

THE STRONGHOLD

Issue N° 1



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Issue N^o. 1

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Cover Artist Jay Penn
Interior Artist Jim Magnusson
Map Boric Glanduum
Additional Art Public Domain
Proofreader Tim Shorts

Contact: boric.glanduum1 @ gmail.com
 thedwarvenstronghold.blogspot.com



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FOREWORD

☞ Sitting here on vacation, away from telephones and the internet. It's a great way to force yourself to write. Except when you're surrounded by gaming materials, miniatures, and books. Lots of books. And kids. But I have music. And some dice.

☞ My kids, though...they aren't bad. They're good kids; I shouldn't imply otherwise. They're good geeks, too. Yeah, in this family, we like the old stuff. Music, books, movies, television, and so forth. For example, we just got through watching Real Genius and an episode of the animated Star Trek. Tomorrow we'll have an hour of Night Court and Welcome Back, Kotter. Maybe a little Riflesman. Heck, around the local Courts, I'm known for my bow ties and fountain pens.

☞ 'Zines are a way-back machine for me as well. I owe a lot to Christian Walker and Tim Shorts for inspiration, both in gaming generally and for this 'zine in particular. Also, in life, they're both great listeners and advisers.

☞ I have shelves and shelves of 2nd and 3^Xth edition Dungeons and Dragons. Even a little 1st Edition, on which my wife and I cut our individual teeth back in the day. There's even some various clone stuff and non-D&D RPGs. I have a large collection of miniatures: lead, "lead-free," and both collectible and non-collectible pre-painted plastic. I consider myself a proud member of the OSR, and happily collect clone-materials, even though my focus is on 3^Xth edition and Pathfinder.

☞ To me, the OSR is a state of mind, not a set of rules. I've seen 2nd Edition run on laptops and 3rd Edition with pencils, paper, and dice. I've seen DMs run 1st edition sessions that were just as boring and time-consuming as some 3rd Edition games. I've also seen the reverse. I think I'm a bit of the latter rather than the former.

☞ So what IS "The Stronghold"? Well, it's a print version of the kinds of things you can find on my blog: <http://www.thedwarvenstronghold.blogspot.com>. The Stronghold itself is nestled in the mountain range just down the road from The Manor. There's some trade between the two; even though their "laws" might be slightly different, the dwarves and the inhabitants around the Manor get along.

☞ That's about it for now. Hope you enjoy the contents and find something useful. Until next time, may your beard grow long and your dice remain dry.

February 18, 2015



FOUND ITEMS

"Nothing under the bed," whispered the dwarf.

"Nothing in the saddlebags, Seandi, but a used handkerchief and some dice," said the human, grimacing and wiping his hands on his shirttails.

"Here we go," answered the tall woman, her eyes sparkling. "There was a false bottom in this drawer here." she set the drawer down on the top of the desk. "Let's just see what we have here, shall we? And Flakin? Bring the dice over here. You never can tell what's going to be useful, hey?" The human nodded, reaching back into the saddlebags.

"Alakin," she said, looking toward the dwarf. "Bring your holy water over here. I think this drawer is booby-trapped. It ain't pretty, either. I'm going to need all the help I can get."

Sometimes as a DM, GM, or referee, the hardest thing to do is to come up with treasure items. I don't mean simply the +5 holy mighty cleaving vorpal thundering longsword, formerly wielded by Sir Fragilus of Doomstrike Castle. I also mean the real random stuff...a small bag of gems or a small bag of knucklebones; a little silver bell or a little silver knife.

Sometimes those seemingly useless or irrelevant items are the most fun: they serve as a little piece of intellectual gristle that gets in your players' minds and worries them until it becomes a little pearl of role-playing fun.

They could be completely irrelevant and not worth the time to pick up. Or they could serve as a hook or an idea germ for the DM: something that becomes relevant or obvious later. You know the idea: something that sends the PCs racing back to the seedy merchant's booth in the street market to buy back at an outrageously marked-up price that little silver bell they just sold yesterday, simply because it is actually not just relevant, but essential to their success.

I like to add these little "found" items to my treasure troves. Very often these items look like trash or useless little bits of flotsam on an

NPC's desk. Usually they are exactly that. But when you're operating in a sandbox environment, it is sometimes amazing what these items will turn into, either under your own inspiration or your players'.

I have seen players carry some of these little bits and pieces, just a random entry on their character sheet, for weeks and months (and on one occasion, a year) until one session they look up and say, "This little bag of fingernails.... Is it possible that it belonged to NPC X?" or "Is it possible to do Z with it?" and suddenly an entirely new window of the game opens up and you have a new—and unintended—adventure hook.

In one instance a player carried around a small bag filled with little bells. The character used these one night, spreading them across the floor of a cavern as an alarm so that they group could rest. The wandering monster entered the cavern, stepped on the bells which immediately jingled, the party awoke, and melee ensued.

Another option is to use them as Evil DM Fodder. In other words, they're completely useless items. However, if you plan correctly and present them in *just the right way* it's possible to convince your players that these little bits of detritus actually have value. Take advantage of the player mind-set that says, "Everything the DM does, says, or gives us has a purpose." Take that mind-set and run with it. You'll have the players thinking that the lump of dried cow dung they found has mystical properties when it was nothing more than part of an NPC's tinder box.

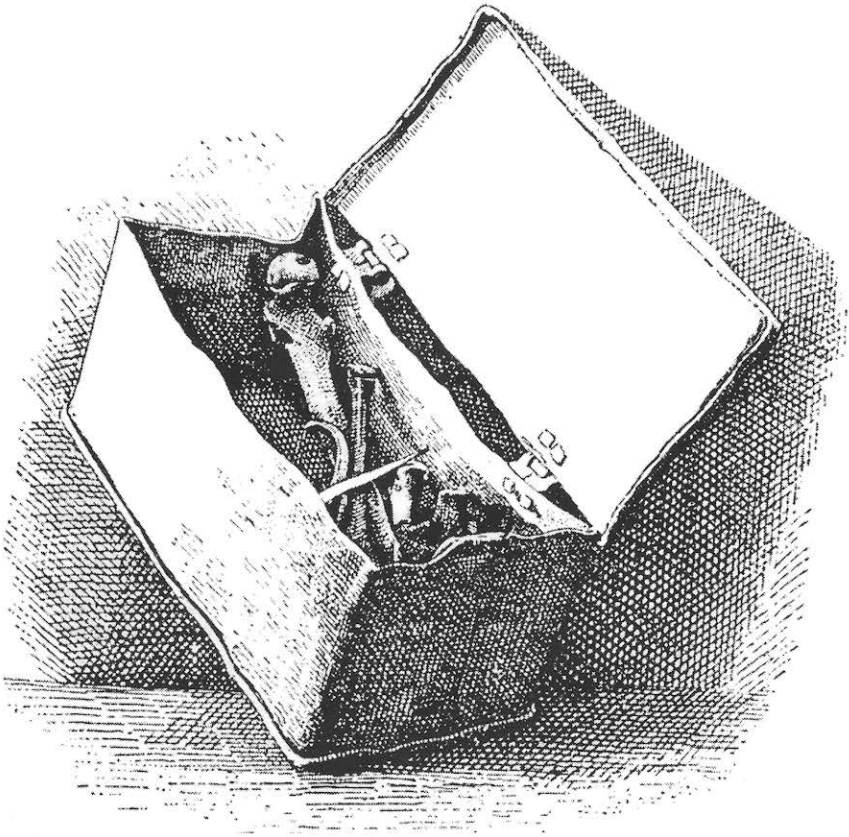
Hey, DMs are allowed to have fun too.

Here is a list of thirty different "stashes"—each stash has four distinct items, with a varying number of "distinct items" per stash. Use these as a random d30 table, find one you like, or pick and choose between the stashes to create your own little pile of stuff.

1. 1 brownie skull, 2 flower bulbs, 1 dried apple fruit, 1 dried orange fruit
2. 1 reptile egg, 6 small potatoes, 1 clay spool, 4 pine cones seeds

3. 1 pewter spoon, 1 small ingot of pewter, 1 small horn piece, 1 feather
4. 1 bird egg (pieces), 1 cedar shavings, 1 rusted arrowhead, 1 clay spool
5. 2 reptile bones, 1 green bottle of ink, 1 shard of a broken mirror, 1 small pumice stone
6. 1 animal skin (rat), 1 human ear, 1 lump of silver, 1 handful of dried fruit rinds
7. 1 yellow ribbon, 1 silver butter knife, 1 chipped china cup, 1 bird egg
8. 1 red ribbon, 1 feather, 1 brooch (appears to be broken), 1 palm frond, 7 pebbles
9. 1 clump of brimstone, 4 dried peppers, 4 lantern wicks, 1 metal shaving
10. 1 small horn piece, 1 clay spool, 1 mummified reptilian finger, 4 toenails
11. 1 rabbit animal skin, 1 hook, 1 blue ribbon, 5 pieces of candy
12. 1 clay spool, 1 piece of fungus (looks like a chunk of algae), 8 fingernails in a wooden box, 1 pair of six-sided bone dice
13. 2 buttons, 1 skeleton key, 1 harmonica, 1 crudely made bone bowl
14. 1 hair, 1 piece of birch bark, 3 dried mulberry berries, 1 tin whistle
15. 4 rodent teeth, 1 white chess pawn, 1 chunk of bleu cheese (Roquefort) sealed in a small clay urn, 1 small potato
16. 1 bone spool, 1 handful of barley, 1 empty glass vial, 1 clump of sand
17. 1 small horn piece, 1 scrap of fur, 1 stub of a candle, 1-cubit-long length of tin wire
18. 1 fishhook, 2 burlap sacks, 11 buttons, 1 broken metal clasp
19. 1 soiled rag, 1 stamp in the shape of a lion's head, 3 flower seeds, 1 human ear
20. 3 flower seeds, 1 arrowhead, 3 small potatoes, 1 silver tiny bell
21. 1 small seashell, 1 crudely made wooden bowl, 1 tin whistle, 3 broken beads
22. 1 piece of a morel mushroom, 1 ball of resin, 1 antler piece, 1 wood whistle
23. 1 small pile of plant matter, 1 dried handful of peppers, 1 2-cubit-long length of copper wire
24. 1 dead newt, 3 corks, 15 eight-inch lengths wooden dowels, 1 small skinning knife

25. 1 spiderlimb lock pick, 1 harmonica, 1 red bottle of ink, 1 3-inch-square scrap of hide
26. 2 small chunks of silver, 1 hide strap or belt, 1 lump of tree sap, 1 tiny tin bell
27. 1 button, 1 tiny lead figurine, 19 six-inch lengths wooden dowels, 3 fishhooks
28. 1 handful of dried fruit rinds, 1 brass tiny bell, 9 glass beads, 1 clump of sand
29. 1 clump of sand, 1 cloth glove, 1 small shard of petrified wood, 1 pewter ladle
30. 1 bottle of violet ink, 1 skeleton key, 1 small pile of cedar shavings, 1 animal skin (rabbit)



MALEVOLENT MATERIALS

VAT OF VARIANCE

The Vat of Variance is, it is to be hoped, a one-of-a-kind item. Its exact origins are unknown; most who have researched the Vat seem to believe that it was created several centuries ago by a wizard in an attempt to create his own life forms to use as slaves. Based on the effects of the Vat, many believe they were intended to be homunculi or receptacles for summoned creatures. Others believe that the Vat is the creation of a malicious, trickster god; one who wished to create disgusting mutations and vicious, vengeful aberrations of the highest order. Whatever its source, the danger of this artifact is clear.

This enormous vessel alters creatures (up to size category Huge) that are placed inside it; based upon carvings on the exterior of the massive vessel, the intent was that they would be “modified” for the better and become completely submissive to the creator.

As those who have attempted to use the Vat over the centuries have discovered, the creator of this object, if it *was* a wizard, wasn't completely successful. In fact, the results are usually disastrous. The creatures who are placed within certainly emerge changed, but that is about the only similarity to the perceived original intent . . . that is, when they actually emerge at all. There have been those who have entered the enormous cauldron never to be seen again.

Any creatures subjected to the powers of the Vat of Variation emerge as Chaotic Evil creatures, regardless of previous alignment. Additionally, their Intelligence and Wisdom scores are each permanently reduced to 3, as the resultant creature is little better than an animal. They cannot read and they understand only their natural language. The Vat creature's Charisma score is also modified by +5, as they become quite distracting: intimidating, frightening, and outright disgusting. Any creature who has once been modified cannot enter the Vat again. If they do, they suffer complete annihilation and vanish. They also cannot be healed of the changes by anything short of a *miracle* or *wish*.

Roll 1d6 to determine the number of modifications received:

ROLL	EFFECT	ROLL	EFFECT
1	Complete Annihilation	5	2 Alterations
2-4	1 Alteration	6	3 Alterations

Roll a d12 to determine which alterations the Vat imposes, re-rolling if desired on any duplicate roll. *Note: each alteration should increase the base creature's CR by at least 1 or 2, at DMs discretion.* (Descriptions of each effect are listed below the following table.)

ROLL	ALTERATION		
1	Serpentine Heads	(1d4 for number)	
2	Tentacles	(1d4 for number)	
3	Spinnerets		
4	Vampiric Proboscis		
5	Choker Arm	(1d2 for number)	
6	Scorpion Tail		
7	Mandibles		
8	Arachnoid legs	(1d8 for number)	
9	Gibbering Mouths	(1d4 for number)	
10	Abdominal Mouth		
11	Paralytic Slime		
12	Eyestalk of Power	(1d12 for effect)	
i	Telekinesis	vii	Fear
ii	Slow	viii	Disintegrate
iii	Sleep	ix	Charm Person
iv	Inflict Moderate wounds	x	Charm Monster
v	Flesh to Stone	xi	Scorching Ray
vi	Finger of Death	xii	Dispel Magic

The following descriptions assume a Medium-sized base creature.

◦ Serpentine Heads

The creature emerges with 1d4 serpentine heads having sprouted from its back and shoulders. Any creature with multiple serpentine heads becomes immune to sneak attacks. Only one serpentine head can attack each round; the creature gains one new attack per round with the head and attacks with a 1d8 bite plus 1d4 acid damage. Each head has Hardness 0 and hit points equal to the base creature's Hit Dice. To sever a head, a foe must make a sunder attempt with a slashing weapon targeting a head.

◦ Tentacles

The creature emerges with 1d4 tentacles having sprouted from its back, shoulders, and abdomen. Each tentacle is covered with barbed hooks that do 1d4 damage per hit. Creatures with multiple tentacles may attack with either their regular attack or their tentacles, using up to two tentacles per round. Each tentacle has Hardness 0 and hit points equal to one-half the base creature's Hit Dice. To sever a tentacle, a foe must make a sunder attempt with a slashing weapon targeting a tentacle.

◦ Spinnerets

The creature gains the ability to throw a web three times per day. This is similar to an attack with a net but has a maximum range of 50 feet (range increment of 10 feet). This attack is effective against targets up to one size category larger than the Vat creature. An entangled creature can escape with a successful Escape Artist check (DC 12) or with a Strength check (DC 16).

The creature can also create a sheet of sticky webbing from 5 to 60 feet square, depending on the size of the creature. (A medium creature can create a web of up to 20 feet square.) Creatures must succeed on a DC 20 Spot check to notice a web; otherwise they stumble into it and become trapped as though by a successful web attack. Otherwise, the web is as one created by a *web* spell.

A Vat creature cannot be entangled by or stick to its own webbing.

◦ Vampiric Proboscis

A thirty-foot-long proboscis unrolls from the Vat creature's mouth (instead of a tongue). The Vat creature can attack with this proboscis as with the spell *vampiric touch*, dealing 1d6 points of damage per Hit Dice of the base creature (maximum 10d6). The Vat creature gains temporary hit points equal to the damage dealt; these temporary hit points disappear 1 hour later.

◦ Choker Arm

The Vat creature grows 1d2 arms from its torso. The Vat creature gains either +5 (one arm) or +10 (two arms) to its Grapple check as well as the unerring talent for seizing the victim by the neck; a grappled victim cannot speak or cast spells with verbal components. In addition, the Vat creature does not provoke an attack of opportunity when performing a grapple maneuver.

◦ Scorpion Tail

The Vat creature grows a barbed tail with which it can make a single attack each round. The sting causes 1d4 damage plus poison (injury; *save* Fort DC 12; *frequency* 1/round for 4 rounds; *effect* 1d2 Strength; *cure* 1 save). The creature also becomes immune to all poisons.

◦ Mandibles

The creature emerges with a set of mandibles incorporated into its face and mouth, from which drips a noxious green ichor. The Vat creature gains a bite attack, dealing 1d4 damage per bite.

◦ Arachnoid legs

The creature grows a number of chitinous legs from its waist and body, with which it can walk. The Vat creature for each even number of legs grown, gains +5 to its speed (max. +20); if the number of legs grown is odd, it also loses 1 point of Dexterity. For example, a creature with two legs gains +5 to its speed; a creature with seven legs gains +15 to its speed, but loses 1 point of Dexterity.

- Gibbering Mouths — roll 1d4 for number
The Vat creature emerges with multiple obscene mouths around its body and limbs. If the Vat creature successfully grapples a foe, each mouth can attack for 1d2 damage each round while grappling.
- Abdominal Mouth
Suffering possibly the most disturbing and troubling alteration, the creature emerges with a massive tooth-filled maw spreading either horizontally across its abdomen or, worse, vertically from its neck to groin. This creature gains a +10 to a Grapple check as the mouth and teeth latch onto its foe; each round the foe is grappled, the Vat creature does 1d12 damage with its gnawing and gnashing teeth. Any creature two or more size categories Smaller than the Vat creature run the risk of being swallowed whole and being subjected to 3d6 acid damage per round.
- Paralytic Slime
The creature emerges completely blind and coated with a constantly dripping, constantly renewing layer of slime coating its body. The creature is granted the blindsight ability with a range of 30 feet and a slam attack (at 1-1/2 times Strength modifier) which does 1d6 damage plus 1d6 acid damage. An opponent damaged by the acid attack suffers an additional 1d4 acid damage per round for three rounds or until the acid is washed off. The Vat creature also becomes immune to acid- and fire-based attacks.
- Eyestalk of Power
The creature grows an eyestalk, usually from its head, neck, or shoulders, although other locations have been noted, albeit rarely. The eye can produce a magical ray once per round as a free action. The ray is cast as a 12th-level caster and follows the rules for a ray. Each eye ray has a range of 150 feet and a save DC of 17. The save DC is Constitution-based.



FROM THE MENAGERIE

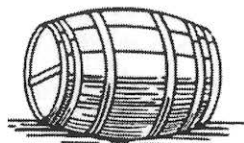
the mimic

It is the young and inexperienced tomb robber that looks with suspicion only at the wooden chest in the corner or the strangely too-wide doorframe, and only in the tomb or the dungeon. After all, these are the most commonly encountered mimics, and the most common lairs. As any well-seasoned adventurer will tell you, however, the dreaded mimic comes in many shapes, forms, and sizes with multiple forms of attacks. They can be found in any place inhabitable by other creatures.

The local inn, for example, once suffered from an infestation of mimics. It took four dwarves a full week to rid The Cheerful Wench of all of the mimics. Unfortunately, there was collateral damage to The Cheerful Wench; nothing structural, however. At least, nothing that the dwarves from the Stronghold couldn't repair. Eventually.

Size Medium Mimics

- Keg and Cask Mimics attack by essentially swallowing their prey and drowning them.



Keg Mimics (also Cask Mimics)

Treat as regular mimic, but replaces the crush attack with a drown attack (as *drown* cast by 17th-level wizard). CR +1

- Mattress and Bedroll Mimics are noticeably softer than the normal form, making it less likely that a tired creature will suspect the “soft” straw tick mattress will eat them.

Mattress Mimics (also Bedroll Mimics)

Treat as regular mimic with the following exceptions:

- Increase disguise skill roll +10 when disguised as a mattress.
- Smother (Ex): this special attack allows the mimic, if grappling, to reduce the time until the target has to attempt suffocation checks. If

grappled, the opponent reduces the remaining duration it can hold its breath by 1d6 rounds.

- **Strangle (Ex):** this special attack prevents an opponent grappled by the mimic from speaking or casting spells with verbal components.
- CR +1

Size Small Mimics

- Clothing Mimics are diabolical, masquerading until they are donned. They then strike quickly with their slam and constrict attacks, until they crush their foes within the folds of seemingly-innocuous cloth.

Trouser Mimics Small Aberration

HP 22 (4d8+4), CR 1 XP 400, Usually Neutral

Init +5; Speed 10, fly 20ft., burrow 5ft.

AC 15, Touch 12, flat footed 14 (+1 Dex, +3 Natural, +1 size)

Melee Base Attack 3 Grapple 7, Slam +9 (1d6+6)

Space: 1/2 ft.; Reach 0

Special Attacks: Constrict (Ex) (Str) DC (16) 1d8, Improved Grab

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60', Immunity to cold, Mimic shape

Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +1,

Str 18, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10

Skills: Disguise +15 (when object +35), Listen +13, Spot +13

Feats: Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (Slam)

Language: Common

- Picture Frame Mimics are incredibly dangerous, in part due to multiple attacks. They attack by jumping; their entire body is a mouth. Some few frames appear to have glass panels; these are actually razor-sharp teeth which cause greater damage to their prey.

Picture Frame Mimics Small Aberration

HP 22 (4d8+4), CR 1 XP 400, Usually Neutral

Init +6; Speed 10, fly 30ft., climb 5ft.

AC 16, Touch 13, flat footed 14 (+2 Dex, +3 Natural, +1 size)

Melee Base Attack 3 Grapple 7, Slam +9 (1d4+4)



Full Attack: Slam +9 (1d4+4) and Bite +3 (1d6+2) [(1d10+2) with glass]
Space: 1/2 ft.; Reach 0
Special Attacks: Adhesive (Ex) (Str) DC (16), Improved Grab
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60', Immunity to cold, Mimic shape
Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +1,
Str 18, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10
Skills: Disguise +15 (when object +35), Listen +13, Spot +13
Feats: Improved Grapple, Improved Sunder, Weapon Focus (Bite)
Language: Common

Size Tiny Mimics

- Candlestick Mimics (also Oil Lamp Mimics) do not attack with fire, as one might expect. Instead, they bite their prey and burrow into their prey's body.

Candlestick Mimics Tiny Aberration

HP 19 (3d8+6), CR 0.5 XP 200, Usually Neutral

Init +4; Speed 10, fly 20ft., burrow 5ft.

AC 19, Touch 16, flat footed 15 (+4 Dex, +3 Natural, +2 size)

Melee Base Attack 2 Grapple -9, Bite +2 (1d3)

Space: 1/2 ft.; Reach 0

Special Attacks: Adhesive DC (15), Attach, Burn DC(13) 1d6

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60', Immunity to fire, Mimic shape

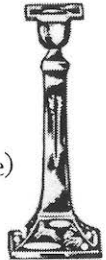
Fort +5, Ref +9, Will +1,

Str 5, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10

Skills: Disguise +14 (when object +34), Listen +12, Spot +12

Feats: Alertness, Lightning Reflexes, Weapon Focus (Bite)

Language: Common



- Tankard Mimics (also Trencher Mimics) attack by attaching themselves to the face of their victim, covering the prey's mouth and nose, eventually suffocating the victim creature.

Tankard Mimics Tiny Aberration



HP 16 (3d8+3), CR 0.5 XP 200, Usually Neutral
Init +5; Speed 10, fly 5ft., swim 20ft.
AC 16, Touch 13, flat footed 15 (+1 Dex, +3 Natural, +2 size)
Melee Base Attack 3 Grapple 0, Slam +6 (1d4+3)
Space: 1/2 ft.; Reach 0
Special Attacks: Adhesive DC (13), Attach, Suffocate DC(15)
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60', Glide (Ex) 10', Immunity to Acid,
Mimic shape
Fort +1, Ref +9, Will +4,
Str 1, Dex 25, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10
Skills: Climb +4, Disguise +13 (when object +33), Listen +11, Spot +11
Feats: Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes
Language: Common

Size Diminutive Mimics

- Key mimics are vicious and mean, attacking without regard. They launch themselves at their prey, biting and goring, digging into their prey's flesh.

Key Mimics Diminutive Aberration

HP 11 (2d8+2), CR 0.5 XP 200, Usually Neutral
Init +7; Speed 5, fly 10ft., climb 5ft., burrow 5ft.
AC 23, Touch 21, flat footed 16 (+7 Dex, +2 Natural, +4 size)
Melee Base Attack 1 Grapple -16, Gore +1 (1-5)
Space: 1/2 ft.; Reach 0
Special Attacks: Adhesive DC (15), Attach, Blood drain (1 CON)
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60', Glide (Ex) 10', Immunity to Acid,
Mimic shape
Fort +1, Ref +9, Will +4,
Str 1, Dex 25, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10
Skills: Climb +4, Disguise +13 (when object +33), Listen +11, Spot +11
Feats: Alertness, Lightning Reflexes, Weapon Focus (Gore)
Language: Common



- Stain mimics are particularly nasty little beasts who, as their name indicates, prefer replicating the appearance of stains, most usually on fabrics and clothing. They prefer to lie dormant, attacking with their sting and acid injection abilities, fleeing when their host realizes the source of the painful burning and itching. Due to their high Strength and Constitution, they can be stubborn and hard to get out.

Stain Mimics Diminutive Aberration

HP 11 (2d8+2), CR 0.5 XP 200, Usually Neutral

Init -4; Speed 5, climb 5ft., burrow 5ft.

AC 12, Touch 10, flat footed 12 (-4 Dex, +2 Natural, +4 size)

Melee Base Attack 1 Grapple -8, Sting +9 (1+4)

Space 1/2 ft.; Reach 0

Special Attacks: Acid Injection (Ex) (1d2 pts immediately and 1 round after attack), Adhesive DC (15), Attack

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60', Immunity to acid, Mimic shape
Fort +1, Ref -2, Will +3,

Str 16, Dex 2, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 12

Skills: Climb +12, Disguise +14 (when object +44), Listen +10, Spot +10

Feats: Alertness, Lightning Reflexes, Weapon Focus (sting)

Language: Common



Acid Injection (Ex). When the stain mimic stings, it injects a burning, irritating acid that deals 1d2 points of acid damage immediately and another 1d2 points of acid damage on the round after the attack. This effect can be countered by submerging the wound in water for a round or with a DC 15 Heal check.

Battle Cries

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| ▪ By the Beard! | ▪ Oh, crap. This is gonna hurt. |
| ▪ By the noble blood! | ▪ Repent! Thy doom is at hand! |
| ▪ Death approaches! | ▪ See my blade and despair! |
| ▪ Face my wrath! | ▪ Wake, Iron! And rouse, Steel! |
| ▪ No dishonor! | ▪ Taste the steel of my axe, cretin! |
| ▪ Not in the face! Not in the face! | ▪ Thou art but mortal! |

MISSIVES FROM THE 'HOLD

“Man has six organs to serve him and he is master of only three. He cannot control his eye, ear, or nose, but he can his mouth, hand, and foot. — Leone Levi

“All men are born with a nose and ten fingers.” — Voltaire

We all have them. Noses, I mean. Most races have a breathing apparatus attached to the (approximate) center of their face. Within those noses reside boogers. Snot. Dried nasal mucus. Viscous colloidal mucus. It's all part of the body's way to protect from germs and dirt. At any rate, it's natural. It's also apparently natural that we engage in rhinotillexomania.

Whether it's simple booger retrieval or a full-on nasal plundering, chances are adventurers and kings, peasants and nobility—someone's going to do it sometime. Here's a little set of tables to help you when your players meet that humanoid NPC who's a bumpkin and a real character and he needs a little more color or flavor to his description.

TABLE 1: THE NOSTRIL

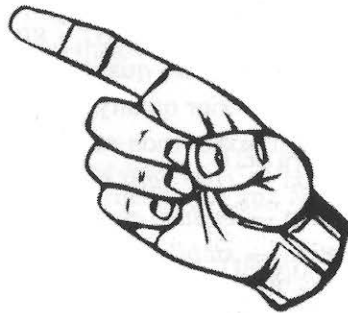
d2 Roll	Nostril
1	Left
2	Right

TABLE 2: THE HAND

d2 Roll	Hand
1	Left
2	Right

TABLE 3: THE FINGER

d5 Roll	Finger
1	Thumb
2	Ring Finger
3	Forefinger
4	Middle Finger
5	Pinkie



TREASURE TABLES

Random treasure tables are often complex and unwieldy, especially when you're expected to flip back and forth between pages throughout an entire chapter. Herein are contained three pre-generated treasure tables; each one has the same total value, but with varying types, volumes, and sizes of treasure hoards. *Note: Obviously, differences in quality levels could represent damaged or rusty equipment, sharpness of blade(s), or original crafting.*

In this issue, we present three treasure tables, each one totaling 1500 gp in value. Any of these tables can be used to represent the total of the treasure caches hidden throughout the Chot Lake gnomish village. Alternatively they can be included in any treasure hoard of your own devise. These particular tables assume an average party level of 5 and are low-level magic hoards.

1	Equipment (1200 gp)
	1) Acid (flask) [standard quality]: 10 gp
	2) Axe, throwing [fine quality]: 10 gp
	3) Axe, throwing [low quality]: 7 gp
	4) Bell [standard quality]: 1 gp
	5) Blowgun [standard quality]: 1 gp
	6) Chest (empty) [standard quality]: 2 gp
	7) Curve blade, elven [low quality]: 73 gp
	8) Flint and steel [standard quality]: 1 gp
	9) Hammer, light [standard quality]: 1 gp
	10) Handaxe [high quality]: 7 gp
	11) Javelin [standard quality]: 1 gp
	12) Lance [inferior quality]: 6 gp
	13) Leather armor [non-magical masterwork]: 160 gp
	14) Potion — <i>cure light wounds</i> : 50 gp
	15) Potion — <i>endure elements</i> : 50 gp
	16) Potion — <i>stabilize</i> : 25 gp
	17) Rope, hemp (50 ft.) [standard quality]: 1 gp
	18) Scimitar [cheap quality]: 11 gp

- 19) Scroll (Arcane) — *detect magic*: 12 gp
- 20) Scroll (Arcane) — *magic missile*: 25 gp
- 21) Scroll (Divine) — *status*: 150 gp
- 22) Shield, heavy wooden [standard quality]: 7 gp
- 23) Shield, heavy steel [non-magical masterwork]: 170 gp
- 24) Shield, light steel [non-magical masterwork]: 159 gp
- 25) Shield, light steel [standard quality]: 9 gp
- 26) Shovel or spade [standard quality]: 2 gp
- 27) Spell component pouch (empty) [standard quality]: 5 gp
- 28) Studded leather armor [non-magical masterwork]: 175 gp
- 29) Thieves' tools [cheap quality]: 22 gp
- 30) Urganth, dwarven [low quality]: 45 gp

Gems and Jewels (150 gp)

Peridot (16 gp), Smoky quartz (49 gp), Clear quartz (25 gp),
 Zircon (13 gp), 2 Lapis lazuli (7 gp each), Tiger eye (8 gp),
 Rhodochrosite (2 gp), Bloodstone (16 gp), Hematite (7 gp)

Coins (150gp)



2 **Equipment** (1200 gp)

- 1) Acid (flask) [standard quality]: 10 gp
- 2) Crossbow, repeating heavy [superior quality]: 646 gp
- 3) Shortbow [Fine Quality] : 39gp
- 4) Greatclub [very fine quality]: 7 gp
- 5) Handaxe [superior quality]: 10 gp
- 6) Scroll (arcane) — *mount*: 25 gp
- 7) Shield, heavy steel [non-magical masterwork]: 170 gp
- 8) Shield, light wooden [Darkwood; non-magical masterwork]: 203 gp
- 9) Starknife [exceptional quality]: 45 gp
- 10) Urganth, dwarven [low quality] : 45gp

Gems and Jewels (150 gp)

Bloodstone (23 gp), Bracelet (22 gp), Carnelian (24 gp), Malachite
 (10 gp), Red garnet (71 gp)

Coins (150gp)



3 Equipment (1200 gp)

- 1) Battleaxe [standard quality]: 10gp
- 2) Cold-weather outfit [standard quality]: 8 gp
- 3) Courtier's outfit [high quality]: 35 gp
- 4) Crossbow, light [fine quality]: 44 gp
- 5) Gauntlet, spiked [cheap quality]: 4 gp
- 6) Glaive [standard quality]: 8 gp
- 7) Greatclub [very fine quality]: 7 gp
- 8) Lance [very cheap quality]: 7 gp
- 9) Lance [inferior quality]: 6 gp
- 10) Leather armor [inferior quality]: 6 gp
- 11) Nunchaku [standard quality]: 2 gp
- 12) Pick, heavy [fine quality]: 10 gp
- 13) Pick, light [non-magical masterwork]: 304 gp
- 14) Pick, miner's [fine quality]: 4 gp
- 15) Potion — *animate rope*: 50 gp
- 16) Ram, portable [inferior quality]: 6 gp
- 17) Sai [standard quality]: 1 gp
- 18) Shield, heavy steel [high quality]: 23 gp
- 19) Shield, heavy steel [non-magical masterwork] 170 gp
- 20) Shield, tower [non-magical masterwork]: 180 gp
- 21) Shield, tower [standard quality]: 8 gp
- 22) Spear [standard quality]: 2 gp
- 23) Splint mail armor [fine quality]: 256 gp
- 24) Trident [high quality]: 16 gp

Gems and Jewels (150 gp)

Amethyst (67 gp), Blue quartz (4 gp), Citrine (30 gp), 2 Hematites (3 gp each), Rose quartz (28 gp), Smoky quartz (15 gp)

Coins (150gp)

NPCS, NASTY AND NICE

Rkoga, Chieftainess of the Chot Lake Tribe

Rkoga is the youngest whelp of Rkark, Chieftain of the Chot Lake Tribe. She delivered the killing stroke to her mother as she and her siblings were being born, ripping their way from their mother's womb. Before Rkoga was nine years old, she had brutally murdered and eaten her four older siblings, as well as the tribal shaman who attempted to offer her as a living sacrifice to the god Owrwkr, who they believe inhabits the enormous stele in the center of Chot Lake.

By the time she was twelve, she had proven herself to be the mightiest and most cunning hunter in the tribe. Some of her skills and talents were attributable to magic items looted from the bodies of humanoids who strayed too near the tribe's home. However, a good portion of her abilities were a result of her fiendish origins.

After conceiving the litter, her father attempted to bargain with a demon who appeared to him as an avatar of Olakg, the tribe's god of war. Rkark was fooled by the demon, who naturally did not uphold his part of the fiendish bargain. "Olakg" was, however, more than glad to taint one of the young pups, as yet unborn.

Rkoga was forced to kill her father and take command of the tribe when she was fifteen. He had grown slow and weak, at least in her eyes. She has maintained her position in the tribe through violence, terror, strength, and cunning.

Rkoga stands shorter than average for a gnoll at 6'5" tall. Her hair is a fiery red, befitting her fiendish heritage. Her green eyes seem to flash with eldritch fire when she is angered. She is motivated by malice and avarice, relying on her magic items and luck to bolster her natural skills. Shiny trinkets are the surest way to her favor; she is always seeking new magic items, especially those that she can use to increase the intelligence of others of her tribe (although not so much that any of them would be a significant threat to her position). The innate animalism, ignorance, and crudity of her kind annoys her and she longs for a near-equal with whom she can talk, plan, and plot.



Rkoga, Chieftainess of the Chot Lake Tribe **CR 16**

Gnoll (Fiendish), Fighter 13 Chaotic Evil Medium Humanoid

Init: +8

Senses: Darkvision 60; Listen +5; Spot +5

DEFENSE

AC 21, Touch 14, flat footed 17 (+4 Dex, +1 Natural, +4 armor, +2 shield)
hp 100

Resistance: cold and fire 10; Damage Reduction 10/magic **SR:** 18

Fort +12, **Ref** +8, **Will** +6

OFFENSE

Speed: 30

Base Attack 14; **Grapple** 19

Melee: +2 *Battleaxe, Unholy* +23 (1d8+9/19-20)

Ranged: Shortbow, composite +20 (1d6+7 X3)

Full Attack: +2 *Battleaxe, Unholy* +23/18/13 (1d8+9/19-20 X3) or
Shortbow, composite +18/18/13/8 (1d6+7 X3) range 70

Space/Reach: 5/5

Special Attacks: Smite good 1/day

Combat Gear: +2 *Battleaxe, Unholy*; Chain Shirt; Shield, heavy wooden;
Shortbow, composite

STATISTICS

Str 17 [+4 = **21**], **Dex** 17 [+2 = **19**], **Con** 13, **Int** 10 [+4 = **14**], **Wis** 11, **Cha** 8

FEATS: Armor Proficiency (all), Greater Weapon Focus (Battleaxe), Greater Weapon Focus (Shortbow, composite), Improved Critical, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Shield Prof, Tower Shield Prof, Weapon Focus (Battleaxe), Weapon Focus (Shortbow, composite), Weapon Prof (Martial, Simple), Weapon Specialization (Battleaxe), Weapon Specialization (Shortbow, Composite),

SKILLS: Climb 8, Intimidate 6, Jump 8, Listen 5, Ride 4, Spot 5, Swim 2

Languages: Gnoll, Common, Goblin

POSSESSIONS

Combat gear plus: Belt of giant strength (+4), Cloak of manta ray, Gloves of dexterity (+2), Headband of intellect (+4)

XP: 76800

PECULIAR PLACES

THE ENVIRONS OF CHOT LAKE

Chot Lake is a natural, freshwater lake deep within the Forest of Illusions. The forest is nestled in a mountainous terrain in the midst of the Infernal Mountains and watched over in the north by the imposing Mount Bdalos. The forest floor is made up of a layer of worn-down dark stones, unidentifiable and unknown, even to dwarves. Where the trees grow, they have pushed aside and heaped up the stones. No soil is visible without digging through inches of these stones. Traveling through the forest is difficult and treacherous; the forest floor is always shifting and sliding underfoot.

A vicious, reclusive tribe of gnolls lives on the northwestern shore of Chot Lake. The settlement is clear of the dark stones, one of the few areas of topsoil in the forest. A series of huts provide shelter; the huts ring a large yurt, which belongs to the current chieftainess, Rkoga. There is also a large pen that houses boars and the tribes' prisoners.

The gnolls have filled the surrounding woods with traps. All devised by Rkoga; they are elaborate and brutal, nearly unavoidable snares. Creatures so caught are bound and kept in the gnolls' pen. The weapons, valuables, and trinkets belonging to the victims are gathered and hidden throughout the village in several small caches of treasure.

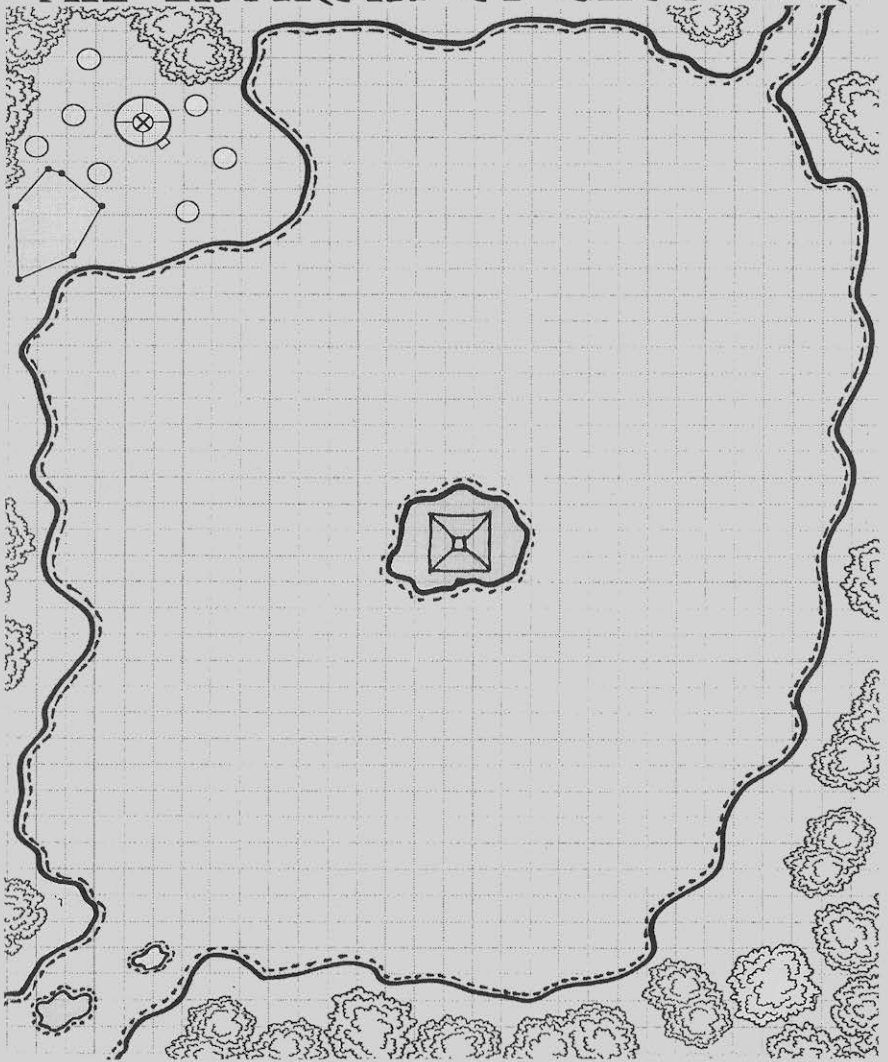
The beach is sandy and void of the dark rocks. The lake bed is lined with the rocks; water and decaying vegetation make the rocks even more slippery and treacherous. The depth of the lake varies greatly, from shallow edges to numerous spots of several hundred feet of depth. The lake is fed by a freshwater river; the currents flow south to north.

In the center of Chot Lake is a bare, sandy island; the sole feature is an immense obelisk standing 555' tall. The stone itself is a mystery: black and featureless, apparently of the same rock that litters the forest floor. The gnolls worship the obelisk as a sign and gift from their god.

The lake is twenty miles due south from Mount Bdalos. Ten miles to the southeast of Chot Lake is a hidden monastery, the Sanctum of Falsehood. Elsewhere in the forest lie the forgotten Ruins of the Wind.



THE ENVIRONS OF CHOT LAKE



Notes:

□=30 feet.

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