


CARCASS CRAWLER

The official Old-School Essentials zine

Issue #5



Changelings and Ratlings
Lake and River Monsters
Short adventure: Up Chaos River
Level 0 Characters and Cantrips
Poisons and Special Materials

CARCASS CRAWLER

The official Old-School Essentials zine

Issue #5



Writing: Chance Dudinack, Brad Kerr, Gavin Norman. **Editing, layout:** Gavin Norman. **Art direction:** Gavin Norman. **Cover art:** Jacob Fleming. **Interior art:** Jerry Boucher, Chris Huth, Peter Pagano. **Cartography:** Glynn Seal. **Up Chaos River playtesters:** Andrew Clark, John Higgins, Sarah Higgins, Daniel Cornwell, Alyssa Cornwell, Whitney Nelson, Simon Barns, Allan Wakefield, Scott Rinehart, David M Jacobs, Leonardo Morais, Alanis Arruda, Beatriz Brum, Nicolas Morais, Thiago Damasceno, Victor Luthero.

Text, design, and art © Necrotic Gnome 2025. Dimitri © Fontalicious – Derivative Versions © Font Bros. – www.fontbros.com. Economica © TipoType – Derivative Versions © Font Bros. – www.fontbros.com. Published by Exalted Funeral Press, 1740 E. Fairview Ave #1052, Meridian, ID, 83642, United States, www.exaltedfuneral.com.

Old-School Essentials is a trademark of Necrotic Gnome. This work includes material taken from the System Reference Document 5.1 ("SRD 5.1") by Wizards of the Coast LLC and available at <https://dnd.wizards.com/resources/systems-reference-document>. The SRD 5.1 is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>.



**NECROTIC
GNOME**



**EXALTED
FUNERAL**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3	Special Materials	16
Welcome	3	Weaker Materials	16
In This Issue	3	Enhanced Materials	17
New Character Classes	4	Expanded Poisons	18
Ratling	4	Bloodstream Poisons	19
Changeling	6	Ingested Poisons	19
New Character Races	8	Magic Swords	20
Changeling	8	Magic Sword Quirks	21
Ratling	9	Lake & River Monsters	22
Cantrips	10	Up Chaos River	26
Level 0 Characters	12	Part 1: The River	27
Rolling a Level 0 Character	12	Part 2: Hag's Lair	30
Experience Points and Advancement	13		
Background Tables	14		



PETER FAGIANO



INTRODUCTION

WELCOME

Welcome to issue 5 of *Carcass Crawler*—the official *Old-School Essentials* zine.

IN THIS ISSUE

Character Classes and Races

Introduce these new races as NPCs for player characters to encounter or add them to the roster of character types players can choose from. Both are presented as demihuman classes and as separate races.

Changeling: Magical demihumans with powers of deception and shape-stealing, possibly related to doppelgängers.

Ratling: Furry, rat-like, bipedal humanoid with long prehensile tails, large ears, and sensitive noses.

Cantrips

Minor arcane spells practiced by apprentice spell casters before they are able to cast full 1st level spells.

Level 0 Characters

Rules and tables for creating level 0 “normal humans”, for use as retainers or in specially designed funnel adventures.

Special Materials

Rules for weapons and armour constructed of bone, stone, bronze, adamantine, silver, and mithral.

Expanded Poisons

Names and flavour details for the 9 poison types presented in *Old-School Essentials*, along with 11 new types.

Magic Swords

Traits tables and minor magical quirks to add unique flavour to every *sword* +1.

Lake & River Monsters

Eight new monsters themed around freshwater rivers and lakes.

Up Chaos River

A short adventure in two parts, designed as a funnel for level 0 characters (or for a normal party of 1st level adventurers).

Part 1: A desperate journey up a chaos-infested river.

Part 2: The lair of a river hag and her corrupted giant beaver minions.

NEW CHARACTER CLASSES

BY BRAD KERR AND GAVIN NORMAN

RATLING

By Brad
Kerr

Demihuman Class

Requirements: Minimum CON 9

Prime requisite: DEX

Hit Die type: 1d6

Combat aptitude: Semi-martial

Maximum level: 8

Armour: Leather, shields

Weapons: Any

Languages: Alignment, Common, the secret language of rats

Ratlings are fur-covered, rat-like, bipedal humanoids. They stand 4' to 5' tall and have 3'-long prehensile tails, large ears, and sensitive noses. Though industrious and adaptable, their association with vermin tends to place them in the fringes of human settlements. Ratlings are born in broods of 3–5, reach maturity around age 7 or 8, and rarely live past 40. Naturally gregarious, their relatively short lifespans lend the species a certain devil-may-care outlook that other races find amusing.

Awareness

Ratlings are only surprised on a roll of 1 due to their strong sense of smell. This may mean that a ratling is able to act in the surprise round while their companions are surprised.

Infravision

Ratlings have infravision to 60' (see *Darkness* under *Hazards and Challenges* in *Old-School Essentials*).



CHRIS WUTH

Prehensile Tail

Ratlings can hold an item (up to 50 coins weight) in their tail, though the tail does not have the coordination to attack with a weapon or to manipulate fine objects like keys or scissors. A ratling cannot climb when holding an object in their tail, as it is required for balance.

Rat Affinity

Ratlings live alongside many different species of rats, including giant rats. They can speak the secret language of rats and gain a +1 bonus to reaction rolls when encountering rats.

Ratling Skills

Ratlings can use the following skills, with the chance of success shown opposite:

Climb Sheer Surfaces (CS): A roll is required for each 100' to be climbed. If the roll fails, the ratling falls at the halfway point, suffering falling damage.

Ratling Level Progression

Level	XP	HD	THACO	Saving Throws				
				D	W	P	B	S
1	0	1	19 [0]	8	9	10	13	12
2	2,000	2	19 [0]	8	9	10	13	12
3	4,000	3	19 [0]	8	9	10	13	12
4	8,000	4	19 [0]	8	9	10	13	12
5	16,000	5	17 [+2]	6	7	8	10	10
6	32,000	6	17 [+2]	6	7	8	10	10
7	64,000	7	17 [+2]	6	7	8	10	10
8	128,000	8	17 [+2]	6	7	8	10	10

THACO: Attack matrix row to use.
(Ascending AC attack bonus in [].)

D: Death / poison; **W:** Wands;
P: Paralysis / petrify; **B:** Breath attacks;
S: Spells / rods / staves.

Detect Poison (DP): A ratling can smell poisons mixed into food/drink or coated on an object. For poisons with a specified detection chance (e.g. the poisons on *p18*), the ratling's DP is added to the normal detection chance.

Hear Noise (HN): In a quiet environment (e.g. not in combat), a ratling can attempt to listen at a door or to hear the sounds of something (e.g. a wandering monster) approaching.

Hide in shadows (HS): Requires the ratling to be motionless—attacking or moving while hiding is not possible.

Move Silently (MS): A ratling can attempt to sneak past enemies unnoticed.

After Reaching 8th Level

A ratling may construct a warren: either a burrow in soft soil or a hidden sewer stronghold beneath a major city. The construction will attract 2d6 1st level ratlings who are loyal to the character. In addition, giant rats within 5 miles will treat the ratling as friends and may warn of intruders, carry messages, and so on. This friendship is contingent on the character's protection of the giant rat population.

Ratling Skills Chance of Success

Level	CS	DP	HN	HS	MS
1	87	30	1–2	10	20
2	88	35	1–2	15	25
3	89	40	1–3	20	30
4	90	45	1–3	25	35
5	91	50	1–3	30	40
6	92	55	1–3	35	45
7	93	60	1–4	40	50
8	94	65	1–4	45	55

Rolling Skill Checks

Hear noise: Is rolled on 1d6. If the roll is within the listed range of numbers, the skill succeeds.

Other skills: Are rolled on d%, with a result of less than or equal to the listed percentage indicating success.

Player Knowledge

The referee should roll for DP, HN, HS, and MS on the player's behalf, as the ratling does not immediately know if the attempt was successful. If a HS or MS roll fails, the referee knows that the ratling has been noticed and should determine enemies' actions appropriately.

CHANGELING

By Gavin
Norman

Demihuman Class

Requirements: Minimum INT 9

Prime requisite: CHA and DEX

Hit Die type: 1d6

Combat aptitude: Semi-martial

Maximum level: 10

Armour: Leather, shields

Weapons: Any

Languages: Alignment, Common,
Doppelgänger

Changelings are magical demihumans with powers of deception and shape-stealing. In their natural form, a changeling appears to be a normal human.

Prime requisites: A changeling with at least 13 in one prime requisite gets +5% to XP. If both CHA and DEX are 16 or higher, the character gets a +10% bonus.

Back-Stab

When attacking an unaware opponent from behind, a changeling receives a +4 bonus to hit and doubles damage dealt.

Increasing Damage (Optional Rule)

Back-stab attacks optionally inflict triple damage at 6th level and above.

Changeling Skills

Changelings can use the following skills, with chance of success shown opposite:

► **Beguile (BE):** On a successful check, the changeling's words take on a supernatural potency. A person of HD no greater than the changeling's level must **save versus spells** or believe the changeling's words. The beguilement lasts for 1 round per level of the changeling. Afterwards, the beguiled person realises they have been tricked. This skill may only be used on any given person once per day.

► **Hear noise (HN):** In a quiet environment (e.g. not in combat), a changeling can attempt to listen at a door or to hear the sounds of something (e.g. a wandering monster) approaching.

► **Hide in shadows (HS):** Requires the changeling to be motionless—attacking or moving while hiding is not possible.

► **Move silently (MS):** A changeling can attempt to sneak past enemies unnoticed.

Shape-Stealing

A changeling can alter their form to exactly mimic another person. This requires 1 round of physical contact.

Slain victims: The changeling can steal the form of a person they have killed within the last turn.

Unconscious victims: The changeling can steal the form of a sleeping or unconscious victim.

Conscious victims: From 5th level, the changeling can steal the form of a conscious victim. This requires a successful melee attack in combat. The victim may **save versus spells** to resist.

Effects of Successful Shape-Stealing

Duration: The changeling remains in the new form for up to one turn per level.

Stats: The changeling retains their own intelligence, hit points, saving throws, and attack probabilities.

Capabilities: Physical capabilities of the new form (e.g. strength, physical attack forms, modes of movement) are acquired. Non-physical special abilities (e.g. immunities, breath weapons, spells) are not.

Clothing and gear: Items visibly worn or carried by the victim are copied. Copied items do not possess any magical properties of the original and vanish if dropped.

Changeling Level Progression

Level	XP	HD	THACO	Saving Throws				
				D	W	P	B	S
1	0	1	19 [0]	11	12	12	15	12
2	2,500	2	19 [0]	11	12	12	15	12
3	5,000	3	19 [0]	11	12	12	15	12
4	10,000	4	19 [0]	11	12	12	15	12
5	20,000	5	17 [+2]	9	10	10	13	10
6	30,000	6	17 [+2]	9	10	10	13	10
7	60,000	7	17 [+2]	9	10	10	13	10
8	120,000	8	17 [+2]	9	10	10	13	10
9	240,000	9	14 [+5]	7	8	8	11	8
10	360,000	9+2*	14 [+5]	7	8	8	11	8

THACO: Attack matrix row to use.
(Ascending AC attack bonus in [].)

*: Modifiers from CON no longer apply.

D: Death / poison; **W:** Wands;

P: Paralysis / petrify; **B:** Breath attacks;

S: Spells / rods / staves.

After Reaching 9th Level

A changeling may construct a secret hideout, attracting 2d6 apprentices (changelings, thieves, or similar characters of 1st level). Apprentices are usually loyal to the character, but are not automatically replaced if killed. The character may use their apprentices as the beginnings of a Thieves' Guild.

Changeling Skills Chance of Success

Level	BE	HN	HS	MS
1	20	1-2	10	20
2	25	1-2	15	25
3	30	1-3	20	30
4	35	1-3	25	35
5	40	1-3	30	40
6	43	1-3	36	45
7	46	1-4	45	55
8	50	1-4	55	65
9	55	1-4	65	75
10	60	1-4	75	85



PETER FAGIANO

Rolling Skill Checks

Hear noise: Is rolled on 1d6. If the roll is within the listed range of numbers, the skill succeeds.

Other skills: Are rolled on d%, with a result of less than or equal to the listed percentage indicating success.

Player Knowledge

The referee should roll for HN, HS, and MS on the player's behalf, as the changeling does not immediately know if the attempt was successful. If a HS or MS roll fails, the referee knows that the changeling has been noticed and should determine enemies' actions appropriately.

NEW CHARACTER RACES

BY BRAD KERR AND GAVIN NORMAN

CHANGELING

By Gavin
Norman

Requirements: Minimum INT 9
Ability modifiers: -1 CON, +1 CHA
Languages: Alignment, Common, Doppelgänger

Available Classes and Maximum Level

- Acrobat: 8th
- Assassin: 10th
- Fighter: 6th
- Illusionist: 9th
- Magic-user: 7th
- Thief: 9th

Changelings are magical demihumans with powers of deception and shape-stealing. In their natural form, a changeling appears to be a normal human.

Listening at Doors

Changelings have a 2-in-6 chance of hearing noises (see *Dungeon Adventuring* in *Old-School Essentials*).

Shape-Stealing

A changeling can alter their form to exactly mimic another person. This requires 1 round of physical contact.

Slain victims: The changeling can steal the form of a person they have killed within the last turn.

Unconscious victims: The changeling can steal the form of a sleeping or unconscious victim.



Conscious victims: From 5th level, the changeling can steal the form of a conscious victim. This requires a successful melee attack in combat. The victim may **save versus spells** to resist.

Effects of Successful Shape-Stealing

Duration: The changeling remains in the new form for up to one turn per level.

Stats: The changeling retains their own intelligence, hit points, saving throws, and attack probabilities.

Capabilities: Physical capabilities of the new form (e.g. strength, physical attack forms, modes of movement) are acquired. Non-physical special abilities (e.g. immunities, breath weapons, spells) are not.

Clothing and gear: Items visibly worn or carried by the victim are copied. Copied items do not possess any magical properties of the original and vanish if dropped.

RATLING

By Brad
Kerr

Requirements: Minimum CON 9
Ability modifiers: -1 CHA, +1 DEX
Languages: Alignment, Common

Available Classes and Maximum Level

- ▶ **Acrobat:** 8th
- ▶ **Assassin:** 7th
- ▶ **Fighter:** 6th
- ▶ **Illusionist:** 6th
- ▶ **Thief:** 8th

Ratlings are fur-covered, rat-like, bipedal humanoids. They stand 4' to 5' tall and have 3'-long prehensile tails, large ears, and sensitive noses. Though industrious and adaptable, their association with vermin tends to place them in the fringes of human settlements. Ratlings are born in broods of 3–5, reach maturity around age 7 or 8, and rarely live past 40. Naturally gregarious, their relatively short lifespans lend the species a certain devil-may-care outlook that other races find amusing.

Awareness

Ratlings are only surprised on a roll of 1 due to their strong sense of smell. This may mean that a ratling is able to act in the surprise round while their companions are surprised.

Detect Poison

A ratling has a 25% chance of smelling poisons mixed into food/drink or coated on an object. For poisons with a specified detection chance (e.g. the poisons on *p18*), this 25% is added to the normal detection chance.

Infravision

Ratlings have infravision to 60' (see *Darkness* under *Hazards and Challenges* in *Old-School Essentials*).



CHRIS RUTH

Listening at Doors

Ratlings have a 2-in-6 chance of hearing noises (see *Dungeon Adventuring* in *Old-School Essentials*).

Prehensile Tail

Ratlings can hold an item (up to 50 coins weight) in their tail, though the tail does not have the coordination to attack with a weapon or to manipulate fine objects like keys or scissors. A ratling cannot climb when holding an object in their tail, as it is required for balance.



CANTRIPS

By GAVIN NORMAN

This article presents optional rules for minor magical effects usable by arcane spell casters. These add fun flavour to wizardly classes, and can sometimes be used in creative ways when adventuring.

About Cantrips

Before beginning their adventuring career, arcane spell casters undergo years of arduous study, learning the theories of magic, the words and gestures to manipulate arcane energies, and finally the techniques for memorising spells. For a beginner, even lowly 1st level spells are too taxing, so apprentices first practice with simple spells of lesser power. These are known as *cantrips*.

Learning Cantrips

Dedicated arcane spell casters (e.g. illusionists, magic-users) know a number of cantrips depending on their level. The table below shows both the number of cantrips in the character's spell book and the number they can memorise. Cantrips are selected by the referee (who may allow the player to choose or roll).

Number of Cantrips

Level	Cantrips
1–2	2
3–4	3
5+	4

Adding cantrips: An arcane spell caster can add new cantrips to their spell book in the same way as other arcane spells. See *Spell Books* in *Old-School Essentials*.

1. Book Leaf

Duration: Concentration

Range: 10'

The caster can magically open a book and leaf through its pages without touching it.

2. Cleaning Brush

Duration: 1 turn

Range: Touch

A broom or mop takes on a life of its own and cleans an area designated by the caster (up to a 30' × 30' area in 1 turn).

3. Coloured Flame

Duration: 1 turn

Range: 20'

A flame within range is imbued with a hue of the caster's choosing.

4. Floating Trinket

Duration: Concentration

Range: 10'

The caster causes a small possession within range to levitate and float through the air at up to 1' per round.

Object weight limit: 10 coins or less.

Possessions: Only objects owned by the caster for at least a day can be affected.

Manipulation: The object cannot be manipulated with enough force or precision to enact its function as a tool.

5. Magic Quill

Duration: Concentration

Range: 10'

A quill floats and moves of its own accord, magically transcribing the caster's words onto a page.

6. Open / Close Portal

Duration: Instant

Range: 20'

An unlocked portal (e.g. door, window, chest lid) within range swings opens or shut as the caster desires.

7. Rune

Duration: 1 turn

Range: Touch

The caster traces a glowing sigil in the air or on a surface or object.

Personal sigil: Each caster's rune is unique and can be used to identify them.

8. Sense Magic

Duration: Concentration

Range: Touch

The caster attunes their mind to subtle arcane energies, attempting to detect magic on a creature or object touched.

Chance: Each turn the caster spends in concentration, they have a 2-in-6 chance of detecting magic on the subject. The referee should roll this chance, as the caster does not know if the roll failed or if there is no magic present.

9. Smoke Rings

Duration: Concentration

Range: The caster

While smoking a pipe, the caster gains the ability to blow impressive smoke rings of any colour desired.

Read Magic Cantrip (Optional Rule)

Traditionally, arcane casters can only use magic scrolls found in treasure hoards by means of the *read magic* spell. This makes scroll use a challenge, as many casters do not have access to *read magic*.

Groups wishing to make scrolls easier to use can demote *read magic* from a 1st level spell to a cantrip that is automatically known by all arcane casters, in addition to the normal number of cantrips known. This does not alter the number of cantrips a character can *memorise*, however.

10. Spark

Duration: Instant

Range: Touch

A tiny spark of flame flashes at the caster's fingertip.

Light: The spark sheds momentary light in a 5' radius.

Igniting: The spark can be used to ignite flammable material (e.g. oil, tinder).

11. Vanish

Duration: 1 round

Range: Touch

A small object touched by the caster becomes invisible for 1 round.

Object weight limit: 10 coins or less.

12. Wizard Flame

Duration: Concentration

Range: Touch

A wan flame wreathes the caster's hand, producing flickering, heatless light.

Radius of light: 5'.

LEVEL 0 CHARACTERS

BY GAVIN NORMAN AND BRAD KERR

This article presents alternative character creation rules for rolling up normal human characters of level 0. This can be useful for fleshing out retainers. Alternatively, in some campaigns PCs might start play at level 0—see *Funnel Adventures*.

ROLLING A LEVEL 0 CHARACTER

1. Roll Ability Scores

Roll 3d6 for each of your character's ability scores: Strength, Intelligence, Wisdom, Dexterity, Constitution, and Charisma.

Sub-par characters: You must keep whatever scores you roll. (Unlike rolling a 1st level adventurer.)

2. Note Ability Score Modifiers

Make a note of any bonuses or penalties associated with your ability scores.

3. Note Attack Values and Saves

THACO: 20 [–1]

Saves: D14 W15 P16 B17 S18

4. Roll Hit Points

Roll 1d4 for your character's hit points, modified by CON as usual. Characters always start with at least 1 hit point, regardless of CON modifier.

Re-rolling 1s and 2s: You must keep whatever hit points you roll. (Unlike rolling a 1st level adventurer.)

5. Choose or Roll Alignment

Decide whether your character is Lawful, Neutral, or Chaotic.

When creating multiple level 0 characters (e.g. for use in a funnel adventure), you can roll 1d6 for alignment: 1–2: Lawful, 3–4: Neutral, 5–6: Chaotic.

6. Languages

All characters speak Common. Characters with high INT also speak additional languages.

7. Roll Background and Items

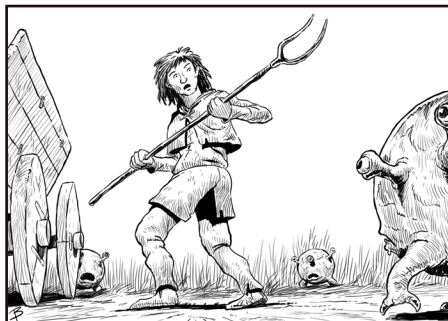
Roll on the background table corresponding to your character's hit points. See *p14*. Your background determines an item and a weapon in your possession.

8. Note Armour Class

Unless your profession indicates that you have armour, your character is unarmoured, with a base AC of 9 [10], modified by DEX as usual.

9. Name Character

Finally, name your character. You can choose a name or roll on the tables on *p14*. You are now ready for adventure!



JERRY BOUCHER

Level 0 Demihumans (Optional Rule)

Optionally, 1-in-6 level 0 characters is a demihuman. Roll 1d4: 1. dwarf, 2. elf, 3. gnome, 4. halfling.

All demihumans speak additional native languages and have a 2-in-6 chance of hearing noises when listening at a door. Each race also has its own boons:

Dwarf: Infravision to 60'. 2-in-6 chance of detecting room traps when searching.

Elf: Infravision to 60'. Immunity to ghoulish paralysis.

Gnome: Infravision to 90'. +2 AC when attacked by large opponents.

Halfling: +1 to missile attack rolls. +2 AC when attacked by large opponents.

EXPERIENCE POINTS AND ADVANCEMENT

After gaining XP on an adventure, a level 0 character becomes a 1st level adventurer. This is handled as follows.

1. Choose a Class

Choose a character class that the level 0 character graduates into, bearing in mind the minimum ability score requirements of some classes. Class selection can be based on the character's ability scores, background, or deeds at level 0.

Demihuman characters: May select the equivalent demihuman class.

2. Roll Hit Points

Roll the Hit Die type for the chosen class and apply the character's CON modifier. If this number is higher than the character's hit points rolled at level 0, this becomes their new hp total. Otherwise, the character keeps the hp rolled at level 0.

Re-rolling 1s and 2s: The referee may allow the player to re-roll 1s and 2s.

Funnel Adventures

Funnel adventures were popularised by the *Dungeon Crawl Classics* RPG. In a funnel, a large group of level 0 characters is whittled down to a small number of survivors, who then go on to become full 1st level PCs. A funnel can be a fun way to start a campaign and provides a compelling backstory of the deeds that led PCs to a life of adventure together.

- 1. Roll characters:** Players roll up a group of 10–20 level 0 characters. These are everyday folk whose village is threatened by some evil force.
- 2. Embark on adventure:** The characters venture forth into peril to save their village. Any normal adventure suitable for 1st level characters can be used (for example, the adventure in this issue—see p26).
- 3. Play:** During the adventure, each player controls 3–5 of the characters. Lacking the skills of true adventurers, they must rely on their collective wits and creativity to overcome the odds. It is likely that some individuals will have to sacrifice their lives for the good of the group.
- 4. Survivors:** Of the characters who survive the adventure, some are inspired to take up the life of an adventurer. Each player picks one of the survivors as their PC for the continuing campaign, choosing a character class and advancing them to 1st level as discussed in this article.



JERRY BOUCHER

BACKGROUND TABLES

* Character can memorise and cast this spell once per day. See *Cantrips*, p10.

1 Hit Point Backgrounds

d12	Profession	Item	Weapon
1	Acolyte	Incense, holy symbol	Mace (1d6)
2	Actor	2 × masks, 2 × costumes	Stage sword (1d4)
3	Alchemist's apprentice	<i>Potion of healing</i>	Club (1d4)
4	Artist	Parchment, paint, brush	Hammer (1d4)
5	Beggar	Wooden bowl	Walking stick (1d4)
6	Jeweller	Ostentatious jewellery (25gp)	Dagger (1d4)
7	Juggler	Juggling balls	3 × daggers (1d4)
8	Money lender	50gp	Mace (1d6)
9	Scribe	3 × parchment, ink pot, quill	Staff (1d4)
10	Trumpet player	Trumpet	Rock (1d3)
11	Wealthy heir	Signet ring, perfume	Jewelled dagger (1d4)
12	Wizard's apprentice	Spell book (1 random cantrip) *	Dagger (1d4)

2 Hit Point Backgrounds

d12	Profession	Item	Weapon
1	Butcher	Dried meat (5 days' iron rations)	2 × daggers (1d4)
2	Butler	Livery, silver serving tray	Hand axe (1d6)
3	Cook	Salt, skillet, onion	Dagger (1d4)
4	Fletcher	Bag of feathers	Shortbow (1d6) + 10 arrows
5	Gambler	Dice	Club (1d4)
6	Horse thief	A horse	Spear (1d6)
7	Innkeeper	3 × bottles of wine	Crossbow (1d6) + 10 bolts
8	Navigator	Compass, parchment, chalk	Crossbow (1d6) + 10 bolts
9	Shepherd	Pole (10' long, wooden)	Sling (1d4) + 10 stones
10	Tailor	Needle, thread, bag of buttons	Scissors (1d4)
11	Trader	Rare, fragrant spices	Crossbow (1d6) + 10 bolts
12	Weaver	Hand loom, yarn	Scissors (1d3)

Example Names

Human (d20): 1. Beska, 2. Brag, 3. Bran, 4. Doram, 5. Dougal, 6. Esme, 7. Estra, 8. Glendor, 9. Grame, 10. Hawk, 11. Marga, 12. Morgan, 13. Morgo, 14. Ralt, 15. Rosa, 16. Theodor, 17. Thyra, 18. Wilberd, 19. Wynn, 20. Yor.

Dwarf (d12): 1. Bhargi, 2. Dorm, 3. Fimbul, 4. Ghandar, 5. Gilda, 6. Gorm, 7. Krago, 8. Magra, 9. Nifdel, 10. Smarag, 11. Thorgrum, 12. Ulfinn.

Elf (d12): 1. Arianwen, 2. Armoviel, 3. Atheldwen, 4. Glind, 5. Heldor, 6. Ingvalor, 7. Lindra, 8. Luna, 9. Mezlo, 10. Orlandiel, 11. Orthiel, 12. Questor.

† **Save vs paralysis** or be unable to move or act. Save again each round to escape.

3 Hit Point Backgrounds

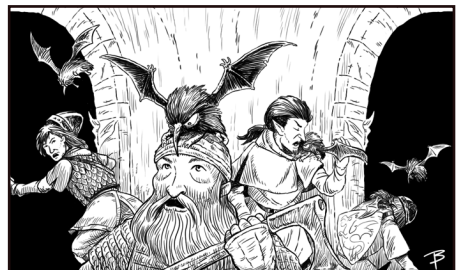
d12	Profession	Item	Weapon
1	Bowyer	Saw	Longbow (1d6) + 10 arrows
2	Cooper	Barrel	Hammer (1d4)
3	Executioner	50' rope	Battle axe (1d8)
4	Fisher	Net	Spear (1d6)
5	Groom	Brush	Pitchfork (1d6)
6	Hermit	Spell book (1 random cantrip) *	Staff (1d4)
7	Kennel master	A dog	Staff (1d4)
8	Leatherworker	A bearskin	Awl (1d4)
9	Limner	Lantern, 2 × oil flasks, paint	Staff (1d4)
10	Sailor	Bottle of rum, 50' rope	Belaying pin (1d4)
11	Teamster	50' rope	Whip (1d2, hits entangle †)
12	Trapper	Bear trap (1d6)	Club (1d4)

4 Hit Point Backgrounds

d12	Profession	Item	Weapon
1	Armourer	Chain mail	War hammer (1d6)
2	Barber surgeon	Bottle of strong spirits	Razor (1d4)
3	Blacksmith	Tongs, apron	War hammer (1d6)
4	Carpenter	Saw	Hand axe (1d6)
5	Farmer	A pig	Pitchfork (1d6)
6	Forester	Tent	Shortbow (1d6) + 10 arrows
7	Hunter	Whistle	Longbow (1d6) + 10 arrows
8	Mason	A bag of rocks	Rock (1d4)
9	Miner	Lantern, 2 × oil flasks	Pick axe (1d6)
10	Shipwright	Pot of tar	Hand axe (1d6)
11	Squire	Pole (10' long, wooden), flag	Shortsword (1d6)
12	Weaponsmith	Tongs, apron	Sword (1d8)

Gnome (d12): 1. Blunder, 2. Dunkle, 3. Froume, 4. Gilligan, 5. Horiddle, 6. Jingred, 7. Loom, 8. Lorum, 9. Nink, 10. Quindle, 11. Vex, 12. Viggle.

Halfling (d12): 1. Daisy, 2. Ferret, 3. Fink, 4. Gilly, 5. Jopher, 6. Largo, 7. Margold, 8. Nickle, 9. Pendor, 10. Righto, 11. Thomwise, 12. Twilly.



SPECIAL MATERIALS

By GAVIN NORMAN

This article provides guidelines for armour and weapons of alternative materials sometimes used in place of steel.

WEAKER MATERIALS

In some campaign settings, steel is precious and rarely used, either due to scarcity of iron ore or due to a culture's lack of metalworking knowledge.

Unaffected items: The following items do not have significant steel components or can be constructed of weaker materials without penalty: leather armour, shields, bows and arrows, clubs, crossbows and bolts, slings and stones, staves.

Bone (or Horn, Ivory, Chitin, Wood)

Armour: –1 AC penalty.

Weapons: –1 penalty to damage rolls (minimum 1 damage on a successful attack). On a natural 1 attack roll, the weapon breaks. See *Broken Weapons*.

Bronze

Armour: –1 AC penalty.

Weapons: On a natural 1 attack roll, the weapon bends. See *Bent Weapons*.

Stone (or Obsidian)

Armour: Stone is not suitable for constructing armour.

Weapons: On a natural 1 attack roll, the weapon breaks. See *Broken Weapons*.

Bent Weapons

Penalties: –1 penalty to attack and damage rolls (minimum 1 damage on a successful attack).

Repairs: The weapon can be repaired by a specialist at one-third its original cost.

Breakage: On a natural 1 attack roll, the weapon breaks. See *Broken Weapons*.

Broken Weapons

Penalties: –1 penalty to attack rolls, inflicts half damage (rounded up).

Repairs: The weapon can be repaired by a specialist at half its original cost.

Destruction: On a natural 1 attack roll, the weapon is destroyed (unrepairable).

Cost

The cost of weapons and armour made of different materials depends on the most common or dominant material in the setting. For example, in a Bronze Age setting, bronze weapons have the standard cost, steel weapons are more expensive (likely imported from another culture), and bone or stone weapons are cheaper.

Cost of Weapons and Armour by Material

Dominant Material	Cost Multiplier			
	Bone	Stone	Bronze	Steel
Bone	–	× 2	× 10	× 20
Stone	½	–	× 5	× 10
Bronze	½	½	–	× 5
Steel	½	½	¾	–

ENHANCED MATERIALS

Items of these special metals are rare, expensive, and usually made to order (this takes time). Allowing the purchase of such items in a campaign can be a good money sink to relieve PCs of excess cash.

Unaffected items: The following items do not have significant steel components and cannot be constructed of enhanced materials: leather armour, bows, clubs, crossbows, slings and stones, staves.

Adamantine

Adamantine is a rare and incredibly hard metal of jet black hue that is mined deep underground. Underworld cultures such as duergars and svirfneblins trade adamantine with surface-dwellers.

Cost: 100 times the item's normal price.

Armour: +1 AC bonus.

Weapons: +1 bonus to attack rolls (not magical and cannot harm monsters that are immune to mundane damage).



JERRY BOUCHER

Mithral

Mined by dwarves in the deeps of their mountain fortresses, mithral is a silvery metal of great beauty, beloved by elves. Its strength is similar to that of steel, but it is much lighter.

Cost: 50 times the item's normal price.

Armour: Half normal weight and treated as light armour for encumbrance.

Weapons: Half normal weight.

Silver

Cost: 10 times the item's normal price.

Armour: Silver is not suitable for constructing armour.

Weapons: Silver weapons harm certain monsters that are immune to mundane damage (e.g. lycanthropes, wights).

Weapons Cost (gp) by Material

Weapon	Ad.	Mith.	Silver
Arrow	50	25	5
Battle axe	700	350	70
Crossbow bolt	66	33	6 ½
Dagger	300	150	30
Hand axe	400	200	40
Javelin	100	50	10
Lance	500	250	50
Mace	500	250	50
Pole arm	700	350	70
Short sword	700	350	70
Spear	300	150	30
Sword	1,000	500	100
Two-handed sword	1,500	750	150
War hammer	500	250	50

Armour Cost (gp) by Material

Armour	Adam.	Mithral
Chain mail	4,000	2,000
Plate mail	6,000	3,000
Shield	1,000	500

EXPANDED POISONS

By GAVIN NORMAN

Old-School Essentials provides rules for 9 different types of poisons (bloodstream poison types I–IV and ingested poison types I–V). This article fleshes out these poison types with names and descriptive details, and adds 11 new types.

Save mod: Applied to victim's save roll. (Higher bonus indicates weaker poison.)

Chance of detection: Visual for poisoned blades (per round) or smell / taste for poisoned food or drink.

Onset time: Delay before effect occurs.

Bloodstream Poisons

Type	Cost (gp)	Save Mod.	Chance of Detection	Onset Time	Damage or Effect (If Save Fails / Succeeds)
Chrome orange	10	+6	80%	1d4+1 rds	15hp / 0hp
Caustic sludge	20	+4	70%	2d4 rds	10hp / 0hp
Poxvial	50	+4	60%	1 rd	Befuddled / no effect
Scarlet sting	75	+5	65%	1d3 rds	25hp / 0hp
Banegel	175	+2	20%	2d4 rds	20hp / 5hp
Pale unguent	500	+3	30%	1 rd	20hp + weakness / 5hp
Blackblade	600	+4	40%	1 rd	35hp / 0hp
Distillation of ichor	1,500	+3	15%	Instant	Death / no effect
Blood of Infernus	1,750	+2	10%	1 rd	Death / no effect
Cyan solvent	2,500	–	5%	Instant	Death / 15hp

Ingested Poisons

Type	Cost (gp)	Save Mod.	Chance of Detection	Onset Time	Damage or Effect (If Save Fails / Succeeds)
White hellebore	5	+6	80%	2d4 rds	20hp / 10hp
Extract of cinnabar	30	+5	65%	1d4+1 rds	30hp / 15hp
Bogwretch	50	+4	50%	1d4 turns	20hp + disease / 5hp
Yellow lotus powder	100	+3	50%	2d4 rds	Sleep / no effect
Black hellebore	200	+4	40%	1d2 rds	40hp / 20hp
Purple lotus power	400	+3	20%	2d4 rds	Charm / no effect
Black lotus powder	500	+3	15%	Instant	Death / 25hp
Gorgon's tears	800	+2	10%	1d4 turns	Petrification / 10hp
Antithesis of weal	1,000	+2	0%	1d4 turns	Death / 30hp
Ether of dissolution	2,500	+1	10%	1d4 rds	Death / 30hp

BLOODSTREAM POISONS

Banegel: A pale pink, odourless gel that becomes almost completely transparent when applied to a blade. Occasionally used as an anaesthetic, due to the numbing effect it has when applied to flesh.

Blackblade (type III): A fizzing black grease that seeps into the metal of a blade when rubbed in.

Blood of Infernus: A ruby liquid sold in tiny vials of black glass—but three drops constitute a dose. It is said that this poison puts its victim's fate into the hands of the arch-devil Infernus, and that those who survive have the fiend's favour.

Caustic sludge: A rough grey paste of corrosive metals—a common by-product of alchemical processes.

Chrome orange (type I): A bright orange lacquer with an acrid metallic odour.

Cyan solvent: A thin, bright blue liquid, with a very faint caustic odour. Can also dissolve gold and silver—up to 100 coins (or equivalent weight) per dose.

Distillation of ichor (type IV): A viscous, midnight black liquid that reeks of sulphur. Produced from demon ichor by a closely guarded alchemical procedure.

Pale unguent: A sweet-smelling white balm. In addition to taking damage, a victim of the pale unguent is stricken with weakness, suffering a –2 penalty to attack and damage rolls for 2d4 rounds.

Poxvial: A noxious green froth with a vile carrion odour. Disappears when rubbed into a blade, but the odour lingers. Distilled from the fermented flesh of ghosts. A victim of poxvial is befuddled, suffering a –2 penalty to attack rolls and saves for 2d4 rounds.

Scarlet sting (type II): A sticky scarlet liquid with a delectable honey aroma. Derived from giant bee venom.

INGESTED POISONS

Antithesis of weal (type V): A greasy, invisible powder said to be extracted from another dimension. The powder is utterly devoid of flavour and odour.

Black hellebore (type III): Powdered leaves of the rare black hellebore plant. Its earthy odour is mild, but its deep black/purple hue is often distinct.

Black lotus powder (type IV): A fine powder, utterly black in hue and faintly redolent of musk.

Bogwretch: Sticky green slime distilled from plague corpses. Dissolves in liquids, but leaves a bitter note. A victim of bogwretch is infected with a disease that causes their skin to flake and turn green. This causes 1hp damage per day, until cured. The disease is non-magical.

Ether of dissolution: A cloudy grey liquid with a mild almond odour. A victim's very soul is imperilled—magical resurrection has a 25% chance of failure.

Extract of cinnabar (type II): A fine, deep red mineral powder with an acrid, bitter flavour.

Gorgon's tears: A milky white, ambrosial sweet liquid. A victim of gorgon's tears is turned to porous white stone.

Purple lotus powder: A deep purple powder that fizzes gently in liquids. A victim is charmed for 24 hours (per *charm person*) by the one who administered the poison.

White hellebore (type I): A pale powder derived from the roasted seeds of the white hellebore plant. The powder has a strong smoky odour that is hard to mask.

Yellow lotus powder: A pungent tan powder with golden specks. A victim of the powder falls into a deep slumber for 4d4 turns. Victims can be forcefully awakened (e.g. by slapping).

MAGIC SWORDS

BY BRAD KERR WITH CHANCE DUDINACK

Few items are as ubiquitous within *Old-School Essentials* campaigns as the coveted enchanted sword. Yet, for all the power and prestige conferred by this magic weapon, few can deny that at face value, a flat mechanical bonus to attack and damage rolls can feel a bit bland.

The table presented here can spice up a magic sword with additional flavour via compositional detail and minor magical quirks. Remind players that no magical blade is complete without a name.

Rolling characteristics: Roll 1d20 on one or more columns in the table. Not all magic swords need a special characteristic of each kind.

Magic Sword Characteristics

d20	Blade	Material	Feature	Quirk
1	Barbed	Adamantine	3' chain on pommel	Bird-friendly
2	Bent	Bone	Always sharp, never dirty	Bloodthirsty
3	Blood grooves	Bronze	Antlered pommel	Flavour
4	Broad	Ceramic	Bejewelled hilt	Gauntlet
5	Broken *	Chitin	Dragon hide scabbard	Immovable
6	Curved	Crystal	Embedded crystals	Invisible
7	Dented	Demon horn	Faint red glow	Laughing
8	Dull	Dragon tooth	Gem-studded scabbard	Perfume
9	Flared	Ice (never melts)	Glowing runic script	Returning
10	Forked	Iron	Gold filigree	Safety
11	Hooked	Ivory	Grows hair and teeth	Silent
12	Jagged	Jade	Holy symbol cut-out	Smoking
13	Notched	Mithral	Holy symbol engraving	Sootblade
14	Pocked	Obsidian	Painted with magic runes	Stone-spout
15	Ringed	Plastic-like	Rusted yet always sharp	Stretching
16	Serrated	Silver	Scarred by lightning	Tattoo
17	Slender	Star metal	Tassels	Thunder
18	Straight	Steel	Twitching eye in pommel	Torchblade
19	Toothed	Stone	Winged hilt	Undroppable
20	Wavy	Wood	Wolf's head pommel	Walking stick

*: May need repair or may magically reassemble when wielded.

MAGIC SWORD QUIRKS

Bird-friend: If the wielder holds the sword perpendicular to their body for one minute, any birds present in the area will land on the blade.

Bloodthirsty: Wounds dealt by this sword spill no blood. Assassins favour it for its clean crime scenes.

Flavour: The wielder may stir food with this blade to imbue the food with delicious flavour. (Does not purify spoiled food.)

Gauntlet: With a snap, the sword transforms into a steel glove on its wielder's hand or back again with a subsequent snap.

Gloating: The sword laughs evilly in combat, reducing intelligent enemies' morale by 1. (Enemies with morale 12 are unaffected.)

Immovable: Press a button in the sword's pommel to suspend the sword in mid-air. Pressing the button again or applying 20 lbs of force unfreezes it.

Invisible: The sword and scabbard are permanently invisible. Requires practice to use effectively.

Perfume: When drawn from its scabbard, the sword emits a cloud of floral perfume that masks all other scents in a 25' radius.

Returning: When the sword is dropped or released, it magically teleports back into its scabbard.

Safety: If the wielder speaks the command word ("Safety!"), the blade becomes intangible and incapable of harm.

Silent: Striking anything with the blade produces no sound (though enemies may still audibly cry out). Favoured by thieves.



JERRY BOUTCHER

Sootblade: The blade and pommel stain all they touch black. The marks can be removed with soap and water.

Smoking: Once per day, strike the sword against the ground to produce a 10' radius cloud of smoke. The smoke blocks normal vision and infravision, except the wielder's. The cloud clears after 2d4 rounds.

Stone-spout: Once per day, its wielder may stab the sword into solid, unhewn stone; 1 gallon of water will spew from a spout in the pommel.

Stretching: Once per day, this sword can stretch to attack an enemy up to 15' away.

Tattoo: The sword's wielder may sheathe the blade harmlessly into their own body; the sword appears as a tattoo.

Torchblade: After the sword deals at least 1hp of damage in combat, it glows like a torch for 1d6 turns.

Thunder: When drawn from its scabbard, the blade emits a flash of light and a thunderous boom. These can be perceived up to 100' away.

Undroppable: This sword cannot be removed from its wielder's hand by any means unless they speak the command word: "Release!"

Walking stick: The sword transforms into a walking stick when struck hard against the ground (and vice versa).

LAKE & RIVER MONSTERS

By CHANCE DUDINACK

This article presents 8 new monsters that lurk in the murky depths of freshwater pools, ponds, and streams. Among them are fearsome amphibious animals, creatures that seek to ambush and drown hapless landlubbers, and the freshwater-dwelling cousins of monsters you may already know.

Beaver, Giant

6' long semi-aquatic rodents with brown fur, flat, paddle-like tails, and long incisors used to chew down trees. Construct giant dams and lodges from wood and mud in bodies of fresh water.

AC 6 [13], HD 4 (18hp), Att 1 × bite 4d4, THACO 17 [+2], MV 90' (30') / 120' (40') swimming, SV D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (2), ML 10, AL Neutral, XP 75, NA 1d6 (2d4), TT C

► **Territorial:** Ferociously defend their lodge from all intruders.



CHRIS RUTH

Freshwater Hag

Ghastly crones with warty yellow-green skin and fishy facial features. A subspecies of sea hag, they are less magically potent, but equally grotesque. They take pride in their hideous appearance, smearing themselves with river muck and tying fish-bones and weeds in their hair. Dwell in freshwater pools.

AC 6 [13], HD 3** (13hp), Att 1 × dagger (1d4) or 1 × gaze (transformation), THACO 17 [+2], MV 150' (50'), SV D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (3), ML 10, AL Chaotic, XP 65, NA 0 (1d4), TT C

► **Hideous visage:** Anyone who looks at a freshwater hag must **save versus spells** or be weakened (–2 penalty to attacks and damage) for 1d6 turns.

► **Transforming gaze:** Three times per day, may gaze at a character within 30'. The target must **save versus paralysis** or be transformed into a toad. *Remove curse* returns the victim to their original form.



CHRIS RUTH

Grindylow

18" tall aquatic gremlins with slimy green or blue skin, webbed claws, and wide frog-like mouths. Use their claws to grab onto characters or water vessels unseen and make mischief. Dwell in underwater nests of aquatic vegetation.

AC 6 (13), **HD** ½ (2hp), **Att** 1 × bite (1d3), **THAC0** 19 [0], **MV** 30' (10') / 180' (60') swimming, **SV** D14 W15 P16 B17 S18 (NH), **ML** 6, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 5, **NA** 3d6 (3d6), **TT** S

► **Surprise:** Stealthy. Other sides are surprised on a roll of 1–4.

► **Grab:** Grindylows attempt to grab onto water vessels or passing characters. If PCs are surprised, the grindylows are unnoticed and begin to make mischief.

► **Pranksters:** Once aboard a vessel or character, grindylows play pranks at the PCs' expense. They steal items, impede travel, and do whatever they can to annoy PCs.

► **Cowardly:** Grindylows try to avoid physical confrontations, fleeing if their pranks lead to violence.



CHRIS RUTH



CHRIS RUTH

Lycanthrope, Weretoad

Bloated, goggle-eyed humans who can transform into giant humanoid toads. In animal form, they are voracious, semi-intelligent hunters who will eat almost anything. Dwell alone near bodies of water.

AC 4 [15] (9 [10] in human form), **HD** 4* (18hp), **Att** 1 × bite (2d4), **THAC0** 16 [+3], **MV** 150' (50') / 150' (50') swimming, **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14 (4), **ML** 8, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 125, **NA** 1d4 (1d4), **TT** C

► **Mundane damage immunity:** In animal form, can only harmed by silver weapons, magic, and magic weapons.

► **Sticky tongue:** Attack up to 15' away. On a hit, prey (up to dwarf size) is dragged to the mouth and bitten.

► **Swallow whole:** An attack roll of 20 indicates a small victim is swallowed. Inside the weretoad's belly: suffer 1d6 damage per round (until the weretoad dies); may attack with sharp weapons at –4 to hit; body digested in 6 turns after death.

► **See Old-School Essentials:** For more information on lycanthropes.

Mudslinger

5' long, amphibious fish able to breathe both air and water. Ambush prey by spitting sticky globs of mucous-laden mud. On land, they slither along the ground using their muscular tails and clawed pectoral fins. Dwell in muddy burrows in lakes, rivers, and wetlands.

AC 6 [13], **HD** 3* (13hp), **Att** 1 × bite (1d6) or 1 × spit (1d4 + paralysis), **THACO** 16 [+3], **MV** 90' (30') / 150' (50') swimming, **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (2), **ML** 7, **AL** Neutral, **XP** 50, **NA** 1d6 (2d6), **TT** None

- **Surprise:** Camouflaged in river mud. Other sides are surprised on a roll of 1–3.
- **Mud spit:** Range 60'. On a hit, the target is held in place and cannot move or act, but may **save versus paralysis** each round to escape. After using this attack, the mudslinger must spend 1 round slurping up dirt or mud to use it again.
- **Drying:** If a mudslinger is dried out (by taking fire damage or being unable to moisten itself for 1 hour) it loses the ability to breathe air and will flee to the nearest water source.



CHRIS RUTH

Shellycoat

Grotesque, aquatic humanoids with unblinking eyes, manes of algae-green hair, and scaly skin encrusted with clamshells. Feed on the corpses of the drowned. Lurk in shallow waters waiting to pull unsuspecting passers-by into the depths.

AC 5 [14], **HD** 2* (9hp), **Att** 2 × claw (1d4), **THACO** 18 [+1], **MV** 90' (30') / 120' (40') swimming, **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (2), **ML** 9, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 25, **NA** 1d6 (2d8), **TT** B

- **Grab:** Anyone hit by both a shellycoat's claws in the same round is grabbed. The victim is trapped and may not move or act, but can **save versus paralysis** each round to escape. The shellycoat can drag the victim 10' each round, and attempts to drag them underwater to drown them.

Snallygaster

3' tall bird / reptile hybrids with wrinkly flesh, a singular eye, and a beak full of lamprey-mouthed tentacles used to suck the blood from living prey. Prefer to swoop down on unsuspecting targets and carry them to their nests.

AC 6 [13], **HD** 5* (22hp), **Att** 1 × beak (1d6 + blood sucking), **THAC0** 15 [+4], **MV** 90' (30') / 180' (60') flying, **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14 (5), **ML** 7, **AL** Neutral, **XP** 300, **NA** 1d4 (1d8), **TT** D

- ▶ **Dive attack:** First attack is at +2 to hit.
- ▶ **Swoop:** Can dive onto victims visible from above. If the victim is surprised, the attack inflicts double damage. On an attack roll of 18 or more, the victim can be carried away (if of up to halfling size).
- ▶ **Blood sucking:** Upon a successful attack, attaches and drains victim's blood: 1d6 automatic damage per round.
- ▶ **Detach:** If snallygaster or victim dies.



CHRIS RUTH



CHRIS RUTH

Troll, River

Amphibious trolls with scaly green skin and hair like pondweed. They have less powerful arms than land-dwelling trolls, but have larger mouths full of needle-like teeth. River troll skin is coated in slime with a sickening rotten fish scent. Dwell in murky rivers, often under bridges.

AC 5 [14], **HD** 6+3** (30hp), **Att** 2 × talon (1d4), 1 × bite (2d6), **THAC0** 13 [+6], **MV** 120' (40') / 120' (40') swimming, **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14 (6), **ML** 10 (8 fear of fire), **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 950, **NA** 1d8 (1d8), **TT** D

- ▶ **Watery regeneration:** A damaged river troll gains 3hp at the start of each round, as long as it is at least partially submerged in water.
- ▶ **Return from death:** If killed (0hp), will regenerate and fight again in 2d6 rounds.
- ▶ **Fire and acid:** Cannot regenerate damage from these sources. The only way to permanently kill a river troll.
- ▶ **Fear of fire:** Morale 8 when attacked with fire or acid.
- ▶ **Nauseating stench:** Those within 10' must **save versus poison** or suffer -2 to hit while in melee with a river troll.

UP CHAOS RIVER

BY BRAD KERR AND CHANCE DUDINACK

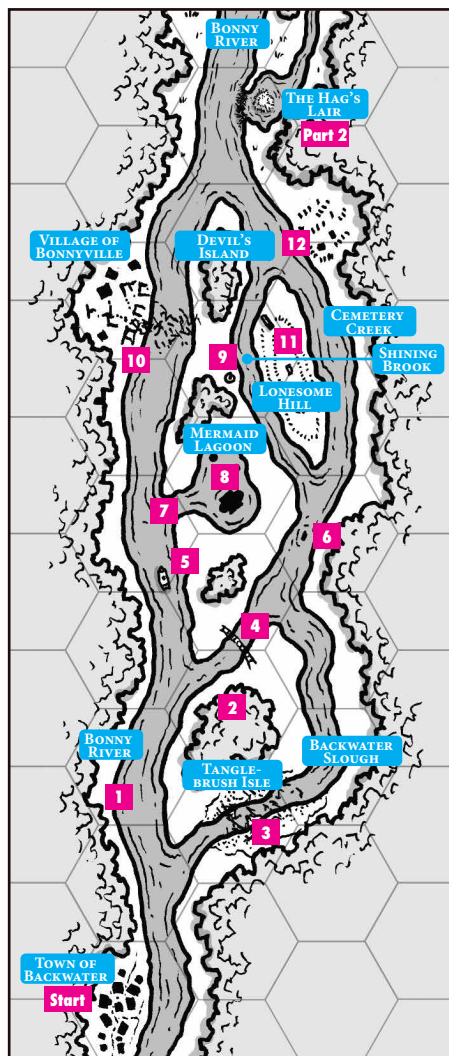
Chaos infects the river's waters. The town of Backwater is cursed by mutations from a mysterious river ooze. The town's warriors and wizards are already mutated beyond help. The neighbouring village of Bonnyville upstream has gone silent. Common folk must take up pitchforks and journey upriver to undo the curse.

What's going on: Weeks ago, spirits were high as the citizens of Backwater celebrated the midsummer festival. Unbeknownst to the townsfolk, the festivities would bring down the wrath of the freshwater hag Mother Greenteeth, who was not invited. Seeking revenge for this perceived slight, the hag captured Slig, the good spirit of the river, and began befouling the waters, regularly dumping mutagenic chaos ooze downstream from her abode within a giant beaver dam. The ooze and the hag's corrupted beaver minions have already physically uprooted the neighbouring village of Bonnyville and may do the same to Backwater unless the hag's curse is ended.

PCs: This funnel adventure is suitable for a group of 12–15 level 0 characters. It can also be used with a party of around six 1st level adventurers.

Monsters: Names underlined. Descriptions in *Lake & River Monsters*, p22, unless noted otherwise.

Ending the curse: The PCs must find a way to stop the hag from pouring her ooze into the river and release the river spirit Slig from his totem-prison in dungeon Area 9. Once both of these things are done, Slig can use his powers to reverse the river's corruption.



Scale: 1 mile per hex.

Current: Flows southwards.

Names: Locals know the names of all labels on the map.

PART I: THE RIVER

By Brad Kerr

PCs pilot one or more small water vessels upriver.

Equipment: Level 0 PCs either have a canoe each or share rafts (2–4 PCs per raft). In addition to their personal items, level 0 PCs can grab a bundle of 12 torches and 3 tinder boxes as they embark.

Overland travel: Dense mountainous forest covers the surrounding lands. PCs can move 1 hex per day, with a 1-in-6 chance of encountering 1d4 owl bears (*OSE*) three times a day.

Random Encounters: 1-in-6 / 2 Hours

1. A **giant catfish** (*OSE*) tries to capsize the PCs' vessels.
2. A **snallygaster** swoops down, grabs a live target and flies to its nearby nest.
3. The **River Man** (stats as bugbear, *OSE*) appears in the PCs' vessel. He's always wet; water pours from his mouth when he talks; all communication is strained. Allow him to ride along for 2 hours and he'll hand the PCs 120 wet gold pieces before leaping into the river.
4. The weather turns and PCs are buffeted by wind and rain. Visibility is reduced for 3 hours.
5. A swift merchant ship approaches. **Dines the Shouting Merchant** (stats as merchant, *OSE*) offers silk armour, hard as leather (magic-users can wear it) for 100gp. PCs must pay Dines quickly before his boat passes by.
6. The river suddenly runs pink with magical chaos ooze which causes vessels to thrash and buck. Anyone who touches the ooze must **save vs poison** or suffer a random **Chaos Ooze Mutation**.

River Travel

Time: Track time in hours as characters ride the river. A normal day of travel is assumed to last 12 hours. Some of this time will be spent moored or beached, while characters eat, rest, and so on, but it is not necessary to track travel and rest time separately.

Movement rates: Vessels moving downstream (southwards) move 50% faster than normal, while those moving upstream (northwards) move 50% slower.

► **Canoes:** 9 miles per day ($\frac{3}{4}$ mile per hour) upstream, 27 miles per day ($2\frac{1}{4}$ miles per hour) downstream.

► **Rafts:** 6 miles per day ($\frac{1}{2}$ mile per hour) upstream, 18 miles per day ($1\frac{1}{2}$ miles per hour) downstream.

Pushing on: In desperate straits, characters may decide to paddle longer than 12 hours in a day. This leads to exhaustion: a cumulative –1 penalty to attack and damage rolls or each additional 2 hours travelled (maximum –3 penalty), until characters rest for one full day.

Chaos Ooze Mutations

Exposure to chaos ooze causes one of the following effects (d10). Effects are curable by *remove curse*.

1. Gain webbed fingers and toes.
2. Grow an additional arm.
3. Gain shark teeth (1d6 damage bite).
4. Bones become soft, shark-like cartilage (–1d3 CON).
5. Grow pink scales all over body (–1d3 CHA, +1d3 CON).
6. Transform into a toad.
7. Transform into a horse.
8. Transform into a giant crab.
9. Transform into a giant bass.
10. Gain water breathing but must submerge in water every 6 hours or suffer 1d6 damage.

Locales

1. Toads

A chorus of croaks announces a vast abundance of toads lining the riverbank.

A large, **bleeding man**, bellows for help from the shore and begs for a ride. “A toad bit me!”

Bleeding man: Garret the woodsman. When the sun sets, he transforms into a feral **weretoad** and attacks. 3-in-6 chance he’ll catch up with PCs within 1d3 hours if left on the shore.

2. Toadberry Grove

A grove of toothsome **berry bushes** stands amid a toad-infested island.

Berry bushes: A rare toadberry grove. An hour spent picking a bushel these valuable, nutritious berries (50gp) risks a 3-in-6 chance of meeting a hungry **giant toad** (OSE).

3. Slough

Wood **debris** chokes the stagnant waters of the slough.

Debris: Reduces water vessel movement rate by half in this hex. PCs who inspect the debris carefully notice large insects feeding on wood pulp. **1d3 freshwater termites** (OSE) stealthily attach to the ship’s hull.

4. Net

A frayed hemp net stretches across the river, barring access. Intermittently, the net **thrashes** as a fishtail breaches the water’s surface.

Thrashing: Freya, a young **mermaid** (OSE) struggles for freedom. Rescue is delicate, dangerous work (PC must make a DEX check or suffer 1d6 drowning damage). Freya rewards her saviours with a river pearl necklace (200gp) and an invitation to her community (Area 8).

Circumventing the net: A muddy beach on the eastern shore provides an obvious point of egress. 1-in-6 chance that **1d3 hobgoblins** (OSE) in log canoes lurk nearby, ready to check the spoils of their net. Cutting the net clears a path but further entangles the trapped mermaid.

5. Swirling Ship

A small, silent, sloop, the “Century,” twirls gently at the river’s centre, apparently unaffected by the current.

Below deck: **4 zombies** (OSE) of varying decompositional degrees stare at a golden statue of a beaver (1,500 gp). They desperately attempt to prevent any intruder from approaching it. Taking the statue causes the ship to sink like a stone: all below deck must **save vs death** to avoid drowning. Those killed arise as new zombie guardians within the cursed ship.



6. Deadly Blade

PCs' vessels are pulled suddenly towards a shining **blade** jutting from the water.

The blade: Has a gravitational pull, held by an algae-covered angel statue.

Escape: Each vessel's pilot must make a STR check to avoid the blade's pull. Otherwise, it slices everything in half: boat, cargo, and crew (all **save vs death** to avoid).

Claiming the sword: If PCs survive the blade's pull, they may claim it: *Gravity Blade, sword +1*, pulls small unattended objects towards it, requires STR 14 to wield.

7. Merfolk

1d10 aggressive, mutated **merfolk** (OSE) appear suddenly around the PCs' vessels. Fish statuary and spiralled, algae covered structures protrude from the waters of a lagoon to the east.

Merfolk: Splash PCs and bar access to Area 8 unless PCs have already aided Freya (Area 4) or otherwise ingratiate themselves with gifts.

8. Merfolk Lagoon

3d10 merfolk (OSE) splash in the cold lagoon or lounge in the mud. Fish statues and the spiralling roof of an underwater great hall stand above the cold water.

Merfolk: Most of them mutated by the chaos ooze. PCs who ingratiate themselves to the merfolk are rewarded with safe lodging, magical healing drink (from Area 9), and ship repairs. The merfolk believe the curse emanates from a giant beaver dam further upriver.

9. Faerie Font

Shimmering butterflies dance across the waters of a marble **fountain** in an overgrown shore-side garden.

Fountain water: Faerie-blessed water heals 1d6hp (once per person per day). If bottled, reverts to normal water in 1 hour.

10. Washed-Away Village

An entire village, apparently uprooted by flood waters, blocks the river in a wall of buildings and detritus. Beyond the shoreline, the forest echoes with the ribbit of frogs and an occasional, distant scream.

Moving through the blockage: It's possible to carry a small vessel through 1d4 compressed buildings. Each building has a 1-in-6 chance of flipping over in the current (**save vs death** or drown). Within each house is hidden 4d6 × 10gp worth of jewellery, coins, or art but time spent looting prompts an additional 1-in-6 chance of turning over.

Circumventing the blockage: It's possible to carry a small vessel and move around the blockage by land. Doing so takes 1 hour and carries a 4-in-6 chance of encountering a **giant beaver** preying on the fleeing, ooze-mutated residents of the village.

11. Lonely Grave

A single gravestone marks a hilly island. A **mossy canoe** and a **gold locket** sit nearby.

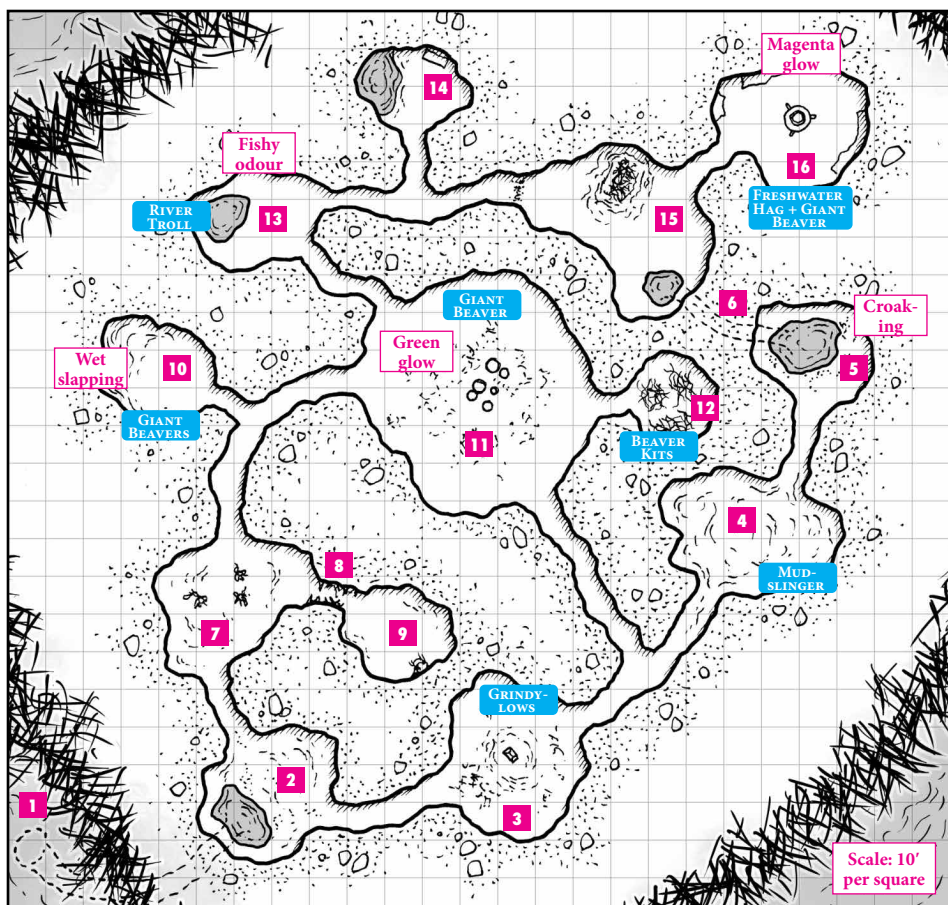
Taking the canoe or locket: Draws the ire of a **wraith** (OSE) who arises from the gravestone. The locket is worth 250gp.

12. Bisected Graveyard

The river's waters carve into the side of a graveyard, exposing damaged, mouldering coffins. **3 face-down corpses** drift languidly towards PCs' vessels.

Corpses: Floating **ghouls** (OSE), hungry for flesh.

Treasure: An hour spent searching the coffins reveals valuable grave goods: river pearl necklaces (6 × 50gp), a pouch of amber (5 × 100gp), a sachet of **black lotus powder** (see *Expanded Poisons*, p18).



GETTY IMAGES

PART 2: HAG'S LAIR

By Chance Dudinack

Exterior: A massive, 20' high mound of dry mud covered in a layer of felled trees jutting from the water in the middle of the river, just east of a similarly constructed dam. Pink iridescent ooze streams from the mound, caking the dam and flowing downstream to infect the waters.

General construction: Tunnels and chambers of densely packed sticks and mud (too wet to burn), 10' ceilings.

Lighting: All areas unlit, unless noted.

Giant beavers: Normally peaceful creatures, now the ravenous minions of the hag, aggressive even outside their lodge.

Random Happenings: 1-in-6 / Turn

1. **1d4 giant beavers** carrying wood to Area 10.
2. **3d4 grindylows** carrying sloshing buckets of chaos ooze to Area 2 for dumping in the river.
3. Junior the **river troll**, trundling along, sighing to himself.
4. Witchy cackling (from Area 16).
5. Glob of twiggly mud falls from ceiling, random PC is splattered.
6. Distant plodding sound of giant beaver feet.

Area Descriptions

1. Entrance

Underwater cave mouth at the base of the lodge, visible 10' beneath the river's surface. **Flooded tunnel** leads upwards into Area 2. **Swimming through:** unencumbered characters can move through safely; encumbered characters have a 10% chance of drowning.

2. Muddy Chamber

Dark pool full of algal blooms. **Muddy floors** pocked with footprints pooled with green water. **Footprints:** webbed feet, giant beaver and a large humanoid.

3. Net Trap

Treasure chest on an earthen plinth, gleaming in a sunbeam. **Hidden tripwire** triggers (3-in-6 chance per character) weighted **fishing net** obscured by debris on the floor. Hoists triggering character and anyone within 6' up into the air. **8 grindylows** cling to the ceiling, hiding in the branches and waiting to laugh at whoever springs the trap. **Noisy:** triggers a random encounter. **In the chest:** 1,000sp, 100gp, *short sword* +1 (made from serrated sawfish bone).

4. Mudslinger

Chamber flooded with **1' deep mud**. **Movement rates halved** while wading through. A **mudslinger** lurks in the puddle, waiting to spit at characters that step into the mud (3-in-6 chance to surprise).

5. Toads

Pool of murky water, swirling algal blooms. Swarm of **croaking toads** lounging along the edge. **Pool:** leads into Area 6. **Toads:** croaks sound vaguely like pleas for help.

6. Flooded Tunnel

5' wide underwater passage, murky and twisting. **Swimming through:** characters may drown (10% chance if unencum-

bered, 30% if encumbered) unless they can see the way through (e.g. using the mushrooms from Area 11).

7. Food Pile

Tree branches stuck in the muddy floor. **3 human corpses** skewered onto sharp limbs. **Corpses:** dressed in punctured armour, the remains of adventurers sent to break the curse. **Looting the corpses:** oilskin bag contains 5 iron rations, empty flask, silver dagger, 60sp, 10gp.

8. Log Trap

Splintered walls with jutting bits of wood. **Examining the walls:** something heavy smashed into them. **Hidden tripwire** (2-in-6 to trigger) causes thorny logs to fall from the ceiling and roll down the hallway. **Save vs death** or 2d6 damage.

9. Fish Totem

Occult sigils painted all over the room. **3' wooden totem** of a catfish stuck onto the wall, shuddering. **Touching the totem:** the rasping voice of **Slig** speaks into the character's mind, asking to be released in exchange for a blessing. **Destroying the totem:** releases the spirit, the character who broke the totem may breathe and move freely underwater for 1 day.

10. New Construction

Sounds of **wet slapping**. **Sparse walls** allow light to slip through the branches from outside. **2 giant beavers** use their tails to tamp down mud into the empty spaces.

11. Feeding Chamber

Wood shavings all over the floor. **6 plump, white mushrooms** jutting up from the wet detritus, **glow green** (as candlelight) in the dark. A **giant beaver** is here, gnawing on a log. **Mushrooms:** heal 1 hp, eater must **save vs poison** or believe they are turning into living wood (-2 to attacks and saves, must **save vs death** or flee from beavers for 1d6 turns).



PETER PAGANO

12. Nursery

5 giant beaver kits (stats as wolves, *OSE*) sleeping in a nest of leafy green weeds. **Metallic objects** gleam in the nesting materials. **Treasure:** 150gp, diamond ring (500gp), woodsman's axe (*battle axe* +1). 1-in-6 chance to wake the kits when taking an item. **If awoken:** the kits' cries draw the attention of a **giant beaver**, who arrives in 1d4 rounds.

13. River Troll

Vile, **fishy odour**. Crude **drawings** on the floor. **Pool** covered in a fine layer of pond scum. A **river troll** floating in the pool, bored. Giant beavers avoid this room. **Troll:** named Junior, rebellious adopted son of the hag. Not allowed to leave the lodge. Can be convinced to side against his "ma" if PCs retrieve his favourite knife, which she confiscated from him and locked in the chest in Area 3. **Treasure:** golden choker (1,000gp, troll wears it as a bracelet).

14. Bathroom

Pool of dark, **cold mud** in the north-west corner. **Makeshift vanity** with a grimy, cracked mirror. **In the drawers:** mother-of-pearl comb (150gp), spray bottle of giant beaver musk (4 doses, giant beavers are indifferent to the wearer for 1d6+6 turns).

15. Hag's Bedroom

Curtain of strung-up fish-bones for a door. **Bed** of sculpted mud with a woven weed blanket. **Giant alligator skin rug** (worth 250gp) covering a pool of dark water (Area 6).

16. Cauldron

Eerie magenta glow flashes periodically. **Mother Greenteeth** (freshwater hag) stirs a bubbling **cauldron**. Her faithful albino **giant beaver** Snowball (25hp) fetches ingredients from **shelves of woven twigs**—jars of squirming insects and pickled organs. **Treasure:** magic spoon (8 charges). **Cauldron:** full of swirling pink chaos ooze. **If combat occurs:** Snowball rushes forward to defend Mother Greenteeth, while she stands back and flings globs of chaos ooze at the PCs (1d4 damage, **save vs poison** or get a random chaos ooze mutation, *p27*). Junior arrives to help his mother in 1d4 rounds.

Ma's Magic Spoon

A wooden stirring spoon etched with glowing, chaotic runes. Used as a magical melee weapon (1d3 damage).

Expending one charge: On a successful hit, a target must **save versus wands** or be affected by one of the following magical effects (roll 1d6): 1–2. Target spontaneously combusts (1d8 damage for 2 rounds), 3–4. Target is affected by a *confusion* spell. 5–6. Burst of twinkling glitter, target regains 1d6 hp.

Usage frequency: Only one charge may be spent per strike.

OLD-SCHOOL ESSENTIALS

CARCASS CRAWLER

The official **Old-School Essentials** zine

Each issue of *Carcass Crawler* is packed with new content for your *Old School Essentials* games, including character classes and races, spells and magic items, monsters, optional and expanded rules, previews of in-development products, short adventures, and more.

In this issue

- ▶ **New races:** 2 new character races and demihuman classes. The changeling and the ratling.
- ▶ **Cantrips:** Minor arcane spells learned by apprentices.
- ▶ **Level 0 characters:** Rules and tables for rolling up “normal humans” as retainers or for funnel adventures.
- ▶ **Up Chaos River:** 8 new aquatic monsters and a short adventure set in a corrupted river and beaver dam.
- ▶ **Gear:** Weapons and armour of special materials, expanded poisons, minor powers for magic swords.



NECROTIC
GNOME



EXALTED
FUNERAL