, and even a mutant plant! Seek wealth and ancient technological artifacts. Enter vast underground complexes, and avoid killer robots! *Mutant Future* is a nuclear post apocalyptic science fantasy game. It is created in the style of similar RPGs from the late 70s, but built around the core *Labyrinth Lord*™ rules so that these two games are fully compatible. To purchase a copy of the latest revised edition visit www.lulu.com or www.goblinoidgames.com to download a free *sans* art copy!



Issue #16 of *Star Frontiersman Magazine* has been released! This fantastic 'zine is dedicated to *Star Frontiers*, the out-of-print role-playing game by TSR. Inside the latest issue (their biggest to date) is a plethora of old school sci-fi goodness, including new creatures, vehicles and equipment, adventure concepts, fiction, optional rules, classifieds and much more! To get your *free* copies of this great magazine go to www.starfrontiersman.com

A DARKENED WORLD

The World of the Dark Crystal™ for Classic D&D® • Part I

By Jesse Walker • Illustrations by Christine Long • Cartography by Jesse Walker

WELCOME to Thra, the curious and magical world of The Dark Crystal. The following is Part I of a guide which will attempt to bring Thra to the Classic D&D® Game, drawing inspiration from the *The Dark Crystal* film by Jim Henson, and the magnificent book *The World of the Dark Crystal* by Rupert Brown. Part II will focus on specific information for referees running games in Thra, such as new monsters and rules for Skeksis' essence draining.

The World of Thra

"Another World, another time, in the Age of Wonder. A thousand years ago, this land was green and good, until the Crystal cracked."

• *The Dark Crystal*

The world of *The Dark Crystal* is as strange as it is beautiful. It is a world of where the forests, swamps and mountains are teeming with bizarre creatures beyond imagination. Everything is alive; plants and tree have the gift of speech and the very stones are living beings. Thra is a world of unsettling beauty, now under the malign control of the repulsive bird-like Skeksis.

History

Nearly two thousand years ago the noble urSkeks came to the green world of the Gelflings and the Pod People to harness the light of Thra's Three Suns. There they laboured for centuries to create a great network of mirrors to trap and redirect the light of the Suns into the Crystal of Truth, during the Great Conjunction, in order to rectify their imperfections. Instead, their experiment went terribly wrong, causing the urSkeks to divide into separate and very different species: the cruel and twisted Skeksis and the wise and gentle urRu.

At once conflict broke out in the Castle, resulting in a blow to the Crystal of Truth, chipping off a shard. The damaged Crystal took on a dark purple hue and it was then that it became the Dark Crystal. The spiteful Skeksis drove the urRu from the Castle, where the shattered Crystal remained, and instituted a reign of terror over their newly created world.

The urRu fled from the Dark Crystal's presence to a remote valley, while the Skeksis began to treat the split of the Crystal as their greatest achievement. The

Skeksis' wrath was particularly directed toward the elfin-like Gelflings, which were hunted to near extinction due to their fear of a prophecy that promised the restoration of the Crystal and the end of their power. So it has been for a thousand years.

Geography

"From the Dark Crystal there came no more songs. The Suns shone as before, but dimmer; the trees grew as before, but twisted. Strange beasts moved in the woods."

• *The World of the Dark Crystal*

The world of Thra is blessed by three suns; the Great Sun, the Rose Sun and the Dying Sun. Also, rotating around Thra is a small dark moon; although none of Thra's inhabitants really know for sure if it is there, as it does not reflect light. Due to the influence of its three suns, day and night are far from regular opposites on Thra; nor is there an ordinary passage of the seasons.

Beyond the more familiar lands of the Dark Crystal, little of Thra is now known. To the west lies the dreaded Castle of the Crystal where the powerful



Crystal of Truth is kept. Initially, the Crystal was hidden inside a mountain, but the urSkeks soon hollowed out its interior and transformed the mountain into a magnificent castle; its walls sparkling with the radiance of the Crystal. As the centuries have passed since the sundering of the urSkeks the once beautiful castle has become dark and demented, falling into decay. It is a place now feared by everyone.

To the southeast of the Castle is the hidden Valley of Stones, the home of the urRu, or Mystics. The Mystic's home is a twisting valley with frequent mists; a perfect place for the urRu to meditate in concealment from the Skeksis. The rock walls of the valley hold many caves and its natural springs provide fresh water.

To the northeast of the Castle lay the ruins of the Gelflings. Renowned craftsmen, it was the Gelflings which provided the urSeks' Castle of the Crystal with much of its now decaying glory. A strange fresco on a stone wall within the ruins depict a prophecy that one day a Gelfling will destroy the Skeksis.

Looking further northward from the Gelfling ruins are the hills of

the long-legged creatures known as Landstriders, as well as the village of the Pod People who live in homes carved from giant seeds. To the south, not too far from the Podling village, is a strange swamp where trees walk, mushrooms fly on wings, and plants swallow butterflies using long tongues. Holes open and snap shut, flowers actively hide from the insects of the swamps, and all manner of creatures bask in the warm light of the Triple Suns.

Finally, to the far north-east is the Dome of the ancient wise-woman known as Aughra. The cavernous dome, perched high on a cliff, is constructed from an opaque material that allows Aughra to view the heavens. The Observatory also incorporates an orrery; an enormous working model of Thra's solar system.

Game Adaptation

The following adaptation of the world of Thra for use with Classic D&D® has largely entailed tweaking existing rules from a number of published sources, resulting in some small liberties (especially regarding magic) with

the 'as written' world of the Dark Crystal. In keeping with the non-traditional fantasy feel of Thra, the term Dungeon Master® has been replaced with Lore Master.

Player Characters of Thra

Players have two character options for campaigns set in Thra: Gelfling and Podling. For the sake of simplicity the two classes are thinly veiled adaptations of the existing Halfling (Gelfling) and Thief (Podling) classes, which have been slightly altered to more closely capture the tone of *The Dark Crystal* setting.

Gelflings

Gelflings are a race of elfin-like creatures native to the world of Thra. Their name is a transliteration of 'Ghel-Iflainngk' or 'those who live without knowledge of the future'. Gelflings stand approximately 3' tall, have dark almond-shaped eyes and small pointed ears.

The Gelflings once formed a happy and prosperous civilisation on Thra. However, when the Crystal cracked and the Skeksis



- | | | | | | | | |
|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|---------------|--------|--------------|-----------------|
| Dense Forest | Forested Hills | Large Mountains | Ravine | Dry River Bed | Hills | Rocky Desert | High Grasslands |
| River | Small Mountains | Rocky Waste | Broken Lands | Wilds | Desert | Swamp | Low Grasslands |



came to power the Gelfings soon found themselves hunted by the Skeksis' Garthim minions. Those who could not flee were captured and taken to the Castle of the Crystal where they were drained of their living essence, which was consumed by the Skeksis for its age-reversing effects. Those Gelfings that survived the process then became mindless slaves to the Skeskis.

Hunted to near extinction down through the centuries, few Gelfings now remain. Those that have survived the feared Garthim

raids stay hidden, living in secret with the Pod People and other kind-hearted creatures of Thra. Nevertheless, Gelfings are brave fighters and are especially adept at wielding missile weapons such as bolas, bows and slings.

Prime Requisite: Gelfing PCs have two Prime Requisites: Strength and Dexterity.

Languages: Gelfings speak their own ancient and melodic tongue. Gelfings who have lived among the industrious Pod People also speak the language of these humble creatures of the forest.

Alignment: Gelfling characters are usually of Lawful alignment.

Score Requirements: Gelfling characters must have a minimum score of 9 in both Dexterity and Constitution. Gelflings live without knowledge of the future and therefore cannot have a Wisdom score greater than 15.

Hit Dice: Gelflings use 1d6 to determine their hit points.

Saving Throws: Gelfling characters use the Halfling Saving Throw table.

Armour: Gelflings may wear any form of armour native to Thra, including a shield. However, such items must be made for their diminutive size. Gelflings have a base Armour Class of 9.

Weapons: Gelfling characters are permitted to use any type of small weapon. However, Gelflings cannot use two-handed or other large weapons (such as longbows, battle axes or pole arms).

Combat: Gelflings favour the use of missile weapons, such as slings, bolas and small bows, and are also good at eluding the attacks of larger creatures. Gelfling characters use the Halfling class' -2 AC bonus when fighting opponents larger than 'man-size', +1 Hit Roll bonus when using missile weapons, and +1 bonus to Individual Initiative.

Hiding: Gelflings are difficult to find in the forests of Thra, with a wily ability to seemingly 'disappear' into the undergrowth. As with the Halfling class, Gelflings can only be detected in such circumstances 10% of the time. Gelflings can also hide in ruins and caverns, but with more difficulty. An attempt to hide in shadows cast in normal light (by

remaining completely quiet and still) will succeed on 1 or 2 (1d6).

Gelfling characters carrying any light source, such as a lamp or torch, cannot hide. Magical light, such as a *Light* spell, will also prevent a Gelfling from hiding.

Dreamfasting: Gelflings have the ability to Dreamfast. When two Gelflings touch hands their minds meld into one, which enables them to communicate without speaking. Gelfling characters can share images, thoughts, memories, and feelings by this special ability.

Gliding: Female Gelflings have dragonfly-like wings, which enable them to glide and flutter. The wings of female Gelflings retract and can be concealed under the clothing. Female Gelflings can glide at a rate of 150' per turn (50' per round). Male Gelflings, who do not have wings, do not have this ability.

Level advancement: Gelflings use the Halfling Experience table.

Podlings

The Podlings, or Pod People, are a diminutive, kindly race that live in small villages constructed in the forests of Thra. Podling is a convenient transliteration of *apopiapoipidiappididiapipob* ('master gardeners who live in bulging plants'). Podlings are about 2' tall and have inquisitive faces that resemble large, brown potatoes.

The hard working Podlings live in a bustling collection of houses formed from the pods of some type of gigantic seeds. These are raised around central clearings in the forests of Thra, and are neatly



carved with windows, doors and chimneys. They are very close to nature and enjoy singing, dancing, and celebrating – Podling feasts can often go on for days.

Unfortunately for the Pod People their simple lives have not always been peaceful. The Garthim unmercifully raid their villages in order to capture and take them to the Castle of the Crystal for essence draining and enslavement. Because of the constant raiding by the Garthim, the nimble Podlings have developed skills that help them evade capture and escape the clutches of the Skeksis.

Prime Requisite: The Prime Requisite of Podling characters is Dexterity.

Score Requirements: Podling characters must have a Dexterity score of 9 or greater. Podlings cannot have a Strength score greater than 15.

Languages: Podlings speak their own babbling, lilting tongue, which is separate from the common language of Thra. However, beginning Podling PCs



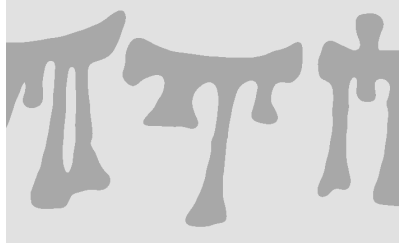
The Skeksis

Part reptile, part carrion bird, the decaying Skeksis rule over a sinister and dying land, ever fearful of The Prophecy that one day a Gelfling would end their rule forever:

*When single shines the triple sun,
What was sundered and undone
Shall be whole, the two made one,
By Gelfling hand, or else by none.*

The urRu

As wise and gentle as the evil Skeksis are cruel and twisted, the urRu, or Mystics, watch over the ancient mysteries from their hidden Valley of Stones, awaiting the return of peace and harmony to Thra.



cannot read or write. Podlings have no written language, preferring to share knowledge through stories.

Alignment: Podling characters are usually of Lawful Alignment.

Hit Dice: Podlings use 1d4 to determine their hit points.

Armour: A Podling can only wear leather armour (which

must be specially made for their small size) and cannot use a shield. Podling characters have a base Armour Class of 9.

Weapons: A Podling may use any small sized weapon; however, Podlings prefer to wield slings, large knives and spears.

Combat: Podlings are not as good at fighting as Gelflings, however they are good at dodging the attacks of large creatures, such as the dreaded Garthim. Podling characters gain a -2 bonus to their Armour Class when attacked by creatures more than twice their size.

Special abilities: Podlings have also learned to be nimble and crafty to evade capture by the Skeksis and their feared Garthim minions. As a result Podlings have also developed various other abilities which they use to avoid traps or to escape the clutches of the Skeksis. Podlings use the Thief class' special abilities to Open Locks, Find Traps, Remove Traps, Climb Walls, Move Silently, Hide in Shadows, Pick Pockets and Hear Noise.

Level advancement: Podlings use the Thief Experience table.

Equipment

There are many unique artefacts to be found in Thra, too many to name here. However, player characters largely have the same equipment options as in any other Classic D&D® campaign. By far the most common objects among the Gelflings and Podlings are the many peaceful items used to enjoy life, such as musical instruments and cooking

utensils. Metal is also relatively rare among the Gelflings and Pod People, with most domestic items made out of natural materials such as wood and flax.

Weapons and Armour

The people of Thra lived a peaceful existence before the coming of the Skeksis with little need for objects of war. As a result items of weaponry and armour are few and far between. However, over time the Gelflings and Podlings have learnt to make weapons (out of sheer necessity) in order to protect themselves from the evil Skeksis, but they are more limited in scope than in other regular D&D® campaigns. A small list of weapons and armour normally available on Thra is listed on the tables below:

Thra Weapon Table

Item	Range	Dmg
Hand Axe	10/20/30	1d6
Short Spear	20/40/60	1d6
Dagger/knife		1d4
Normal sword		1d8
Short Sword		1d6
Club		1d4
Staff		1d6
Sling	40/80/160	1d4
Bola	20/40/60	1d2
Short Bow	50/100/150	1d6
Cross Bow	60/20/180	1d6
Blowgun	10/20/30	*

* Damage as per poison type

Thra Armour Table

Item	AC
Leather Armour	7
Scale Armour	6
Shield	-1*

* Subtract 1 AC pt if a shield is used

Spellweavers of Thra

Very little is known about Thra's magic from the official sources, so the following spell casting (or 'spellweaving') rules have been adapted and simplified from the *D&D® Rules Cyclopedia* and the supplement *Creature Crucible I*.

There is two types of magic on Thra; the natural magic of the shamans (the equivalent of clerics and druids) and the sorcerous ways of the wicca (magic-users). Although it is more usual for Podlings and Gelflings to become shaman spellweavers, both races may also become wiccans. The urRu are the most powerful shamans of Thra and the Skeksis are the most powerful wicca.

To become a shaman of Thra a PC must have a minimum Wisdom score of 13. Characters with a minimum Intelligence score of 13 may become wiccans. Once a player character decides to become a spellweaver he must learn from a teacher before spell abilities can be attained (as represented by the XP requirement to reach the 1st level spellweaving ability – see the *Spellweaver Experience Point Costs* table). Before the 1st level of spellweaving ability can be attained, a PC must undergo a ritual of some kind, often involving meditation and fasting (or as otherwise determined by the Lore Master).

Only if the PC makes a successful Ability Check against Intelligence (for a wiccans) or Wisdom (for shamans) will the ritual be a success (if the novice spellweaver has additional assistance from his teacher

during the ritual's preparation a bonus of -2 applies). Note, however, that shaman spells are still not gained until 2nd – the PC still has learning to complete. If the Ability Check fails the additional 1,000 XP is lost. However, a player character may try again after an extra 1,000 XPs have been earned once more.

Becoming a Spellweaver, or attaining additional spell levels, also requires further Experience Points (XPs). A PC must earn these extra XPs before reaching the spellweaver ability level (see the *Spellweaver Experience Point Costs* table).

Spellweaver Experience Table

Spellweaving level	Extra XPs Required
1	1,000
2	2,000
3	4,000
4	8,000
5	16,000
6	32,000
7	64,000
8	130,000
9	260,000
10*	460,000

* +200,000 XPs per level

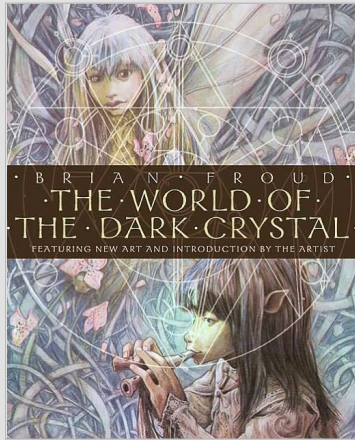
The XP needed to gain the next spell level is added to the XP needed for the next PC level

Shaman Spell Progression Table

Shaman level	Spells/Level					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
2	1	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
3	2	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
4	2	1	♦	♦	♦	♦
5	2	2	♦	♦	♦	♦
6	2	2	1	♦	♦	♦
7	3	2	2	♦	♦	♦
8	3	3	2	1	♦	♦
9	3	3	3	2	♦	♦
10	4	4	3	2	1	♦
11	4	4	3	3	2	♦
12	4	4	4	3	2	1

Wiccan Spell Progression Table

Wiccan level	Spells/Level					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	1	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
2	2	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
3	2	1	♦	♦	♦	♦
4	2	2	♦	♦	♦	♦
5	2	2	1	♦	♦	♦
6	3	2	2	♦	♦	♦
7	3	2	2	1	♦	♦
8	3	3	2	2	♦	♦
9	3	3	2	2	1	♦
10	4	3	3	2	2	♦
11	4	4	4	3	2	♦
12	4	4	4	3	2	1



From the source...

Although this article attempts to provide a brief overview of the world of the Dark Crystal for the purposes of bringing it to the classic edition game, it barely does it justice. For those who wish to learn more about Thra the obvious place to start is the movie itself. *The Dark Crystal* was released in 1982 to critical, if not commercial, acclaim and is now recognised as a classic of fantasy film.

However, for those DMs interested in using the lands of Thra in their games, either as a stand alone setting or as a part of a bigger campaign world, it is highly recommended that you pick up a copy of *The World of the Dark Crystal* by Rupert Brown (Harry N. Abrams, Inc.). Not only is the book filled with beautiful and evocative artwork, diagrams and glyphs by the renowned British artist Brian Froud, it also contains many interesting insights into this strange and mysterious world, as well as the creatures that people it. As a source of inspiration the book is second to none.

in order to find the *final* figure needed to advance to the next level (i.e. a spellweaver character does not separately advance up through PC and spell levels). Spellweaver and class levels can be recorded as Gelfling 4 / Shaman 1 etc.

Finally, shaman spellweavers can only use clerical magical items and a wiccan spellweavers can only use magic-user items.

Additional Spells

The following are three additional low level spells for shaman spellweavers, which again have been adapted from other accessories (namely, the AD&D® 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook*, *Complete Druid's Handbook* and the *Complete Ranger's Handbook*) to help capture the earthy magic of Thra.

Heal Creature

Level: 1

Range: Touch

Duration: Permanent

Effect: One creature

This spell enables a shaman to heal an animal by transferring his or her life essence (as represented by hit points) to the stricken creature. However, the creature can only receive hp to its normal maximum level. The laying one hand upon the wounded animal will restore 1d4 hp; laying two hands upon the creature will restores 2d4 hp. The temporary loss of hit points for the spellweaver remains for 1d4 hours. The caster also suffers -1 penalty to all rolls until he fully recovers due to the dizzying effects of the loss of his life essence.

Creature Messenger

Level: 2

Range: 20' / level

Duration: 1 day / level

Effect: One creature

When cast, a shaman calls a tiny creature to be his messenger. The animal may make a Save vs. Spells to resist the effects of the enchantment. The shaman can give the creature a simple message, such as going to a certain place, or give it a note to carry. However, the receiver of the message may not recognise these subtle hints and could ignore the messenger. Once the spell expires the creature will return to its normal behaviour.

Animal Senses

Level: 2

Range: 10 yards

Duration: 1 turn / level of caster

Effect: One creature

The shaman can use this spell to share a creature's senses (sight, smell and touch). However, the spell does not enable the control of the animal. Only non-magical creatures can be effected. The shaman must remain motionless and undisturbed for the duration of the spell. The spell is broken if the creature moves more than 100 yards from the caster. ■

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LON'S SPLENDID ARBOR

A versatile spell for the *Labyrinth Lord*™ roleplaying game

By Michael Chesher • Illustration by Jesse Walker

TO MY old friend, Atturianon. Please find enclosed with this letter another incantation to add to your growing collection of arboreal enchantments. I discovered this in a book taken from the body of some poor unfortunate magic-user who perished in the lost sanctuary of the Cruth Mountains. Sadly, our own party's hireling died in the same trap while we were exploring the ruin. Anyway, I hope you will find it of some interest. Affectionately yours, Maldorin.



Lon's Splendid Arbor

Level: 2

Duration: See below

Range: 10' x 10'

When this spell is cast a withered tree grows from the ground, regardless of whether the floor is of stone, soil or timber. The tree grows to a height of about 20 feet in height. If the spell is cast in a confined area the tree will grow up and spread out along the walls and ceiling for approximately the same area.

The exact form of the tree will depend on the "seed" that is used, as the spell is usually cast on an apple seed, thorn or pine

cone. If the caster does not have any of the "ingredients", he can select which plant will grow, but it will only be 1/4 its normal size and effect. Other seeds could be used, but cautionary rumours persist among wizards that reckless experimentation can result in disastrous consequences.

Apple-seed: The tree will grow as described above and be covered in 1d12 small, shiny red apples. Each fruit is the equivalent of 1 day of field rations. Of these fruit 1d4 will have minor restorative powers (a day long +2 to Constitution). These "fortifying" fruit are very

bitter and can be identified by their deep red shade. The fruit, being magical, will turn to dust within 1d4 days.

Thorn: When the spell is cast upon a rose thorn, a large plant springs up to fill an area 20 x 20 feet in size. The near impenetrable tangle cannot easily be passed, not least because the thorns of this plant are tainted with a painful poison (movement reduced by 1/4). Those attempting to hack their way through the plant will suffer 1-2 points of damage for every turn they are in contact with the thorny limbs and continue to suffer severe pain for the following 1d12 turns, with -2 to all rolls including "To Hit" rolls.

Pine-cone: The sap of this magical tree can be used to mend objects, such as armour, or otherwise used as a very strong glue. The viscous, golden-colored sap can be collected by piercing the trunk with a sharp object. When the wood from the tree, which is highly flammable, is burned on a fire or used as a torch, the scented smoke will repel all insects and spiders, large or small – however dragons are said to be attracted to its scent. ▀

KNIGHTS & WIZARDS

Classic Dungeons & Dragons® for kids!

By Jimm Johnson • Character Sheet by Jimm Johnson

HAVING nothing better to do the Friday after Thanksgiving, I whipped up a quick dungeon and house-ruled a kid-friendly version of classic D&D for my kids and some of their friends. The players ranged in age from 5 to 7 years, and fun was had by all as knights, wizards, elves, and dwarves braved the strange caverns to rescue the enchanted sword of the faerie queen. Below are the rules we used, followed by the adventure map and encounter key. The rules are

not all-encompassing, nor are they system-specific, and general knowledge of some form of classic D&D is assumed.

Character Classes for Kids' D&D

There are four character classes (listed below) to choose from in Kids' D&D: knight, wizard, elf, and dwarf. The knight and wizard class titles may be changed to "warrior princess" or "enchantress" respectively if the player so desires.

Character Creation

There are no ability scores in Kids' D&D. To create a character, choose one of the four character classes, name the character, and draw a picture of the character (not necessarily in that order). Then, on the character record sheet, note the character's level (1), hit points (roll d6), armor class (2, 5, or 9), and saving space (15). In the appropriate space, note the character's special abilities and equipment,

Knight

Special Ability: In combat a knight gets 2 attacks every round.

Starting Equipment: Plate mail, shield, sword, torch.

Armor Class: 2

Wizard

Special Ability: Each day, a wizard can use his staff to cast two spells per level of experience. At 1st level a wizard gets two 1st level spells, at 2nd level he gets two 2nd level spells, and so on.

Starting Equipment: Staff, dagger, torch.

Armor Class: 9

Elf

Special Ability: Each day, an elf can use his wand to cast one spell per level of experience. At 1st level an elf gets one 1st level spell, at 2nd level he gets one 2nd level spell, and so on.

Starting Equipment: Chain mail, bow and arrows, magic wand, torch.

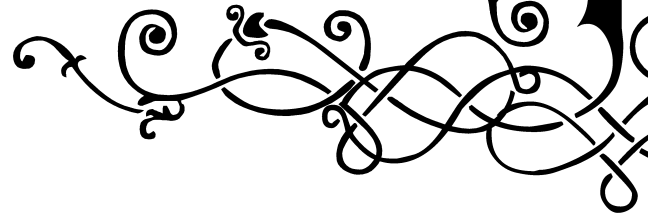
Armor Class: 5

Dwarf

Special Ability: When searching, a dwarf will automatically find any secret door in the immediate area (i.e. within about 30').

Starting Equipment: Plate mail, shield, axe, torch.

Armor Class: 2



then fill in the “TO HIT” ARMOR CLASS table at the bottom of the record sheet. If you’re using the classic D&D tables, the character needs a 10 to hit AC 9, an 11 to hit AC 8, a 12 to hit AC 7, and so on.

Initial Hit Points and Saving Throw

At 1st level all characters roll 1d6 for hit points, with an additional d6 each time a character gains an experience level. All characters begin with a saving throw of 15, which improves by two each time the character gains an experience level.

Experience Points and Level Advancement

Experience points (xp) are gained at a rate of 100 xp per hit dice of monster defeated and 1 xp per gold piece value of treasure found. After each adventure, earned xp should be divided evenly among the surviving characters. An experience level is gained when a character accrues experience points equal to his current level multiplied by 1000. Thus, a 1st level character would need to earn 1000 experience

points to achieve 2nd level. A 2nd level character would need an additional 2000 experience points (for a total of 3000) to reach 3rd level, and so on.

game for young players), the movement rate for all characters is 3 squares (i.e. 15’) per round on a 1” grid or other playing surface where 1” = 5 feet. For

Level Advancement Table

Character’s Level	Experience Points Needed
1	0
2	1,000
3	3,000
4	6,000
5	10,000

Searching, Listening, and Opening Doors

A roll of a 1 or 2 on d6 will indicate success when a character attempts any of the following actions: listening at a door, opening a stuck door, searching for hidden items or secret doors. (NOTE: If the searching character is a dwarf he will automatically find any secret doors in the immediate area. For every failed attempt to open a stuck door, the Dungeon Master should make a secret check for wandering monsters.)

monsters, the movement rate in squares per round is equal to their base move rate divided by 3. For example, a goblin with a base move rate of 6” (or 60’) would move 2 squares (or 10’) per round; a giant ant with a move rate of 18” would move 6 squares, or 30’ per round.

Movement

When miniatures are used (and they will greatly enhance the

Spells for Wizards and Elves

Spells for wizards and elves are drawn from the spell lists of both clerics and magic-users. The Dungeon Master may limit available spells to a few per spell level, based upon their understandability and ease of use by young players. ■

Recommended Spell Lists by Spell Level

1	2	3	4	5
cure light wounds	find traps	fireball	charm monster	hold monster
light	invisibility	fly	neutralize poison	telekinesis
sleep	speak with animal	lightning bolt	polymorph	teleport
magic missile	web	remove curse	wizard eye	wall of stone

KNIGHTS & WIZARDS: CLASSIC D&D FOR KIDS

QUEST FOR THE ENCHANTED SWORD

A short adventure for young players of D&D®

By Jimm Johnson • Cartography by Jimm Johnson

Background

The gentle animals of the forest have always been protected by the Faerie Queen and her enchanted sword. Then, one night, not long ago, four goblins crept into the forest. They took the Faerie Queen's sword and carried it away to their tunnels in the mountain. Now Faerie Queen has sent out a call for help to all the brave knights, wizards, elves, and dwarves of the land.

Starting the Quest

In answer to the Faerie Queen's plea, the character's have travelled to a dark cave opening in the mountains. They stand at the threshold and light their torches, ready to enter the goblins' domain.

Notes for the Dungeon Master

The only wandering monsters in the goblin tunnels are giant ants. Anytime a character fails to open a stuck door, the DM should make a secret check to see if any

giant ants are attracted by the noise the character is making. If a 1 or 2 is rolled on a d6, 1 or 2 giant ants will appear and attack.

Giant Ants (1-2): HD 2; hp 5, 6; AC 3; Atk Bite (1d6); Move 18; Save 16.

Encounter Key

1. The Magic Cauldron: This cavern is the entrance to the goblins' tunnels. In the north end of the area is a large cauldron that begins to bubble and smoke when the characters enter the area. If characters approach the cauldron, a magical face will form in the smoke. Once per day the face will say, "Ask me three yea or nay questions." The magic face knows everything about the caves and tunnels. It will truthfully answer any three yes or no questions that are asked of it. When the characters are done talking to the cauldron, 2 giant ants will enter the area from the curvy tunnel to the east. They move very quickly and can crawl up the walls (and even on the ceiling!). They will attack and fight to the death.

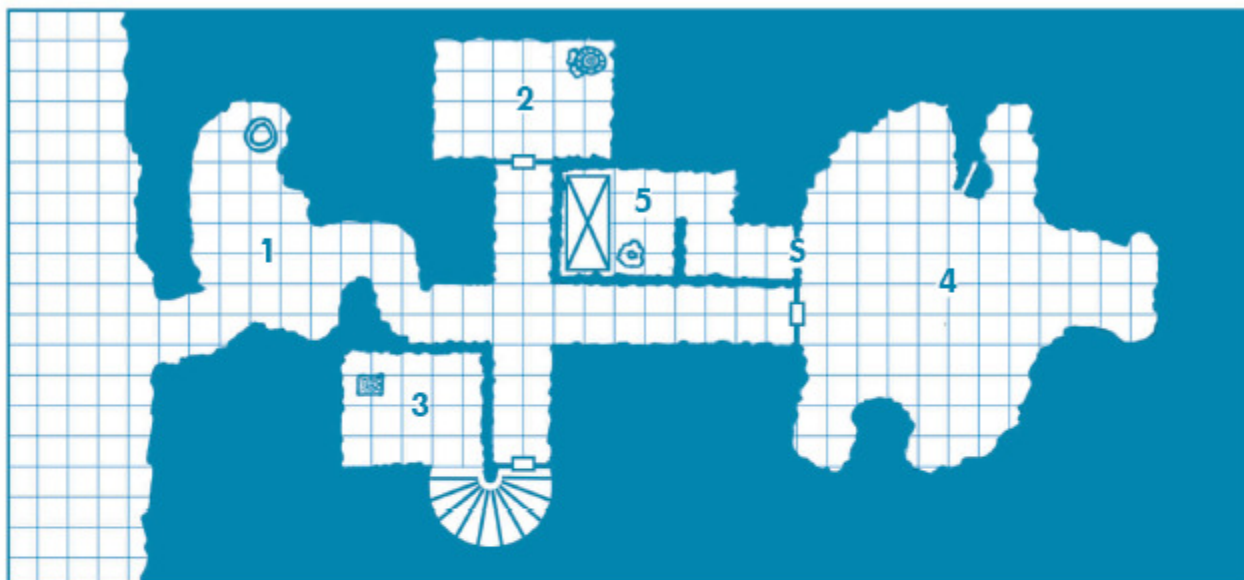
Giant Ants (2): HD 2; hp 5,7; AC 3; Atk Bite (1d6); Move 18; Save 16.

2. Giant Rats: The door to this room is stuck shut, but may be opened if a character rolls a 1 or 2 on a d6. Five giant rats scurry about this room, eating scraps of bread that are scattered on the floor. In one corner is a large barrel of cider. On top of the barrel is a coiled 50' rope and a bottle labeled "cure for poison." Leaning against the barrel is a sack full of apples, and a sack with 250 silver coins.

Giant Rats (5): HD ½; hp 1, 1, 2, 2, 3; AC 7; Atk 1 bite (1d3 + disease); Move 12; Save 17; Special: 1 in 20 are diseased. Roll saving throw or character is sick for 10 days.

3. The Golden Statue and the Magic Brazier: The door leading to this area is stuck shut, but may be opened if a character rolls a 1 or 2 on a d6. At the top of the winding staircase is a living statue made of gold. He is wearing a gold key on a chain around his neck. He will give the key to

CAVERNS OF THE MOUNTAIN GOBLINS



SCALE: 1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

KEY:



MAGIC CAULDRON



DOOR



STAIRCASE UP



MAGIC BRAZIER



BARREL & SACKS



SECRET DOOR



STALAGMITE



30' PIT

anyone who asks for it nicely. The key unlocks the door to room #4. If anyone attacks the statue, they must roll a saving throw or their weapon will stick to it.

Living Statue, Golden (1): HD 3; hp 12; AC 3; Atk 2 fists (1d6 each); Move 6; Save 15; Special: non-magical weapons used against the statue will stick unless a saving throw is rolled.

In the corner of the room beyond the statue is a burning brazier. On the rim of the brazier is written: SPEAK THE SECRET WORDS. The statue knows the secret words, and will tell them to any character who asks him. The secret words are: "Use your

power, O magic brazier." Anyone in the room who says the secret words will be affected by the brazier's power. Roll a d6 to find out what happens.

Die Roll Result

1	The character's hair falls out.
2	The character is turned into a small
3	The character falls to sleep for 10 minutes.
4	The character's skin turns purple.
5	All injured characters are cured of 1-6 hit
6	A pouch containing 20 gp appears.

4. The Goblins' Room: The door to this room is locked. (If the characters do not yet have the key, it is on a chain around the neck of the living statue in area 3.) Inside this room are 4 goblins, and an owl bear chained to the back wall. There is also a giant centipede hiding in a crack in the north wall.

Goblins (4): HD 1-1; hp 2,3,3,4; AC 6; Atk 1 short sword (1d6); Move 6; Save 18.

Owl Bear (1): HD 5; hp 15; AC 5; Atk claw and bite (1d6 each); Move 12; Save 13.

When the characters enter the room 3 of the goblins will rush to attack. The fourth goblin

will try to sneak over to the owl bear and release him so that he can also attack. The goblins all have short swords and each has a pouch of 1d6 silver pieces. The giant centipede will remain hidden until a character approaches the north side of the room. Then he will rush out and attack.

The secret door in the west wall leads to a secret passage. If a dwarf searches the room, he will automatically find the secret door. Other characters have a 2 in 6 chance of finding it if they search.

Giant Centipede (1): HD ½; hp 2; AC 9; Atk 1 bite (0 + poison); Move 6; Save 18; Special: non-lethal poison. Roll saving throw or character is sick for 10 days.

5. Secret Passage and Treasure Pit:

The secret passage leads to a pit. The pit is 30' deep and there is a large stalagmite next to it. If the characters have the rope from area 2, they can tie it around the stalagmite and climb down. At the bottom of the pit is the Faerie Queen's enchanted sword, as well as other treasure that the goblins have been hoarding. In addition to the sword, the treasure consists 2 bags of gold (100 coins each), and a chest containing 200 silver pieces and 10 ruby gems (worth 20 gp each). The enchanted sword is a +2 magic weapon.

End Note

If the characters successfully retrieve the enchanted sword, it is understood that they must return it to the Faerie Queen of the forest. The other treasure they may keep. ■

A fun time was has by all...



DRAGONS OF LORE

Put some Norse myth into your Classic D&D® dragons

By Thomas Daly • Illustration from ClipartETC

DRAGONS must surely be the most iconic creature of D&D®. They are there in the very name Dungeons & Dragons® and feature on the front covers of all the 'classic' editions, starting with the 1977 Holmes edition and running right through to the final version of the game in the early 90s. While these dragons are beautifully rendered by great artists such as Otus, Easley and Elmore, their relatively modern image is not exactly the same as dragons from history.

Dragons should be the epic highlight of a campaign and not simply more sword fodder for a party, so it's instructive to look at some mythological dragons for inspiration. Dragons loom large in many cultures' legends, from the story of St George and the dragon, to the good luck dragons of the Far East. This article, however, will have a look at five dragons from Nordic myth.

Jörmungandr

Probably the greatest of the dragons of Norse mythology was Jörmungandr. According to legend Jörmungandr was one of

the children of the giantess Loki. The ancient Nordic *Prose Edda* recounts that Odin kidnapped Loki's three monstrous children, Fenrisúlfr, Hel and Jörmungandr, tossing the latter into the great ocean that encircled the world (i.e. Midgard). Jörmungandr eventually grew so large he was able to encircle the entire world and bite his own tail. It was said that when Jörmungandr let go of his tail the world will end, thus earning his alternative name, the World Serpent.

Jörmungandr appeared to Thor one day while he is fishing with the giant Hymir. The giant had refused to give Thor some bait for his fishing line, so he cut off the head of the Hymir's best ox for bait. In the fishing contest that followed Thor rowed out to sea further and further, despite the dire warnings of Hymir. But eventually, Thor caught the mighty dragon and an epic battle then ensued. Thor was able to defeat Jörmungandr, with Hymir cutting the line to let the dragon sink to the ocean floor.

The last meeting between the serpent and Thor is predicted to occur at Ragnarök, when

Jörmungandr will emerge from the ocean to poison the sky. It is foretold that Thor will kill Jörmungandr in this final battle and then walk nine paces before falling dead, having been poisoned by the dread wyrm's venom.

On face value such a mighty dragon would be too powerful for all but Immortal level PCs. But the important lesson here is that dragons can be presented as more than simple monsters, but epic creatures of mythology. A smaller dragon (modelled on Jörmungandr) could be incorporated into regular campaigns, perhaps as a mythological keeper of a kingdom's prosperity, with its death heralding untold woe.

Fafnir

Possibly the origins of the modern standard that dragons hoard treasure, Fafnir was once the son of a magician named Hreidman who possessed a number of magical rings. Fafnir so lusted these rings that he murdered his father with the



aid of his brother Regin. Fafnir's greed eventually grew so great that he developed the form of a dragon. Following his transformation Fafnir's lust for treasure grew ever stronger, gathering a huge hoard of treasures, which he jealously guarded.

Of course Fafnir's treasure was a beacon to many a brave adventurer seeking to make their fame and fortune. Like most adventurers, however, they were only to meet a grisly death – burned alive by Fafnir's fiery dragon breath. But a mighty hero named Sigurd eventually slew Fafnir, after being led to his lair by the dragon's brother Regin. But that is not the end of the tale, because Sigurd's life was subsequently shattered by Fafnir's cursed treasure.

Fafnir's cautionary tale of the perils of greed could be used in your game as nothing more than background to explain why dragons seek to hoard treasure. But Fafnir's apparent transformation caused by his epic lust for treasure could be used as the basis of a magical curse; or maybe the PCs could fall foul of a mythological dragon's curse by stealing its booty.

Beowulf's dragon

The epic tale of *Beowulf*, which was recorded in Old English prose around the 10th Century AD, recounts the daring adventures of Nordic warrior, of the same name, from the 5th or 6th Century. The poem happens to

be one of the earliest pieces of Old English literature. The Firedrake makes its appearance towards the end of the poem, with the dread wyrm being the dragon that Beowulf fights in his final battle (with the aging hero-king dying of his wounds). In the tale, Beowulf sets off with a band of warriors to slay the dragon after a slave had blundered upon the Firedrake's hoard, stealing a cup. This had so enraged the dragon that it laid waste to the surrounding countryside. The Firedrake of the tale best matches our modern image of a dragon, being described as having wings and a fiery breath.

The story of the Firedrake is an obvious lesson in cause and effect. With interesting parallels to Smaug in Tolkien's classic tale of *The Hobbit*, the dragon is provoked by the theft of its precious treasures, only to then unleash its dread fury on the locals. The player characters in your campaign could be sent off to defeat the dragon, or maybe they were the ones responsible for its rage in the first place?

Nidhoggr

Among the most epic (and feared) of all the Norse dragons was Nidhoggr (the 'dread biter' or the 'dark striker'). This terrible mythological dragon was said to be the devourer of the corpses of the dead, which lived deep beneath the Earth at the base of the world ash tree, Yggdrasil. One of Yggdrasil's three great

roots reached over Niflheim, where the goddess Hel reigned as Queen of the cold mists of the Nordic underworld. There Nidhoggr could be found at Hvergelmir (the 'bubbling cauldron'), a spring in Niflheim that was believed to be the source of all the rivers of the world. Because Nidhoggr would gnaw at the roots of Yggdrasil (believed to be the supporter of all life) when he became weary of the taste of the dead, Nidhoggr was therefore portrayed as the very personification of evil.

Certainly one of the most evocative of the Nordic mythological dragons, the story of Nidhoggr is great fodder for a Classic D&D® campaign. Not only would Nidhoggr serve as a fantastic and unusual basis for a Chaotic Immortal (as the devourer of souls and the personification of death and destruction), he could obviously be the focus of worship for other wicked dragons or cultists. A Nidhoggr-like dragon could also be present in a game in another more practical, if somewhat smaller, scale. Nidhoggr could serve as a dragonic 'boogeyman' living beneath a town or cemetery, feeding on the flesh of the dead: a corrupted and twisted dragon feared by all.

ALTHOUGH the above is just a small taste of the dragons from Norse legend, perhaps it can serve as a starting point to reviving some of the mythological power these dragons had for our ancestors. ■

DM'S TOOLKIT: RANDOM CURIOSITIES

20 dungeon oddities for your *Labyrinth Lord*™ game

By Howard Olsen • Graphics by Jesse Walker

MYSTERIOUS dungeons need more than monsters to battle! Here are 20 non-combat encounters to entertain your players, suitable for the most excellent *Labyrinth Lord*™ role-playing system, but else wise compatible with any other older edition campaigns:

1. Mushrooms: A putrefying corpse of a slain rust monster lies on the floor with mustard colored mushrooms growing upon it. These mushrooms are magical and provide -3 to AC if eaten.

2. Splash: A random item belonging to a PC teleports into nearby a body of water, some 30' deep, with a loud splash. A damaged Amulet of Teleportation is the culprit. At the bottom of the pool are the bodies of a number of its victims. Also lying at the bottom of the pool is a resulting hoard of treasure (Hoard Class VI).

3. Dungeon clock: A small mirror is inlaid into the floor at the center of a round chamber. At exactly midday and midnight a beam of

sunlight or moonlight falls upon the mirror through a tiny shaft. The light illuminates one of two elaborate figures carved on the wall; one figure holds a sun (indicating midday) and the other a moon (indicating midnight).

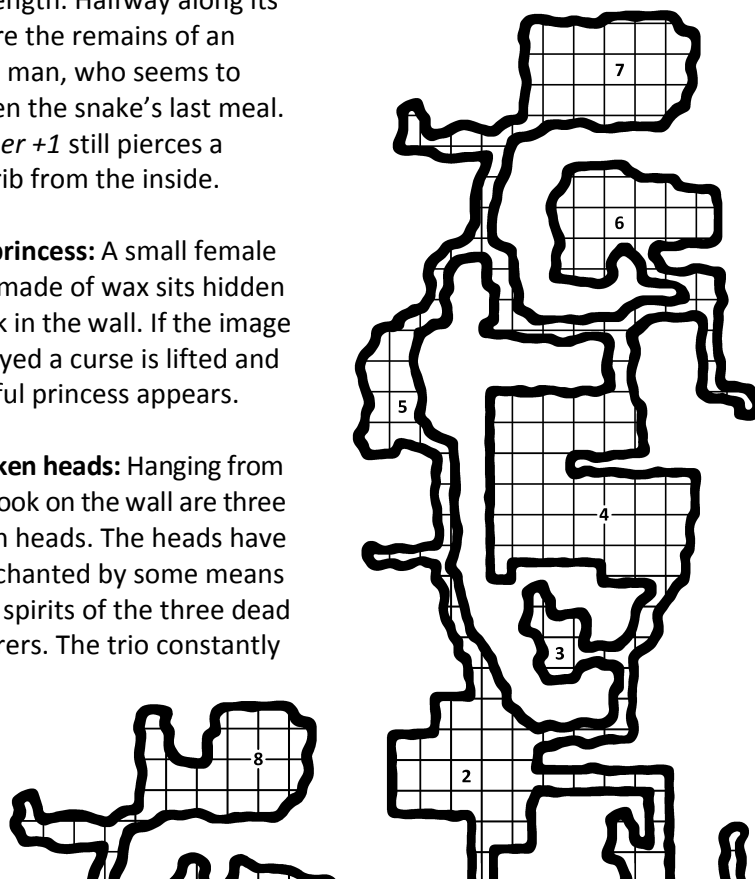
4. Snake bones: Twisting along and through a number of stone corridors is the skeleton of an enormous snake, originally some 200' in length. Halfway along its length are the remains of an armored man, who seems to have been the snake's last meal. His *dagger +1* still pierces a snake's rib from the inside.

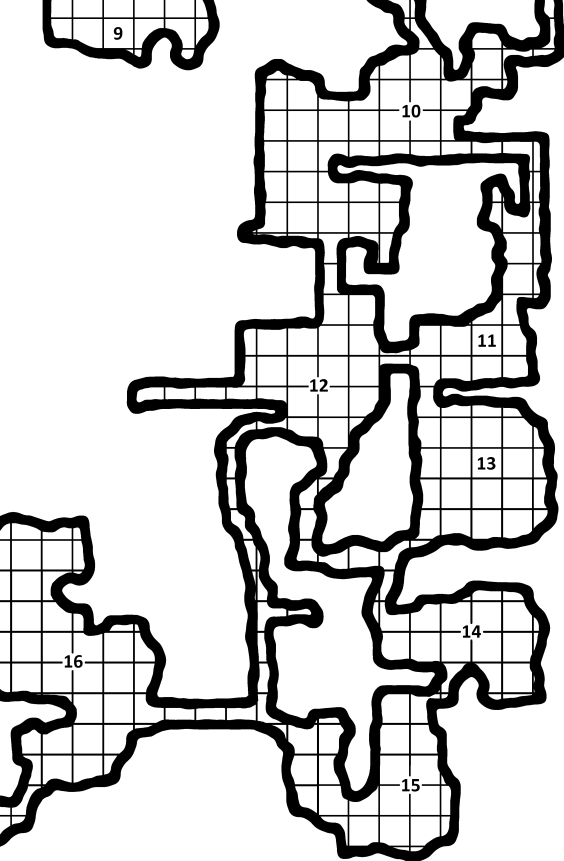
5. Wax princess: A small female figurine made of wax sits hidden in a crack in the wall. If the image is destroyed a curse is lifted and a beautiful princess appears.

6. Shrunken heads: Hanging from a rusty hook on the wall are three shrunken heads. The heads have been enchanted by some means with the spirits of the three dead adventurers. The trio constantly

bicker about the events that lead to their current predicament. The heads can answer some simple questions about the dungeon, if they can be persuaded to listen.

7. Shrieking Toadstools: A field of harmless toadstools carpet the floor of a large chamber. A growing cacophony of shrieking erupts from the mushrooms if any are trodden upon.





8. Scaffolding: A complicated network of rickety scaffolding holds up the ceiling. The labyrinthine structure fills the entire hall and as a result movement is reduced by 1/4. Any PC passing through the web of scaffolding must make three successful Dexterity Checks to get to the other side safely. A failure results in 1d6 points of damage from pieces of falling ceiling.

9. A recent meal: Sitting on the floor is a freshly made, half eaten human meal. The owners of the food are nowhere to be found.

10. Orb: A cup sits upturned in the middle of the floor, covering a small class orb about the size of a large marble. If the cup is removed the orb floats up to head height and shines with a pale light. The orb is harmless but will persist in following the PCs around the dungeon.

11. Lost scroll: Invisible furniture fills the room (a table, a bed, two chairs and a chest). Beneath the table is a scroll containing an invisibility spell. The chest holds various items including 300 GP.

12. Compass: Crushed under a large slab of stone is the body of a man holding a brass compass. The compass is cursed and sets off any magical traps when within 10'.

13. Air shaft: A narrow air shaft in the stone ceiling leads to the surface. It is evidently raining outside because a steady gush of water falls to the floor, bringing a slurry of leaves and other debris. On a roll a of 1-2 on a 1d6 a startled pixie is washed down the shaft from outside and into the chamber with a watery plop.

14. Stone font: Water seeps from the wall into a small font. The water is fresh, but each time a PC drinks from it the Labyrinth Lord rolls a secret Save v. Poison; the PC shrinks by 1" if the roll fails.

15. Failed trap: An elaborate trap has been prematurely released, revealing its hidden mechanical secrets. Close inspection will provide a +10 bonus to detection and disarmament of a similar trap.

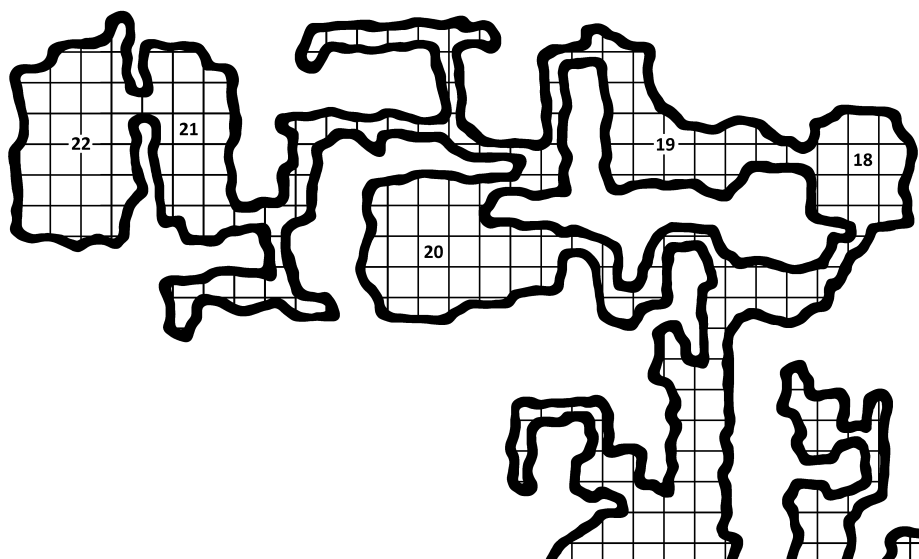
16. Dead End: Stone stairs twist downwards to an abrupt dead end. Pinned to the wall is a faded scroll that reads: "Danger. Ceiling is unsafe. Works ceased by order of Master Clovis, Chief Engineer."

17. Spider web: Spreading across a deep void, some 50' wide, is the web of a giant spider. The spider is long gone, but at the web's center is the remains of a dead adventurer. Glittering jewels can be seen in what remains of his pack (1500 GP).

18. Giant Statue: The face of an enormous buried statue of an ancient god projects from one wall of the chamber. The statue extends down many levels and is made of an unusual green stone.

19. Battle in a box: An old wooden box contains forty small (1" high) warriors carved from jet and ivory. When the lid is raised the figurines clamber out of the box and each 'side' begins to fight, with battle horns loudly calling, recreating some forgotten war.

20. Map: On the floor of the chamber is a huge 60' x 60' relief map of the kingdom. Moss and lichen grow as forests and mercury fills its lakes and rivers. ■



TRUESIGHT

Views from the Old School blogosphere

EACH issue *Encounter* will take a quick stroll around the world wide web and bring back a sprinkling of comments and opinions from the lively Old School blogosphere...

Storyline vs. Sandbox

greyhawkrogard.blogspot.com

“[It] is sometimes erroneously assumed that the sandbox type of campaign has no plot. In fact, it will often have many plots going on at the same time, running inexorably along their course. What distinguishes a sandbox-style game from a plot-driven game is that in a sandbox the players are free to pick up or ignore the various plots that they uncover as they see fit. In the plot-driven game, there is no game if the players decide to take a course that radically deviates from the plot the game master has devised.”

Old School Play “Explore it”

oldguyrpg.blogspot.com

“When I run a campaign, or when I play an RPG, what really gets me going is that idea of exploration and it seems to be something that a number of the old modules shared. You could

explore these places, uncover really neat bits and while it wasn’t always germane to the module’s “plot”, the older authors took care to make many of these modules exploration worthy. Look at B2 ... you can travel around and find nothing, or find all sorts of neat little bits.

To me, exploration is oldschool. I’m talking about good old fashioned hiking around the area to see what is there. You don’t have hints, you don’t have rumors, you don’t have a huge neon “plot sign” pointing to a spot saying “GO HERE TO CONTINUE STORY”, you are out and about, learning a new land. It can be boring, but it can also lead to neat new adventures. Sometimes the exploration itself IS the adventure.”

The Clubhouse

grogardia.blogspot.com

“Nearly everyone I met [in the late 70s and early 80s], through school, at the hobby shops, or at games days, had learned to play RPGs not because of a rulebook but because someone else, *who already knew how to play*, took pity on them and explained the rules to them. To us, that was simply the way of things, a way that

we all perpetuated by initiating others into our “Secret Club.” I can tell you for a fact that that was a big part of the appeal to the hobby back then: unlike other games, you couldn’t just pick up a copy, read the rules, and play - you had to have someone “on the inside” willing to teach you the ropes, like becoming a Mason except without the aprons and trowels.”

Magic Items Should be Magical

trollandflame.blogspot.com

“I challenge every DM to make it a personal goal that every magic item your players pry out of you will be notable and prized by the character who obtains it. Invest as much time detailing items as you do on NPCs. Give them names, colorful descriptions, histories, previous owners, secrets. Make them mystical, wondrous, and exciting.”

What is best in life?!

steamtunnel.blogspot.com

“Some say “Saving the princess, slaying the dragon, and stealing the treasure...” No!!! OSR says “Slay princesses, Save treasures, Steal dragons.” 🍷

COVER ARTIST

An adventurer's death can often be sordid and cheap, but Greg Taylor's awesome vision of an arrow-pierced warrior captures the glory that is fighting 'till the last breath! To view more of Greg's artwork visit www.battlebrush.com