

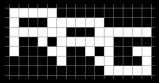
Hobbs & Friends #3

HALFMEN of HIRSUTE HOLLOW



CRB
2018

COMPATIBLE WITH
**DCC
RPG**



HALFMEN ^{of} HIRSUTE · HOLLOW

a DCC adventure zine

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Author's Note

I originally concocted this adventure as an interim scenario between Sailor on the Starless Sea and Well of Souls; the meat between two very fine pieces of bread. Yes, both of those adventures are considered funnels, but don't have to be. Well of Souls works very well as a first level adventure, too. To fill this niche, it had to start in the underworld with some sort of sea-vessel outlet, and it needed a hook for the Well of Souls, namely the tablets you start that wonderful adventure with. One could easily plop this adventure anywhere.

What's Going On?

Nuliaj Kernib - Dimensional traveler and time jumper, arrived in the Hirsute Hollow area searching for a rare brain-empowering crystal, and he found it! Tapping the crystal, he gained untold mental power that also withered away his body and caused his head to grow to a massive size. Kernib gained telekinetic control over his own hair and it holds him aloft in his Trophy Room (area C), though he is unable to leave. Reveling in his new-found power, Kernib cares not for these side-effects, as he surrounds himself with android servitors, called half-men and the trophies of his many jaunts across time and the dimensions.

The Half-men – Constructed of poly-synthetics, Kernib's servitors maintain a modicum of artificial intelligence, moving through their orders with little or no independent thought. Appearing as Neolithic hulks, the heavily muscled half-men stand nearly six feet tall with a full mane of black hair and a light covering of grayish fur. Their multifaceted eyes glitter like that of a fly or other insect. When the androids take damage, their synthetic natures are revealed, as they leak greenish ichor and major wounds expose fleshy tubes and artificial pumps. As Kernib's sanity fails, so too do the orders of

the Halfmen grow more difficult to understand, causing them to be less reliable and possibly malfunction.

Why are we here?

The PCs might find entrance to the Hollow by climbing down into the Hollow itself through the rain chute in Chamber C. They may have sought out the location for various reasons. Perhaps, the Halfmen were sent to terrorize a nearby village or simply kidnap someone from said village for Kernib's insane purposes. The party may find themselves drawn to the Hollow in multiple ways. The adventure assumes that they were on the ship found at the end of Sailors of the a Starless Sea and moving along the stygian depth of the Under World after the destruction of the ziggurat in that adventure.

1. Landing Site

The narrow waterway you've been traversing for untold days and nights in this confounded darkness of the Under Realm seems to open around you. Phosphorescent lichen puts out a soft, viridian light bathing a beach area of white sand in a bluish-green hue.

1a. Sandbar Suicide

The Halfmen have learned, through Kernib that some use this tunnel to ship things about the Under Realm and, at his bidding have shoveled much of the sand into the stream to stop unwary travellers. There is a chance that those on the ship will see these poorly constructed sand bars and stop the ship themselves. If not, they will run aground on them, likely destroying their ship's hull and taking 1d3 damage if they fail a **Reflex** Save DC 10.

1b. Ambush!

Halfmen lurk in the northern tunnel, edging up into the rough hewn chamber to the northwest during the flooding season. They'll lurk waiting to see what happens with the snappers before ambushing anyone climbing up the scree and sludge-ridden slope.

The tunnel is a sluice of muck from runoff. It's obvious that the Halfmen only travel the length of this tunnel from the beach to the **Knick-knack** chamber. The waters from above flood into the northern-most portion of the tunnel and a corpse has been lodged between some rubble there and is half hidden beneath the mud. It bears a scrimshawed bone baton on a chain. The scrimshaw shifts at casual sight. With a successful DC 10 INT check, it can be understood as a scroll of Invoke Patron spell for **Hecate** found at the end of this adventure.

1c. Slimy Scree Slope

Occasional run-off from the surface above causes flash flooding of this section of tunnel that cascades down to the beach below. It's caused a natural tumble of scree that has mounded up to a rocky slope to the tunnel above. If anyone attempts to flee up the slimy scree slope, the Crabs (from 1d) will not chase them, but if the Halfmen have been alerted they will push them back down the slope with their bone truncheons.

2 Halfmen: Init +0; Atk bone truncheon (1d4) +1 melee; AC 12 HD 1d8+1; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will -2; AL N.

1d. White Sand Beach

Between the Halfmen's sandbars and the flash flood run off, a school of Cave Crabs have taken to lurking about this cavern cove. They swarm anything they sense moving about the beach. The blue-green hue of the moss nearly blinds the crabs, though. So, if special care is taken, like a Move Silently check, or not touching the beach, a PC may bypass this encounter. It is also reflected by the creatures' attack and initiative rolls.

2 Cave Crabs: Init -2; Atk pincer +1 melee (1d6) and beak (1d4); AC 13; HD 2d6; MV walk 20' or swim 30'; Act 2d20; SP grasp (1d4) SV Fort +2, Ref -2, Wil +2; AL N Cave Crabs are mostly blind in this light already reflected in their statistics. Crabs will attack a single target with both pincers and attempt to bite with its beak. For each pincer that hits, the crab receives 1d6 on an opposed STR check to hold the character down. The Crab can only use its beak once the character is grappled.



2. Knick-Knacks

A short bit of natural stairs leads up into a natural chamber, one side strewn with various sundries from the Breaker actions of the Halfmen. There is a chance some choice bit of gear, or rare item of wealth can be found here. Every turn of searching offers one item from the Halfmen Junk table, but also has a 1 in 6 chance of drawing a Halfmen patrol.

- Working compass
- Short sword
- Wooden music box
- Small metal mirror
- Smoky gem (10gp)
- Festive vest of colors (25gp)

2 Halfmen: Init +0; Atk bone truncheon (1d4 +1 melee); AC 12 HD 1d8+1; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will -2; AL N.

The stairwell descending to the north holds the first nuance of Nerbick's control. Fine, moss-like hairs cover the walls and ceiling of the hall, undulating as if from a light breeze. If players check with a torch or something similar, they will see the moss shifts against the wind and back again in a wave-like pattern. The cilia can be scraped away but will grow back again within a few minutes. If a strand is cut away it is brownish-black in color and fine like a single tress of hair.

3. Hirsute Hollow

A large oval chamber topped by a heady dome, far above is filled with vegetation of all sorts. During the day above, light filters in through a distant flue, righter than one would expect due to geodes in the shaft wall reflecting and diffusing the light to the cavern below. This shaft also brings heavy waters during the rainy season that mostly splash into the tunnel above which leads to the beach, but also filter down to the floor of the hollow in a misty spray, feeding the vegetation. The plants and mushrooms are all covered with the wavy cilia seen previously. They climb the walls of the cavern. Discerning individuals might notice a change in coloration but it would be difficult (DC 15). The Halfmen often frequent this area harvesting and working to keep the vegetation alive with pruning, almost as if gardeners. Also amongst the alien flora of the Hollow are the mutated wooly worms and their get, the Villous Moths. The wooly worms are giant, scaly-headed caterpillars relatively harmless unless agitated. The villous moths however are tainted from normal moths and actually feed on metal as opposed to cloth. The lichen-like cilia on the caverns walls hides the ochre ore that has drawn the moths and keeps them here. Interlopers in chain mail however will draw them as... moths to a flame.

1d4 Halfmen: Init +0; Atk bone truncheon (1d4 +1) melee; AC 12 HD 1d8+1; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will -2; AL N.

Wooly Worms: Init -4; Atk slam (1d8+2) +2 melee; AC 15 HD 3d6; MV 15'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +4, Ref -4, Will -2; AL N If angered or their filament is distressed, any moth will defend its territory. They attack by rising up and slamming their upper segments onto aggressors.

Giant Villous Moths: Init +1; Atk villuos spines (1d4) +4 melee, oxidizing secretions; AC 14; HD 2d8; MV 20', Atk Special* Flying 40'; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will 0; AL N. These moths are only aggressive when their favorite food metal, appears. They are also covered in spiny hairs, as well as oxidizing secretions that can destroy metal as follows. Their attack is the volatile saliva that breaks down metal. *Anytime a moth approaches a mailed opponent they do 1d4 attacks for 1d4 damage on each hit AND a salival secretion that does 1d4 AC damage to the mail or metal weapon. This oxidized mucous is then sucked up by the moths.



4. Halfmen Chambers

These carved caverns are used by the Halfmen as personal chambers of a sort.

4a. Kernib's Trophy Room

All that is left of the once great Time Jumper's career is stored in this cavernous chamber. It is crisscrossed with ropy hair follicles holding the grossly enlarged head of Nuliaj Kernib and his equally shrunken body, a desiccated wart on the underside of Nuliaj's noggin. Cubicles around the room hold rusting and decaying trophies of the adventurer's past. At any time, 1d4 Halfmen can be discovered in this chamber, subservient to their creator and master. The once heralded man has fallen very deeply from his previous heights in career and motivation. Since discovering the Mind Stone and melding with it, he's simply devolved in volition as his mind has evolved in expansion. At one point he is using nearly 98% of his brain's capacity and will regale visitors with this information as often as possible. He consists of a giant head suspended in the center of the room by a mass of hair. This hair can be used in combat to protect himself as well as shifting him up and down in the chamber in an effort at defensive maneuvers. Kernib also has an array of brain-powered High Science talents! Kernib can create a nigh impenetrable force field around himself in an effort at self-protection

Nuliaj Kernib: Init +4; Atk (2) Telekinetic Hair Club +3 (range 30') and High Science as spells below; AC 14; HD 3d6; MV 20'; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, to Will +3; AL N; Spells +5 Casting (Magic Shield, Magic Missile, Paralysis, ESP, Word of Command)

Kernib will utter the following phrases via telepathy:

- *“You have no capacity to comprehend the vista of my cognizance.”*
- *“Given the preponderance of patience, I would explain it to you, but I lack that particular virtue.”*
- *“Inconceivable.”*

Trophy Room Details:

1. Time Jumper suit - Time has caused this suit to become inoperable. It resembles an astronaut's suit of the early 1980s in its bulk and fishbowl like helmet. Tucked in a utility belt one can find a barely functioning **Force Baton** (use as club d4 damage) on a successful hit, an electrical charge may stun the opponent for 1d4 rounds (1d4 charges)

2. Futuristic Battle Van - This vehicle was used in a distant dimension by Hydro Hackers intent on bringing water to their parched neighborhoods. The side is emblazoned with a Water Tear Drop and the name Mr Goodwater. The vehicle has long since fallen into disrepair, but within the locked side enclosure is a heavy, iron tool that could be used as a weapon (1d6+1, minus 1 to hit due to its unwieldiness), or in a pinch the Half-moon Rod from the Well of Souls. A robotic wash and wax device was installed here to keep the Battle Van clean. It is mostly malfunctioning now, but is booted up by proximity. Two polycarbonate arms will extend from the ceiling and fend off anyone attempting to enter the cubicle the van is stored in, as a broken voice will sound from the robot's cracked speaker, “Wax on. Wax off.” As it speaks it will fend off melee weapon attacks as if AC 18, the robotic arms blocking attacks in an alternating clockwise/counter-clockwise fashion. If the robot takes 20hp of damage it is rendered inert.

3. Two-handed Falchion - This wickedly edged sword of malfeasance once held the deranged soul of the scholarly demon, Goad. Its intelligence has waned, unfortunately. There is a 1 in 6 chance of the sword describing esoteric novels from the pulp era of Prime Material Earth. The blade also functions as a two-handed sword that hits with the sharpest cut. If the user can verbalize with cunning wit, the blade has a bonus to hit equal to the cunning jibe of the user (Judges' decision).

4. The Tablets of the Well of Souls

Kernib's hair actually sinks into the cavernous walls of his Trophy room and connect to various locations within the tunnel complex, giving the decaying adventurer insights to what is happening within the structure. He can also communicate the his Halfmen and give orders through these follicles. Feel free to torture hapless players with this particular tidbit in any way you see fit.

4b. Rejuvenation Chamber

The Halfmen were constructed and serviced here by Kernib, while he could still move about. All that remains of his devices is a permanently stationed repair bot. This robot has lost all functionality.

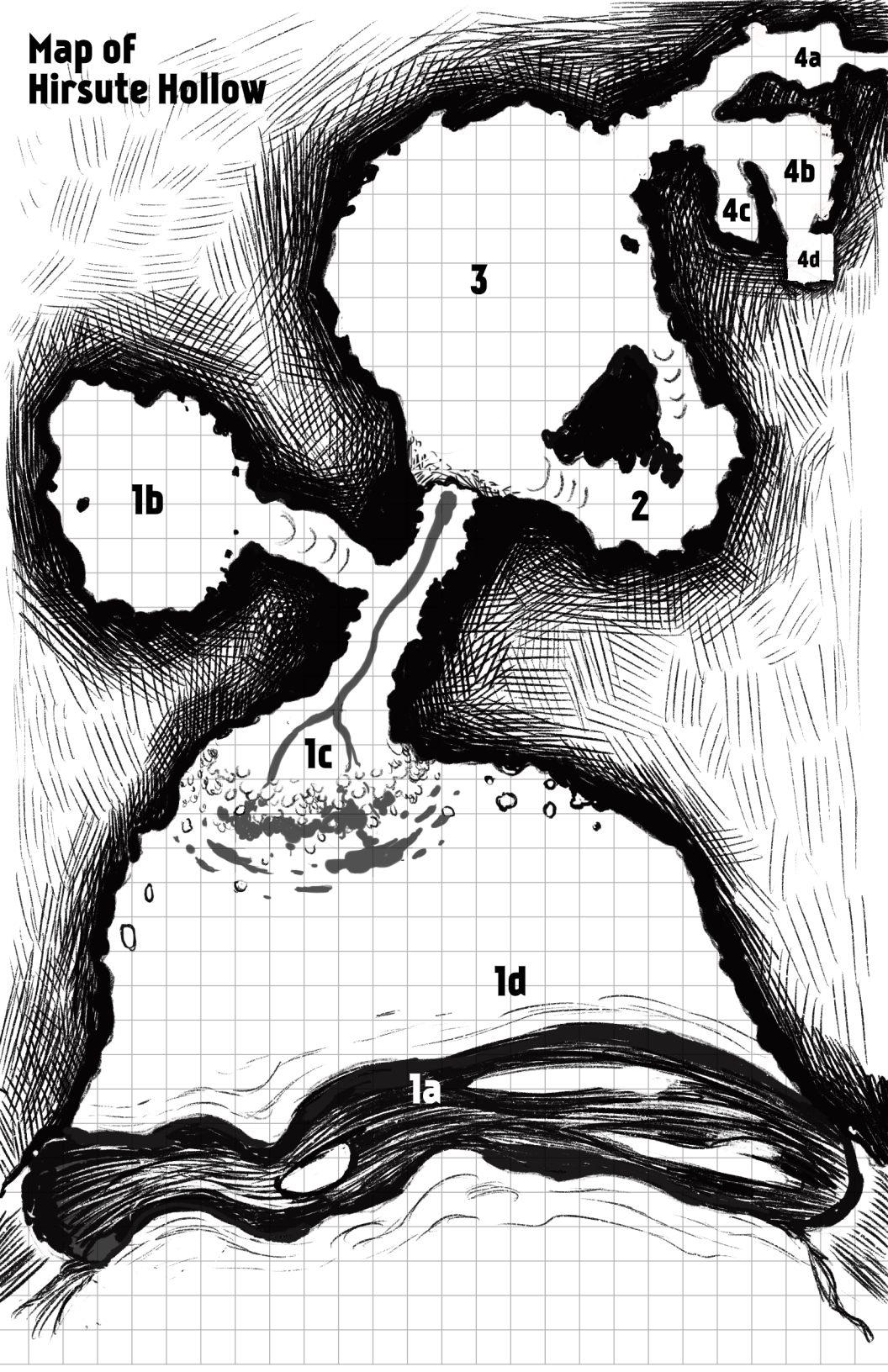
4c. Storage Chamber

All manner of Halfmen parts lie haphazardly about this cave. Among the busted storage crates are all sorts of internal and external parts, including epidermal sheathing. Inventive PCs may try to use this to create things and I heartily promote these sorts of shenanigans. Unfortunately, such things are beyond this humble author at this time.

4d. Processing Chamber

Much of the trappings of the cavernous nature of the complex have been forgone here. The walls, ceiling and floor have all been cleared and a poly-synthetic white plastic give the area a sterilized aesthetic. A broad-headed shower head looms over a small cubicle with a plastic table in it. Behind the cubicle and attached to the shower head is a tank replenished by water collected from the chute in **Chamber C**. The Halfmen process the foliage taken from the Hollow for nourishment for Kernib here. The tank is under pressure and PCs messing with it have a chance to rupture the tank. A small bit of antitoxin is injected into the collected water to help clean the foliage and could be salvaged.

Map of Hirsute Hollow



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