

DELVER

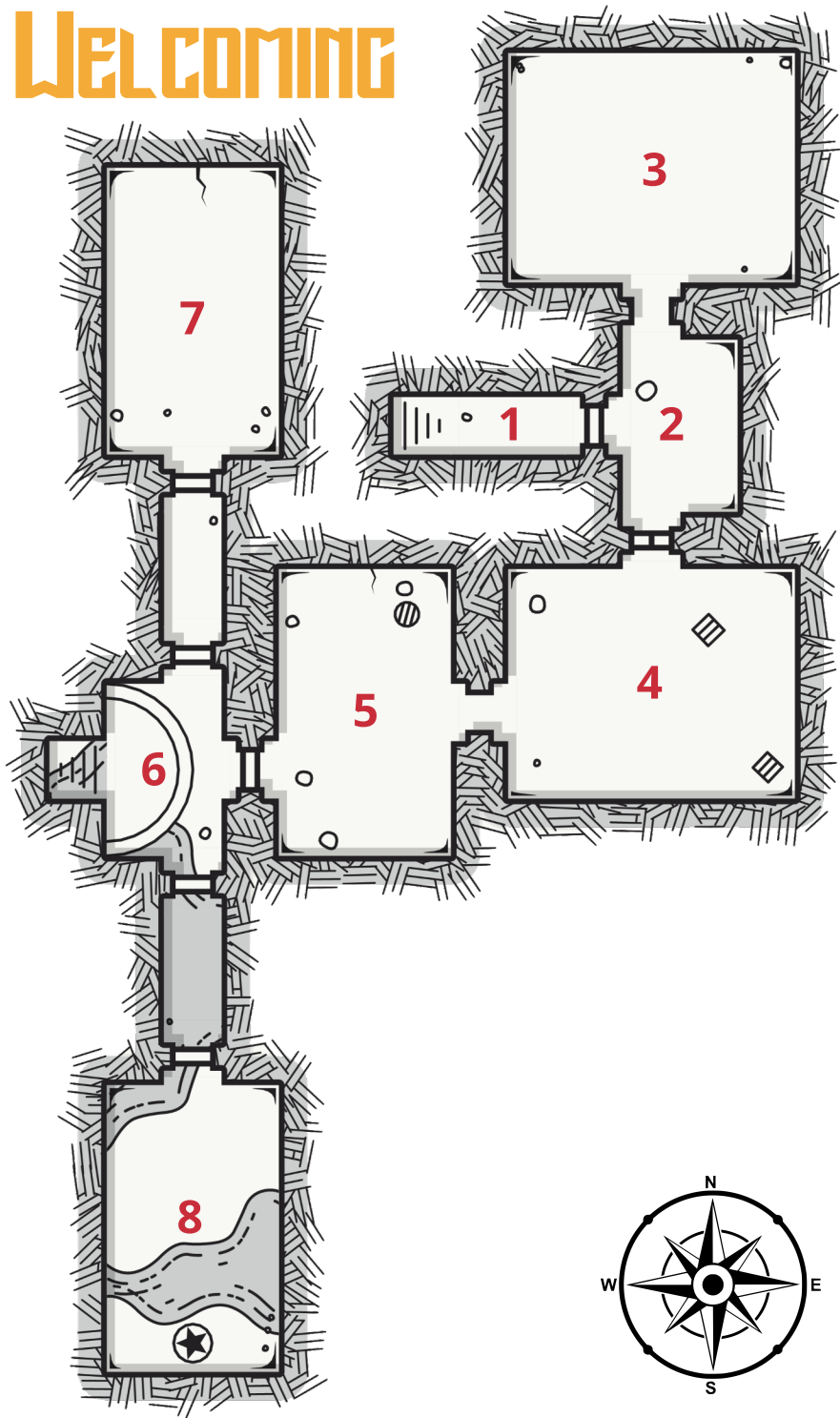
Issue #5

Resources for the Random-Rolling Referee



DESIGNED FOR USE WITH
**OLD-SCHOOL
ESSENTIALS**

THE UNDEAD WELCOMING



DELVER

Issue #5

Created by James Floyd Kelly
1st Printing

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Resources for the Random-Rolling Referee

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DELVER

Issue #5

WELCOME!

If you're a GM (or player) like me, you love a good adventure. I'm quite pleased with the playtesting for this issue's adventure titled "**The Undead Welcoming**" and I hope additional players find it a fun and challenging run.

For this issue, I used a new piece of software called Midjourney to create two unique images that a GM can use as Handouts for the players, giving them a visual of certain adventure elements.

As always, thank you for your support of Delver!

I can be reached at jimsworkshop@fastmail.com

James Floyd Kelly
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Build a Meaner Minotaur



d6 - Head

- 1 Bull
- 2 Goat
- 3 Dog
- 4 Tiger
- 5 Wolf
- 6 Bear

d6 - Feature (roll 2x)

- 1 Eye patch
- 2 Tattoos on arms
- 3 Pierced nose
- 4 Forked tongue
- 5 Three-finger hands
- 6 Oversized fangs

d4 - Weakness

- 1 Loud noises
- 2 Water
- 3 Fire
- 4 Magic

d4 - Weapon

- 1 Spear
- 2 Battleaxe
- 3 Two-handed sword
- 4 Dagger (x2)

d12 - Modification to Minotaur Stat Block (Roll 2x)

- 1 Tougher hide -- **AC** 3 [16]
- 2 Healthy -- **HD** 8 (36 hp)
- 3 Rabid Bite attacks -- **save vs poison** (2d4) or poisoned
- 4 Sharp Eye -- **THACO** 12 (+7)
- 5 Speedy -- **MV** 150' (50')
- 6 Self-Preservation -- **ML** 8
- 7 **Magic Resistance** -- +1 to all savings throws versus magic
- 8 **Disorientating Gaze** -- **save-vs-spell** or confused for one round
- 9 **Bone Armor** -- +1 AC and half-damage vs. edged weapons
- 10 **Death Stomp** -- 1d8 damage and 1-in-6 chance target pinned
- 11 **Spell Casting** -- Level 1d4 magic-user
- 12 **Fire Breath Attack** -- **save-vs-breath** or -2 to attack and 1d8 dmg

INTELLIGENT GLOVES

d4 - Alignment

- 1 Law
- 2 Neutral
- 3 Chaos
- 4 Unaligned

d6 - Quirk

- 1 Requires daily cleaning with wool
- 2 Refuses to wield a bow
- 3 No ability at night
- 4 Always wants to punch clerics
- 5 Must "sleep" in wood box at night
- 6 Refuses to be worn by humans

d8 - Primary Ability

- 1 +1 Strength
- 2 Wearer immune to sleep
- 3 +1 to hit with axe
- 4 Heals 2hp once per day
- 5 Wearer gains 1 language
- 6 +1 AC if bearing shield
- 7 +1 Dexterity
- 8 Wearer can speak to dogs



d10 - Secondary Ability (1x/day)

- 1 +1 to hit Chaos target
- 2 +1 to hit Law target
- 3 +1 to hit Neutral target
- 4 +1 AC to one ally for 1hr
- 5 Detect invisible < 300'
- 6 Detect water < 300'
- 7 Detect undead < 300'
- 8 +1 to a saving throw
- 9 +1 to an ability check
- 10 Heal ally +1hp

Jungle Explorers



Referee/GM: When your players want to know what's nearby... roll it up! The jungles are dangerous and filled with mystery, so give them some teasers and let them go...

d6 - Start Here

- 1 Ancient Pyramid
- 2 Abandoned Huts
- 3 Lone Stone Statue
- 4 Cave behind Waterfall
- 5 Rectangular Temple
- 6 Deep Pool

d8 - Ancient Pyramid

- 1 Blood-stained altar at top
- 2 Polished steps lead down
- 3 A scream from inside
- 4 Unusual symbols at entry
- 5 Entry blocked by large stone
- 6 Glow from deep inside
- 7 Unknown dark stone
- 8 Three-toe footsteps visible

d8 - Abandoned Huts

- 1 Pile of human bones inside
- 2 Gold statue (50gp)
- 3 Campfire still warm
- 4 Deathly quiet. No sounds.
- 5 Human skeleton in large jar
- 6 Small clay figures of party
- 7 Strange clicking from jungle
- 8 Unrecognizable growl

d8 - Lone Stone Statue

- 1 Cougar head, human body
- 2 Covered in poison ivy
- 3 Easily tipped over
- 4 Finger pointed to South
- 5 Head rests to left of statue
- 6 Fresh offerings of raw meat
- 7 One gem-eye missing
- 8 Eyes seem to follow you...

d8 - Cave behind Waterfall

- 1 Dead panther carcass
- 2 Set of exquisite drums 25gp
- 3 Lit torches lead deeper...
- 4 Snakeskin... everywhere
- 5 A roaring fire...
- 6 Drums start beating nearby
- 7 Spellcasters detect magic
- 8 Poison-trapped chest...

d8 - Rectangular Temple

- 1 Triggered spike trap at door
- 2 Slight glow from altar
- 3 Stairs down behind altar
- 4 Human skull throne
- 5 Tapestry shows sacrifices
- 6 Floor filled with pit traps
- 7 Bag of gold nuggets on altar
- 8 Whispering from walls

d8 - Deep Pool

- 1 Glittering at bottom
- 2 Dark slithering shape...
- 3 Filled with razor fish
- 4 Bow visible at bottom
- 5 Bubbling surface
- 6 Dead fish float on surface
- 7 Waterfall disturbs surface
- 8 Surface shows no reflection

HEALER HARFIN

d6 - Specialty

- 1 Healing under 20 damage
- 2 Healing over 20 damage
- 3 Removing curses
- 4 Creating poison antidotes
- 5 Curing petrification
- 6 Curing madness

d6 - Payment

- 1 Free but requests unique flower
- 2 Cheap (1d4+1 x10 gold)
- 3 Cheap + 1 gem (15gp)
- 4 Reasonable (2d4 +2 x10 gold)
- 5 Reasonable + 2x gems (25gp each)
- 6 Expensive (2d8+4 x10 gold)

d8 - Complication

- 1 Only negotiates with clerics
- 2 No healing of Chaotic
- 3 Payment up front
- 4 Requires special root
- 5 Needs rare herb
- 6 No healing at night
- 7 No healing during day
- 8 Insane - 1-in-6 will poison

d8 - Special for Sale

- 1 1d4 health potions
- 2 1d4 poison antidotes
- 3 Spell Scroll - Party Healing
- 4 Health Boost Potion +2hp
- 5 Anti-petrification potion
- 6 Anti-Blindness potion
- 7 Anti-charm potion
- 8 Anti-sleep potion

d12 - Secret Knowledge

- 1 Knows identity of three lycanthropes in town (2x wolf, 1x rat).
- 2 Knows identity of Assassin's Guild members in town (2x).
- 3 Knows of hidden cache of cursed weapons outside of town.
- 4 Protecting the secret of a runaway princess in town.
- 5 Secretly provides poison to the Assassin's Guild for rare herbs.
- 6 Owns rare book of healing potions (value 1000gp)
- 7 Keeps a captured ogre in cellar for "testing" purposes.
- 8 Hunted by gang of ogres for kidnapping their leader.
- 9 Has map of ancient burial site for Dwarven clan (value: 2000gp)
- 10 Haunted by ghost of former partner (poisoned)
- 11 Collecting blood of patients for mind-control magic
- 12 Responsible for the deaths of sixteen townsfolk (slow poison)



FROM THE LIBRARY OF NILOSHIS WHISPERWALK

Queen of the Banished

by Malor Ziku

Heirs to the Underdark

by Takamos Nuramill

Scars of the Sorcerer

by Haru Frostpride

Soldiers of Magic

by Parnolo Slatetask

Blacksmiths of the Realm

by Kormis Goldriver

Vengeance and Nightmare

by Krindor Arnigg

Kobolds with Wings

by Dorros Stouth

Criminals and Crimes

by Hodo Swiftboot

Bleeding the Dragon

by Ratom Tegrug

The Tower of the Eternal

by Hudon Gamdothen

Guarded by the Minotaur

by Rarlak Boldbrow

Invaders at the Stockade

by Boluck Urmadrur

Unity of a Druid Circle

by Banis Braveboot

Questions of the Dread King

by Amohag Blanlibear

Perfection in Sorcery

by Odorm Ralmi

Insanity Dogs of Kilern

by Irnith Kistopeak

Spear of the Universe

by Tarmis Thomsong

Death at Twilight

by Sernor Dumazza

Women of the Trail Clan

by Unknown

Destiny of the River Army

by Aldon Shortfavor

Assassin's Eclipse

by Toneg Twauker

Sounds of the Dark Tomb

by Kegum Wenabus

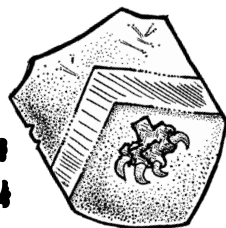
Bandits at Work

by Ragic Flintbelly

Frontline with the King

by Tarstout Lightbraid

GRIFFON CLAW AUCTION HOUSE



LOT # 27- A Helm

Worn by Qis Shadowgrind, the Swamp Troll Lord of Ferrigard Valley at the Battle of Seven Shields. He was defeated by Diltu Graybit in a duel that lasted three hours.

d4 - Beat this Bid?

- 1 1d4x10gp and yours!
- 2 1d6x20gp and yours!
- 3 1d8x30gp and yours!
- 4 1d12x40gp and yours!

The Secret: If a dwarf dons the helmet, that person will be made aware of the location into a significant treasure cache buried by Qis Shadowgrind before the famous battle.

d4 - Beat this Bid?

- 1 1d6x50gp and yours!
- 2 1d6x150gp and yours!
- 3 1d6x250gp and yours!
- 4 1d6x400gp and yours!

LOT # 14- A Bow

Wielded by the elf ranger Gridlow Flamegrind at the Battle of Tesserat that saved the Riversplit Forest from the Red Scar goblin infestation.

The Secret: This +1 bow becomes a +2 against goblinoids. Strength 15+ required.

LOT # 19 - A Book

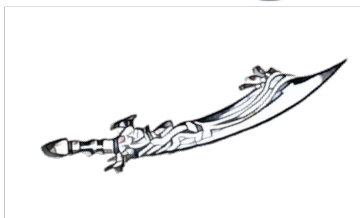
Rumored to have been the only blank spellbook in the library of Wybixx Saltblade. The wizard's name plate is in the front, indicating the wizard's intent to fill with spells.

d4 - Beat this Bid?

- 1 1d8x25gp and yours!
- 2 1d8x50gp and yours!
- 3 1d8x100gp and yours!
- 4 1d8x200gp and yours!

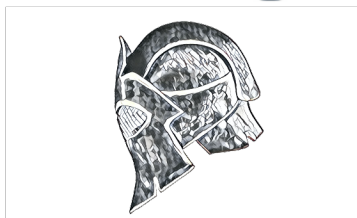
The Secret: The first offensive spell recorded in this book will deliver double damage once per day.

Bleeding Scimitar



Any chaotic target struck with this weapon must save versus spells or take an additional 2 points of damage for two rounds.

Helm of Lost Strikes



Once per day, a fighter wearing this helm who misses a strike against an opponent may add a charge to the helm up to 3 charges. Each charge may be expended for +1 to hit.

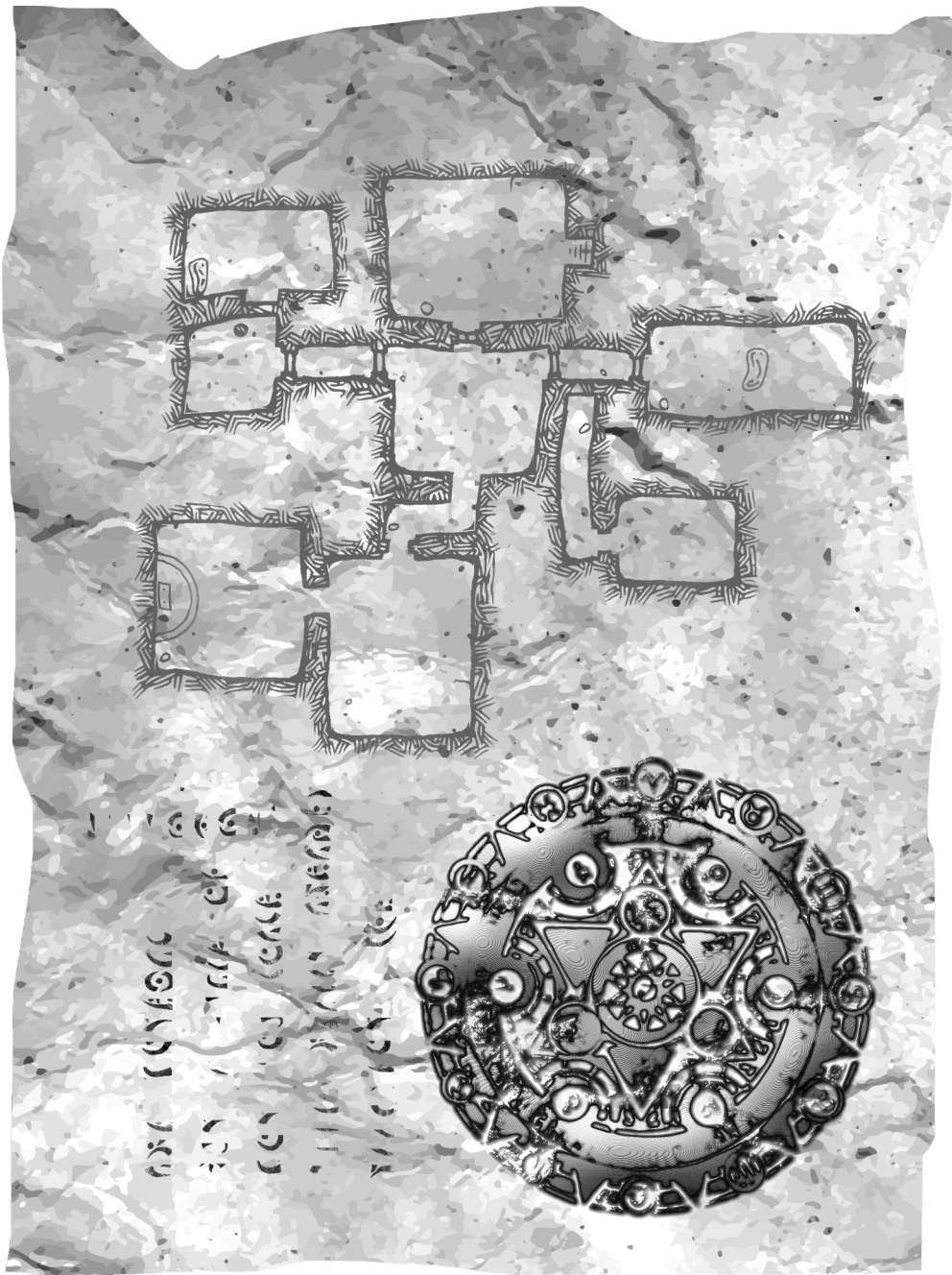
Protection Feather



4 uses.

Hang the feather from a shield or helm for +1 AC. Any hit that delivers 4+ damage, there is a 1-in-6 chance the feather is damaged and loses its magic.





Print out map on white paper. Brew two cups of tea or coffee, wait to cool. Pour liquid into cooking pan or plastic bin. Soak printed map in liquid for 20 minutes. Remove and let dry. (Placing under something heavy will prevent curling. Crumple paper before soaking for distressed look.)



***An Old-School Essentials Adventure
for 4 to 6 Level 5 Characters PLUS Hirelings***

For reasons unknown, the abandoned Amber Gong Monastery has suddenly become active with an undead presence that is spilling over into the nearby village of Misty Crown. The townsfolk are offering up rewards for any party that is willing to venture into the underground facility to clean it out and end the dangers that it presents to the area.

PLAYERS: DO NOT READ ANY FURTHER

Referees,

The Undead Playground is a level 5 adventure for four to six players plus a mix of hirelings. The entire adventure should run between 3-5 hours and can be split over one or more sessions.

The map for the adventure can be found on the inside of the rear cover; each room or area is numbered and corresponds to a numbered listing in the following pages.

It is recommended that you read through the entire adventure before running it; this will allow you a chance to make changes based on your own gaming style and what your players expect from an adventure as well as to familiarize yourself with the various creatures and NPCs that the players are likely to encounter.

If you choose to run the game with higher level characters, you can consult the *Referee's Tome* and roll for wandering monsters of a higher HD value to keep the adventure challenging. For the unique creatures, use your best judgment for

increasing armor, hit points, and special abilities.

This adventure features an overload of undead enemies, with the source (creator) of this infestation waiting on level 2.

This is NOT an adventure for those unwilling to run away, camp and heal up, and then return for the next phase of the fight. The secret is figuring out the undead aren't going anywhere, so slow and steady is likely to win the day.

I hope you enjoy running *The Undead Playground*!



The Story

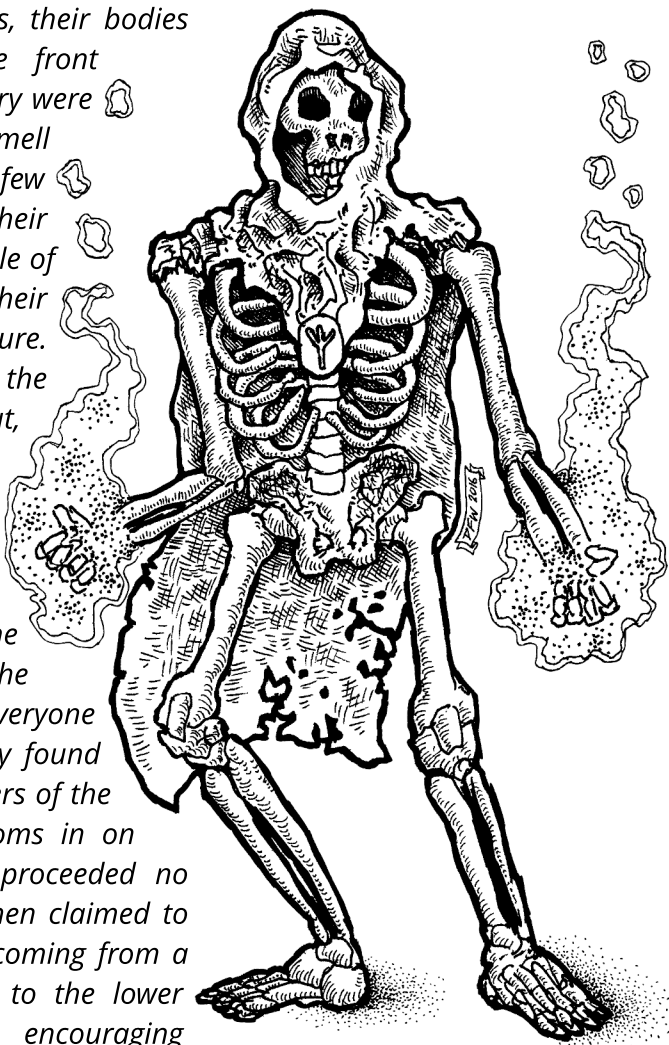
For over a hundred years, the village of Misty Crown enjoyed the benefits of their neighbor, the Amber Gong Monastery. Both groups shared food, news, and the protection the partnership provided in times of danger.

Ten years ago, however, the kind folk of Misty Crown woke to discover a dozen of the monastery's residents dead outside its walls, their bodies torn to pieces. The front doors to the monastery were open, and a horrid smell could be detected. A few farmers grabbed their pitchforks and a couple of swords and made their way into the structure. Twenty minutes later, the men came running out, demanding that the doors be shut and sealed.

The monastery was closed up, and all the men would say on the matter was that everyone inside was dead. They found the remaining members of the monastery a few rooms in on the first floor, and proceeded no further. Two of the men claimed to hear horrific moans coming from a set of stairs leading to the lower basement, further encouraging them to leave the building

immediately.

And now, ten years later, the abandoned Amber Gong Monastery has suddenly become active with an undead presence that is spilling over into the village. The townsfolk are offering up rewards for any party that is willing to venture into the monastery to clean it out and end whatever dangers that it presents to the area.

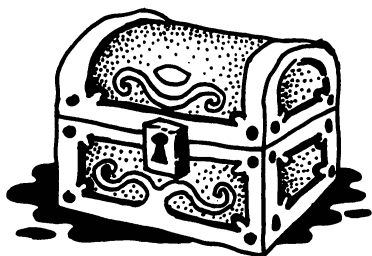


BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

However the player characters find their way to the village of Misty Crown, there are plenty of ways to introduce the possibility of this adventure.

Adventure Hooks

1. As the adventurers enter the town, an attack is under way by a small group of undead creatures (HD to be determined by GM). The source is known, and the villagers will not hesitate to point to the abandoned monastery as the source.



2. If the adventurers need financial incentive to investigate, one or more of the villagers will talk about a number of magic items the monks collected and held for either use by the monastery or to keep the items out of the hands of those who could use them for evil. (A GM can leave it vague or be specific, especially if the adventurers have been looking for specific types of magic items.

3. To truly encourage an investigation, a hero (or two) can

be marked by a curse left behind during an attack by the undead (on entry to town or later). The curse is a symbol that one of the townsfolk recognizes from an image on a wall in the monastery. The link to the monastery is now established. Should the heroes wish to avoid it and just have the curse removed, that should be allowed.

NOTES:

1. The adventure is designed for level 5 PCs and is going to involve swamping the heroes with waves of undead. Only when the heroes reach the basement will the discover the source. If they make it no further than the first level, the undead menace will remain for them to return to, but the villagers will board up the monastery again.

2. If the PCs wish to investigate, the villagers are willing to unblock the main entry door. They do not know how the undead are getting out of the monastery, but keep the entrance boarded up anyway.

3. If necessary, place a healer in the town for emergencies; undead are notorious for disease and curses, so if the GM allows it, the heroes can return quickly to the fight.

4. A summary of what actually occurred in the monastery follows.

The Invitation

The Amber Gong Monastery was welcoming to all, and its members continued to look for ways to make the monastery a beacon to anyone in need of safe harbor and rest.

A few members made a private choice to attempt to expand that welcome beyond just the Material Plane and into other planes of existence; they reached out to a famed wizard with questions about how they could do this. The wizard, not having the monks best interest in mind but his own, chose to use their interest to further his studies but in a safe location, far from his own doorstep. He provided them with the magic necessary to open a portal to a plane that he felt would "be grateful and accepting of the offer from the monks."

What the monks did not know was that the wizard has already made a few preparations with an entity on that plane; the wizard was willing to provide the entity with a way to gain access to the Material Plane in exchange for more knowledge and power. The entity was more than willing to meet the wizard's request, and the deal was struck. With the monks' arrival, the wizard realized he could now deliver on his part of the bargain.

The secretive monks were given the proper materials and scrolls and they gathered in the lower level of the monastery one evening and opened a portal to an unknown plane, thinking the wizard would never endanger their lives. They hoped their connection with this plane would impress their masters and show they were committed to the openness of the monastery to all.

Six monks gathered in the lower level of the monastery one evening and opened a portal to an unknown plane, thinking the wizard would never endanger their lives. As soon as the portal was opened, however, the monks realized they had made a terrible mistake. What crossed over was a powerful creature with a limited ability to corrupt living flesh.

Six monks became... something else. And the remaining members of the monastery died attempting to close the portal and end the existence of the corrupted monks.

One monk was able to close the portal, but not before the damage was done. The monastery was ended.

And the evil has waited.

Area 1

Monastery Entrance. Stairs down (east).

Two solid oak doors are boarded up and take the villagers about ten minutes to remove nails to allow for entry. As the doors are opened, a rotting smell is immediately detected along with a strong breeze exiting the monastery.

Symbols of welcoming and a few statements in random languages are fading on the left and right walls that appear to be blessings to all visitors to the monastery.

Area 2

Greeting Room. Open passageway to north, closed wood door to south (locked).

A large amber-colored gong rests against the eastern wall. It is approximately 5 feet in diameter, and the mallet used to strike it rests against the wall. The gong is covered in dust and cobwebs.

Ring the gong will alert all creatures within the monastery. Creatures in **Area 4** and **Area 5** will begin to shuffle into **Area 4** to attack anyone who enters the room. Creatures from **Area 6, 7,** and **8** are blocked by the closed eastern door in **Area 6**.

Dozens of mats cover the floor in a haphazard manner, all of them moth-eaten and many covered in dark stains -- dried blood if examined.

If the mats are picked up and examined, there is a 1-in-6 chance someone will spot a ring (**Ring of Protection +1**) covered in dirt, webs, and dust.

If the door to **Area 4** is opened, the creatures in **Area 4** will attack; this alerts the creatures in **Area 5** who will begin moving into **Area 4**.

Area 3

Monastery Gathering. Open passageway to south.

The monks used this room for gatherings to discuss theology as well as day-to-day activities and duties. Smashed chairs scatter the floor, and numerous dark (blood) stains cover the walls and parts of the chair fragments.

A dozen faded scripts are painted on the north wall in various languages. The writing has faded, but anyone speaking dwarvish or elvish will be able to spot enough of either language to translate the message as follows:

"We welcome all through our physical and mystical doors."

Area 4

Monastery Library. Open passage to west, Door to north (locked).

The bookshelves that once lined the walls are now collapsed, with all the books they held scattered across the floor in various states of decay. Thick cobwebs cover all the debris.

Sitting, standing and leaning are a dozen (12x) Shagri Zombie monks. When the door opens, they react immediately by attacking anyone who enters the room. These monks are unlike any zombies that the adventurers may have encountered before; they appear to actually have some intelligence. (They are being controlled, but the heroes won't know this.)

NOTE: There are six more Shagri Zombies in **Area 5**. They will move to **Area 4** if any combat occurs. The zombies in **Area 4** and **Area 5** are being controlled by a Shagri Priest in **Area 6**. The zombies will not attempt to leave the monastery, but they will do everything to prevent further encroachment into the lower levels of the monastery.

The books in the monastery are almost 100% worthless, but a search of the room will reveal a six books that have survived. Use the list in the From the Library of

Niloshis Whisperwalk to pick six books; each is worth 2d8+20 gold pieces to a collector.

Area 5

Monastery Dining and Kitchen. Open passage to east, Door to west (unlocked).

Collapsed tables and chairs cover a mix of debris that includes smashed water barrels.

Six Shagri Zombies are in this room, sitting or milling around. If combat occurs in **Area 4**, these six will move into **Area 4**.

The Shagri Zombies are controlled by a Shagri Priest in **Area 6** who will summon additional forces from **Area 7** and **Area 8** to confront anyone attempting to move into **Area 6**.

Shagri Zombies

AC 6 [13], **HD** 3* (14hp), **Att** 1x poison bite (1d8) and 1x martial fist (1d6), **THACO** 16 [+2], **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (3) **ML** 12, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 30, **NA** 2d6+3 **TT** none

Martial Fist: On a successful hit, the target is knocked back 10'.

One Mind: A Shagri Zombie is controlled by a Shagri Priest, allowing some strategy and planning in the zombie's attacks.

Area 6

Preparation Room. Opened doors to north and south, door to east (closed but unlocked).

Monks would prepare their minds in this room before entering the lower levels for rest or training. A set of stairs descends to the west, and a small pool of water enters the area from the south and spills down the stairs.

If the gong (in **Area 2**) was rung or combat was started in **Area 4**, a single Shagri Priest is ready for an attack and has called 4x Shagri Zombies from **Area 7** to assist.

To the north and south, hallways are visible through two open doors (per hallway) that lead to **Area 7** and **Area 8**.

Shagri Priest

AC 5 [14], **HD** 4* (18hp), **Att** 1x spell, 1x weapon or 1x martial fist (1d6), **THACO** 17 [+2], **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D11 W12 P13 B14 S15 (4) **ML** 12, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 80, **NA** N/A **TT** none

Martial Fist: On a successful hit, the target is knocked back 10'.

Alert Mind: Shagri Zombies are controlled by a Shagri Priest (also undead), allowing some strategy and planning in the zombie's attacks, even when the priest is

engaged in combat or spellcasting. Shagri Zombies will always move to protect the priest.

The Shagri Priest can cast the following spells 3x each:

magic missile - focus will be on any spellcaster in range and line of sight first followed by the closest target to priest.

hold person - focus will be target that is closest or has done the most damage to the priest or a zombie.

The Shagri Priest is one of the six monks who opened the portal (in **Area 16**). He will fight to the death to protect what is waiting in the lower level.

The Shagri Priest is wielding a +1 staff and wearing a modified Robe of Powerlessness. While worn by an undead Shagri Priest, the STR and INT are raised to 18. On a living creature, the robe functions normally.

Area 7

Exercise Room. Two doors to south (opened).

Monks would perform their daily exercises in this room, along with their self-defense training.

Area 8

Entry Room. Two doors to north (opened).

The monks of the Amber Gong Monastery paid honor to their fallen brothers and sisters in this room. A single pillar near the southern wall has a list of names chiseled into its surface. Smaller versions of the gong in Area 1 are to the left and right of the column along with their mallets.

A stream of water issues from a crack on the west wall and drains into a crack at the base of the east wall.

Should an adventurer ring one of the gongs, one of six possible things will happen (roll d6 and consult table below). Ringing the gong again will not result in a special effect for 24 hours per person.

| | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 1 | AC +1 for 2 hours |
| 2 | STR +1 increase for 2 hours |
| 3 | DEX +1 increase for 2 hours |
| 4 | WIS +1 increase for 2 hours |
| 5 | +1d4 hit points |
| 6 | roll 2x, ignore duplicates |

Area 9

Study. Door to north (unlocked) and door to south (locked).

The stream of water from Area 6 continues down the stairs and into this room that once served as a place for the monks to read and study. The two dozen desks that once were placed here have been shattered, and the fragments now are water-soaked.

A single **Grey Ooze** lies dormant in the NW corner, flattened and slightly lower than the 3" water level pooling in the corner.

The Shagri Priests on this level have allowed the ooze to remain in this room because it does not pose a threat to them (undead) or their master in **Area 16**.

Grey Ooze

AC 8 [11], **HD** 3* (13hp), **Att** 1x touch (2d8), **THACO** 17 [+2], **MV** 10' (3'), **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (2) **ML** 12, **AL** Neutral, **XP** 50, **NA** 1 **TT** none

Blend with stone: Difficult to discern from wet stone.

Acid: After attack, sticks to victim and exudes acid that destroys normal armor + 2d8 dmg/round. (Magic armor dissolved in 1 turn).

Energy Immunity: cold and fire

Area 10

Quarters (1 of 4). Door to south (unlocked).

The rotting wood frames of six beds have been shoved against the wall to create an open space in the center of the room that is clear of the pooled water.

This room (and the ones identical to it in **Areas 13, 14, and 15**) served as quarters for the two dozen monks that lived here.

The room contains nothing of value, but at the northern wall of the room is a fresh arcane symbol that has been painted on the floor. The symbol is magical in nature but is not dangerous. This symbol (and the two other symbols in **Area 14** and **Area 15**) must be ruined in some way before damage can be done to the portal in **Area 16**.

Now that the adventurers have made it to the lower level, the five remaining Shagri Priests are aware of their presence. Two of the priests (in **Area 16**) will move to **Area 10** to attack the party; if the symbol on the floor has been tampered with or defaced in any way, the two Priests will summon a third priest who will arrive two rounds later.

The Shagri Priests that arrive will fight to the death.

Area 11

Temple Foyer. Door to east and west (unlocked). Door to north (locked). Open corridor to the south.

The floor is covered in an intricate glass tile pattern of an amber gong. Moth-ridden mats rest to the sides of the room where the monks would leave their shoes before entering the temple (**Area 16**).

Through the open corridor to the south, the party will be able to glimpse what is left of the Shagri Priests (depending on how many were fought and killed in **Area 6** and **Area 10**). There were originally five monks in level 2, but two will be sent if the party enters **Area 10** and a third if the symbol on the floor in **Area 10** was defaced in any way. This will leave either 2 or 3 monks in **Area 10**. They will turn to view the party but will not move to engage as the remaining monks are focused mentally on a glowing portal that floats about 3' above a single stone sarcophagus (**Handout A**) at the rear of the room.

If the party attempt to enter **Area 16**, all remaining Shagri Monks will attack, but not before one of them jumps into the portal, apparently sacrificing itself... but why?



Handout A

Area 12

Lecture Room. Door to west (unlocked). Curtained corridor to south.

This room is slightly flooded from a leak above. The water has soaked into a faded yellow tapestry on the east wall. Mats on the floor are also soaked and faded. The yellow curtain that hangs in the corridor to the south partially blocks the chanting from the priests in **Area 16**.

If the party moves into this room from **Area 11**, the priests will continue with their work in **Area 16**. The room can make an excellent place to rest and heal for a moment.

Area 13

Quarters (1 of 4). Door to east (unlocked). Curtained corridor to south.

Six beds have been moved to slow movement through this area. Two block the corridor to the south, and another is pushed against the east door to prevent it from opening. A small pool of water is in the northwest corner.

The yellow curtain that hangs in the corridor to the south partially blocks the chanting from the priests in **Area 16**.

Area 14

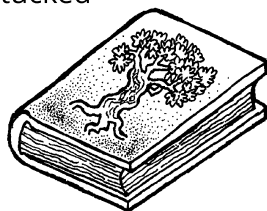
Quarters (1 of 4). Door to north (unlocked) leads to corridor. Door to west (unlocked).

Six beds remain in the room, spaced evenly.

If the party moves into this room from **Area 12**, the priests will continue with their work in **Area 16**.

A search of the beds will reveal a hidden book tucked beneath one mattress -

"Portal of the Shagri."



Reading the contents of the book will take an hour, but a quick glance through it will give any character with INT 14+ insight into the events in **Area 16** that include the defacing of symbols that magically support the portal's opening. They will also learn that Shagri is a non-Material Plane entity capable of empowering dead creatures.

There is a symbol painted on the floor here (similar to the one in **Area 10**) that, if defaced, will force the actions described for **Area 16** below.

A small corridor runs between **Area 14** and **Area 15**. There is nothing of interest in this corridor.

Area 15

Quarters (1 of 4). Door to east (unlocked). Door to north (unlocked).

Six beds have been moved to against the west wall.

There is a symbol painted on the floor here (similar to the one in **Area 10**) that, if defaced, will force the actions described for **Area 16** below.

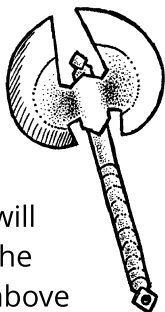
A small corridor runs between **Area 14** and **Area 15**. There is nothing of interest in this corridor.

Area 16

Amber Gong Temple. Open corridors to north, west, and east.

There will be a number of Shagri Priests here that depends on how many have responded to the party's actions (described in **Area 10**).

Once the party enters this room, all remaining Shagri Priests will attack minus a single priest who will fling himself into the portal that floats above the stone sarcophagus at the south end of the room.



The sarcophagus contains the powdered bones of the order's

ancient leader; there is nothing of value in the sarcophagus, but it is being used as the **Magical Anchor** of the portal along with three symbols painted on the floors of Area 10, Area 14, and Area 15.

For each symbol defaced, reduce Shagri's starting hit points by 5. Additionally, each time a symbol is defaced, roll 1d6 on the following table to determine the effect it has on Shagri (reroll for duplicates):

| | |
|-----|--|
| 1-2 | Lower AC by -1 (easier to hit) and -1 tentacle |
| 3-4 | Decrease Shagri's damage by 1d4 points and -1 tentacle |
| 5-6 | Increase each saving throw type by 2 and -1 tentacle |

The Shagri priests will fight to the death once they engage the party. They will try to attack any spellcasters first, followed by the adventurer with the highest hp value.

Two rounds after the priests attack and the single priest jumps into the portal... Shagri arrives.

Provide players with **Handout B** and let them ponder on it a bit...

Shagri is an entity from a non-Material Plane. It is more than a standard Gibbering Mouther; rather than gibberish, it is capable of spellcasting and control of undead creatures.

Shagri cannot enter the Material Plane unless a human worshiper is sacrificed into the portal, but the Shagri Priests are unaware of this requirement and have been worshiping at the portal for decades trying to coax Shagri to cross over.

If a Shagri Priest (undead) is sacrificed into the portal, a fragment of Shagri will enter the Material Plane with the following stats.

Shagri Fragment

AC 0 [19], **HD** 4+3*** (21hp), **Att** 6 x tentacle (2d8), **THACO** 15 [+4], **MV** 30' (10'), **SV** D13 W14 P13 B16 S15 (5) **ML** 12, **AL** Chaos, **XP** 450, **NA** 1 **TT** *Shagri Crystal*

Attaching: On a successful tentacle attack, the tentacle squeezes and does 1 damage each round the target is held. Anytime 3hp or more of damage is done to the fragment, all tentacles will release any held targets.

Spellcasting: Rather than gibberish, the fragment can cast spells as a 5th level spellcaster. It has the following spells readied:

Level 1: *darkness, protection from good*

Level 2: *continual darkness, web*

Level 3: *hold person*

If the **Shagri Fragment** is defeated but the portal remains open, the fragment will return at half hit points after 20 minutes and any of the limitations put on it due to defacing the symbols.

Shagri can only be prevented from returning by destroying the monk's sarcophagus. Doing 20hp of damage to the sarcophagus is enough, but only magical weapons and spells are capable of doing damage. If the portal is closed permanently, it shuts with a loud snap and a crystal drops to the floor.

Shagri Crystal

The stored energy of the portal is stored in this crystal. If it is shattered with a magical weapon (2hp of damage), the crystal releases a burst of energy with the following benefits to all within 30':

1. +1 hp (permanent)
2. One random attribute increased by +1
3. 1-in-6 chance the individual will be cursed with a tentacle that can only be removed with a *remove curse* spell or similar magic.



Handout B

Tavern Tales

Hunted by the Tsonnga Snake



For you *TAVERN* owners, here's another *Tavern Tales* to spur those sales. Be sure to order more barrels of ale this month, and keep an eye out for those pesky pickpockets; they like to strike when the storyteller pauses before the big reveal! Just make sure the fire is kept stoked and the front door closed to keep out the chill.

d12 - The Adventurers (roll 6x)*

- 1 Tinclu Ryhummm (Human Fighter)
- 2 Sincer Voylott (Half-Elf Fighter)
- 3 Cestris Goldfence (Elf Magic-User)
- 4 Tageth Shedrun (Dwarf Magic-User)
- 5 Verstrik Irongate (Gnome Cleric)
- 6 Braksith Treestain (Human Cleric)
- 7 Getheril Redfield (Halfling Ranger)
- 8 Mivet Lightshard (Dwarf Ranger)
- 9 Hoogey Sunblight (Half-Elf Thief)
- 10 Devifulk Copperstorm (Elf Thief)
- 11 Peribug (Half-Orc Druid)
- 12 Nallita Sheriksoul (Human Druid)

* reroll duplicate classes

d6 - Storyteller

- 1 Hester Bakaflit
- 2 Capotora Setflint
- 3 Lecki Noifard
- 4 Dilligem Crackrot
- 5 Wallajash Surteen
- 6 Ratori Brittletoe

d6 - Setting

- 1 The basement of an abandoned inn
- 2 Rooftop of an evil temple
- 3 Hidden cave in the Graven Hills
- 4 Baron Triikko's Tomb
- 5 Below deck of a spectral ship
- 6 Through a portal in back of a wagon

d12 - The First Encounter (roll 3x)

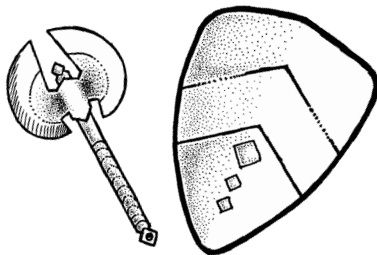
- 1 Entrance filled with bones of dozens of victims (+1gp)
- 2 A giant shadow disappears down a long corridor (+2gp)
- 3 Screams echo in the night followed by a sinister laugh (+4gp)
- 4 A dying hero, delirious with pain, is covered in bites (+3gp)
- 5 Party leader triggers a trap and is impaled! (+2gp)
- 6 Gang of lizard men attack; cleric dies! (+1gp)
- 7 Hireling discovers a vial and drinks - poison! (+3gp)
- 8 A stampede of giant rats; two hirelings trampled! (+4gp)
- 9 Party ambushed by giant armored snake & slithers away (+5gp)
- 10 Hissing from behind a locked door... (+1gp)
- 11 Nest of giant snake eggs - valuable loot! (+3gp)
- 12 Giant armored snake attacks - 2 party members killed! (+6gp)

d12 - Plot Twist (Roll 2x)

- 1 The Giant Snake was actually a shapeshifting wizard (+6gp)
- 2 Any found snake eggs are illusion-protected spellbooks (+4gp)
- 3 Wizard summons giant mongoose - snake injured! (+3gp)
- 4 Cleric is bit and poison paralyzes her during a healing (+1gp)
- 5 Snake enraged/attacks Rogue for snake leather armor (+3gp)
- 6 Giant snake coils and crushes a party member to death! (+5gp)
- 7 Eggs beginning to hatch - armored snake alert! (+2gp)
- 8 Wizard's fireball destroys some eggs... snake fails to bite (+3gp)
- 9 Fighter stabs at snake and blinds it in one eye! (+5gp)
- 10 Snake whips its tail and sends wizard flying into wall! (+8gp)
- 11 Rogue pins snake's tail to wall with dagger pierce! (+9gp)
- 12 Rogue blinds snake with well placed dagger toss (+8gp)

d8 - End of the Story (Roll 2x)

- 1 Snake kills all but wizard who flees (+2gp)
- 2 Fighter sacrifices himself to allow party to escape (+3gp)
- 3 Fighter delivers fatal strike against snake but is bit! (+10gp)
- 4 Snake heart explodes, poisoning entire party. All die! (+2gp)
- 5 Dying snake changes form -- a missing princess! (+4gp)
- 6 Armored snake's mate arrives -- kills rogue as party flees! (+6gp)
- 7 Snake blood enrages baby snakes -- party must flee! (+7gp)
- 8 Wizard brews antidote to poison from snake blood for all (+8gp)



d4 - # Times Requested This Month

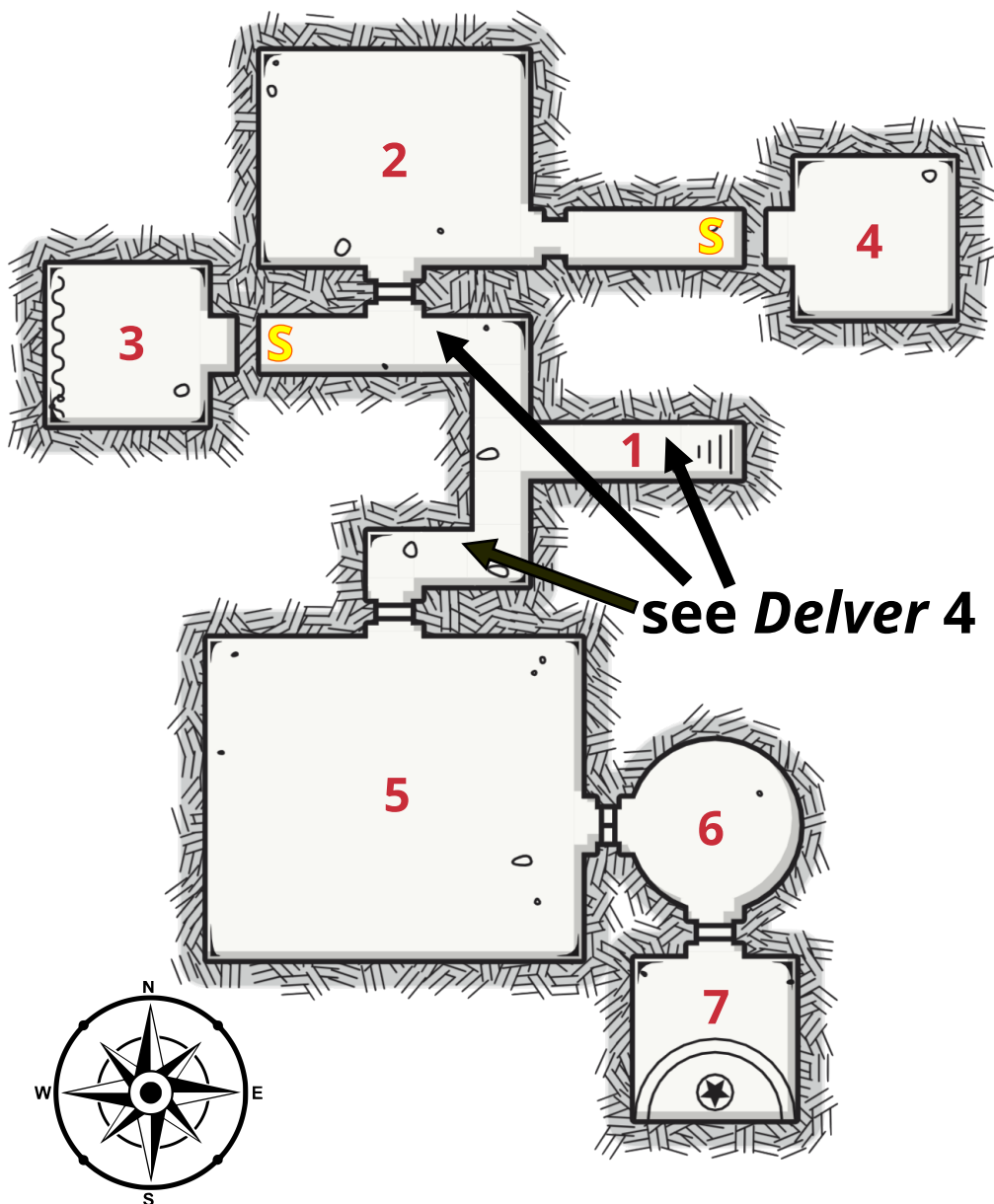
- 1 2 (Patrons bored!) Bonus x 4
- 2 10 (Story is a hit!) Bonus x 7
- 3 12 (Story getting stale...) Bonus x 12
- 4 20 (Story becomes epic) Bonus X 15

Bonus Profit this Month!

Add up gp from tables and
multiply by Bonus value

| |
|--|
| |
|--|

Let's Create a Dungeon - Part 2



Let's Create a Dungeon

- Areas 2 and 4

The door to the north opens silently, its hinges surprisingly quiet...

d6 - Area 2 - A Most Deadly Lair

- 1 A crumbling altar, bones galore, 1x random HD 5 creature
- 2 Two crypts (one opened and empty), 1x Ghoul (+2HD, 18hp)
- 3 Hideout for 2d6+3 bandits, 1d4 pet wolves, 2x random magic items
- 4 Evil wizard's library/laboratory, 1x level 6 magic-user (Chaos)
- 5 Tunnel to swamp (north wall), 2d4+3 Lizard Men, 2x prisoners
- 6 Dungeon Hag (HD 6, 26hp, XP 500, 1x talon (1d6+2) and poison)

GM: A secret door to **Area 4** is at the dead-end of the eastern hallway. Roll for type of trap and the trap effect below if it is discovered.

d6 - Trap Trigger

- 1 Touch, 1-in-6 to disarm
- 2 Touch, 2-in-6 to disarm
- 3 Open, 1-in-6 to disarm
- 4 Open, 2-in-6 to disarm
- 5 Magic Ward, 3-in-6
- 6 Pressure Plate, 1-in-6

d6 - Trap Effect

- 1 Noise - roll for Wandering Monster
- 2 Poison Gas - 10' range
- 3 Acid Spray - 15' range
- 4 Oil Spray + Flame - 10' range
- 5 Spear, single target, 10' range
- 6 d6 darts, 10', random targets

The secret door opens to reveal a slight glitter in the darkness...

d6 - Area 4 - This looks promising...

- 1 Long lost treasure room - Type C plus 1 random magic weapon
- 2 Lost wizard's collection - 2d6 random spell scrolls +1d4 potions
- 3 Abandoned armory - 1d4+2 weapons + 1 random magic armor
- 4 Mummy - Type D plus wearing 2x random magic rings
- 5 Guarded hoard - Type B plus 1x random HD 7+ creature
- 6 Mimic disguised as open wood coffin filled with 3d4 x 1000sp



by James Floyd Kelly

If a player were to ask me why I moved from being a GM for the most popular fantasy RPG to *Old-School Essentials*, I could list any of a dozen reasons. While I enjoyed my time as GM for the current fantasy RPG champ, each year I spent behind the screen for that particular RPG seemed to reveal more and more flaws (flaws to me, not necessarily anyone else) in a collection of game mechanics that has never stopped growing in complexity.

And that's really the answer to the question right there; all my reasons for changing to OSE are nothing more than parts of a greater whole.

As a GM, I felt like I could never catch my breath with all the new classes, the new spells, the new races, the new magic items... the list goes on and on. And each of them was a reason in itself, but when lumped together, they slowly stole away some of the joy I got from being a GM. I would find myself consulting the rules and debating mechanics, asking players for clarification on this new race detail or that new class feature. And slowly but surely, playing the game turned into learning the game.

This is my experience. I do not and will not pretend to speak for other GMs (of any RPG) who might enjoy added complexity, an ever-growing base of rules and new content, but there were months where I felt pure information overload. I can't put my finger on exactly when I lost my interest in the modern RPG, but I do know when my interest was reignited -- at a table playing a level 1 magic-user in a classic BX game run by a friend. My magic-user died, but I honestly hadn't had that much fun with a fantasy RPG in years. I began re-reading older RPG rule books, enjoying looking through old game magazines, and listening to a few podcasts that focused on old-school gaming.

And then I lucked into discovering the Kickstarter for *Old-School Essentials*. I grabbed the Referee's Tome, started reading, and I was immediately teleported back to 6th grade and all the joys and wonders and dangers of a simpler set of rules.

Old Becomes New

Old School fantasy RPGs aren't anything new. There are plenty of predecessors to *Old-School Essentials* (OSE), but it was simply the right timing and the right presentation. I could easily have chosen to switch to another OSR product, but OSE grabbed me and I ran with it.

The small, unassuming books were fast to read, easy to understand, and the rules weren't complex or vague... but something in-between. Much was left to the GM (called the Referee in OSE) as it was in those early RPGs I remember playing so many years ago. There weren't dozens of books to be consulted; you had your GM's book and the players had their book and that was that. (Sometimes the players didn't even have a book!) If a rule wasn't listed, the GM could (and usually would) make a rules decision on the spot.

Here was a "new" game that stripped down the current rules of fantasy RPGs to try and find a way back to what I perceive as so many of the early standards for fantasy RPG gameplay. And what do I consider those "early standards?" Here you go:

Fast character creation - Being able to roll up a character with ACTUAL DICE versus dropping in "heroic, pre-rolled" values was all part of the fun, and it didn't take more than 5-10 minutes to create a character and get to playing. Today, just making a character is its own 1-2 hour adventure. (Some folks like that... I prefer to get to the table and play.)

Limited number of class/race choices - I can point to at least half a dozen times a player arrived at my table the last few years with a new class or race that I knew nothing about... and sometimes had never even heard of. As a GM, my time is limited, and while many GMs try to stay up on every rule and new addition to a game, it really started getting tiring. I miss the days when players would choose between fighter, magic-user, cleric, and thief and maybe 3-4 other choices. Old school RPGs seem to be recognizing that fact and keeping it streamlined.

XP for treasure and exploring and staying in the dungeon - This is one that draws a lot of debate, but I believe it works very well. When gold coins equate to XP, the game tends to involve more discussion from the players regarding risk versus reward. Do we keep going? Do we turn back? While monsters give XP, that's not the key mechanic for leveling

up... it's acquiring treasure! And that's how I've always seen the role of an hero-adventurer.

Unique leveling requirements for classes/races - Having unique XP requirements for various classes means that some classes will level up faster than others. While this may sometimes seem unfair, some classes (such as spellcasters) ramp up in power fairly quickly once they have a few levels under their belt, eclipsing other classes at the same level in terms of comparable power/threat. Making XP requirements different for each class means players gain some control over how fast or slow they level up (assuming survival).

Maximum levels - Some races will max out at certain class levels. This differs from game to game, but as a GM, I see it as a balance for some of the benefits that certain races grant to the player.

Resource, time and encumbrance tracking - One of my favorite parts of an old-school dungeon delve is tracking resources. In many modern games, food, water and even arrows are treated as never-ending resources for the player. Sleep is something that occurs only when a character needs healing or to recover spells. By returning to a system where resources (including time) are tracked, players must carefully balance how deep they wish to delve given limited items. And encumbrance carefully plays into this; as food and water are used up, characters can carry more, but players must now ask... "what's my risk threshold?"

Constant risk, rewards for flight - So many modern fantasy RPGs will provide GMs with the ability to balance a fight or rank it as easy, hard, or impossible (or something along those lines). It's rare for players to run away from a fight - the defeat of a creature or group of creatures is so tied to the developing storyline. The disappearance of the "Wandering Monster" roll has trained players that when a creature is encountered, it somehow relates to the major story and that defeat is unacceptable. A return to the concept of turning a corner and bumping into a wild creature as well as the concept of choosing to run away... these define old-school adventuring and the removal of them is something I feel has changed fantasy RPGs to a simple pattern of Explore-Fight-Win-Repeat.

And there are more things I love about old-school fantasy rpg games. Many more. And when I talk to other players of old-school games, I

constantly hear new and valid reasons why so many gamers are returning to an older style of play.

Old-School Isn't for Everyone

Given the incomplete list above of factors gamers will discover when they first play an "old-school" game, it probably won't come as a surprise to anyone that old-school gameplay isn't for everyone. Many gamers desire that epic feel of growing a character to level 20, picking a unique mix of feats and special abilities and combining it with 30 or more races to choose from and an even greater number of classes.

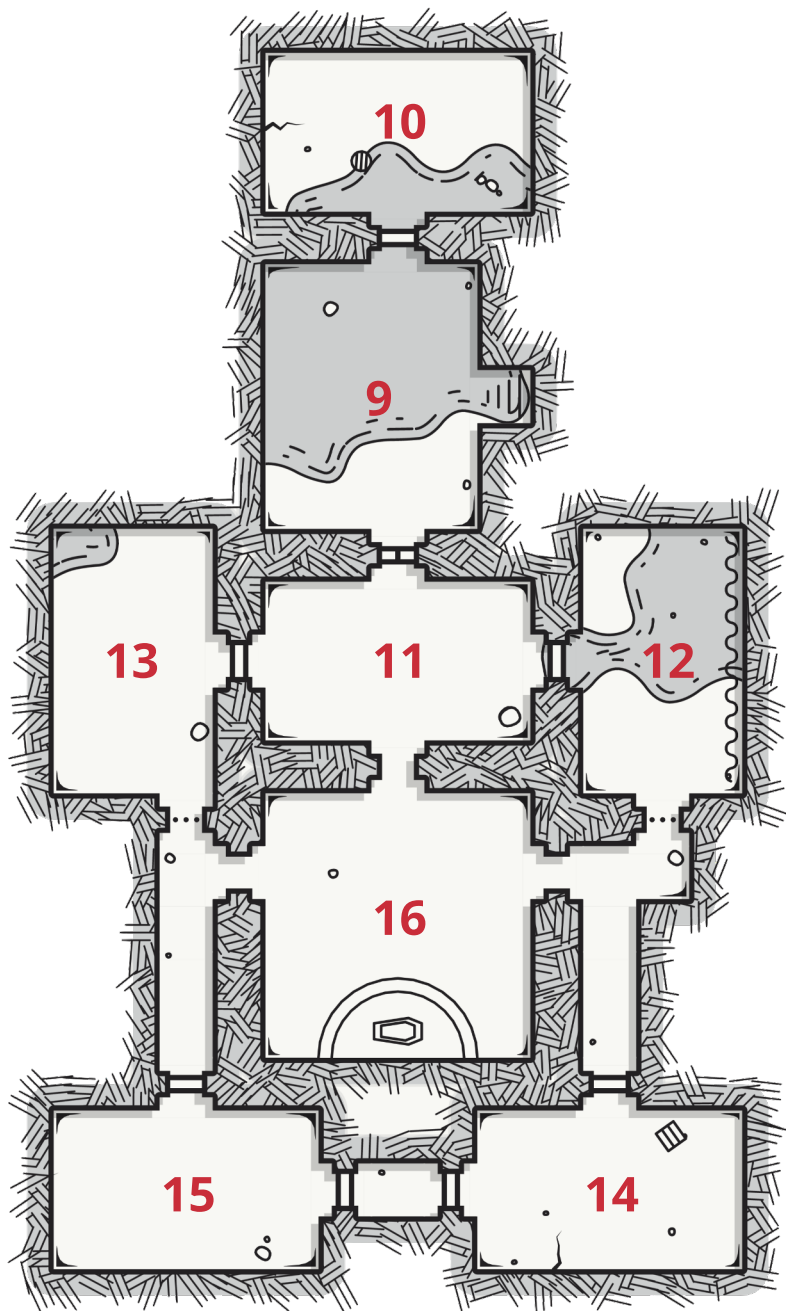
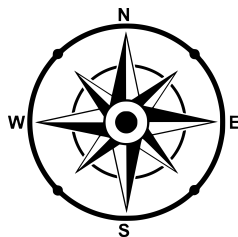
I've played plenty of modern day fantasy RPGs, and I still find the game fun. I even write adventures for a few publishers for new RPGs. The sheer volume of books and resources available for the current version of the most popular fantasy RPG is incredible. But sometimes... less is more.

With less, I (the GM) am able to focus on the adventure. I don't reach for the rulebooks as often, instead making decisions on the spot when I'm certain that a situation hasn't been thoroughly defined. I don't have to remember 30 races and 40 classes and all the baggage they bring. Instead of constantly asking my players to explain a spell or tell me how a feat works, I can make instant rulings, knowing that the game mechanics are strong but simple and tend to lean towards common sense. No more tracking half a dozen character sheet values to calculate a simple To Hit value or lists of skills that players (inaccurately) believe that if it's not on their character sheet, they can't do it!

Yes, I'm quite pleased that the number of old-school game options is increasing. I'm happy to see more players giving old-school a chance. I'm ecstatic to see Kickstarters for old-school players (and producing *Delver* is a dream job). And I love seeing both old and new players at my table who leave a game with a huge grin on their face... some of them telling me "that was different! But fun!"

Yep! Old-school games are different. And yes, they are fun! My heart is warmed with each and every old-school game I get to play, and my mind flashes back to those early days when we just played and didn't worry about piles of rules and mechanics. And now I get to do it all over again.

THE UNDEAD WELCOMING



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