

The Curse of the Dreadstone

The Ideal **SECOND** Adventure
for a Starting Group of 2-6 Players

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



Hexplore Publishing

**Have time to kill
and want some easy coin?
Find Brumeer, the dwarf,
at the Market Square.
He may have a job for you!**

Everybody knows Brumeer, the dwarf, a locally renowned merchant. When a farmer named Arcbold failed to meet him at the market square, he hires the PCs to find out what has happened to his friend. The answer might not be pleasant, or safe...

This introductory adventure is the ideal second mission for a starting group of 2 to 6 players. Use it with **Old-School Essentials**, **B/X** or any other **OSR rules system**. With the proper adaptations, you could even use it with 5e!

You can easily run this adventure as a one-shot or as part of an ongoing campaign, as one of many side-quests. You can also use it in a West Marches kind of game.

The Curse of the Dreadstone is the first release in our new line of adventures for players and GMs who want to take their game to the next level!



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The Curse of the Dreadstone



**The Ideal SECOND Adventure
for a Starting Group of 2-6 Players**

Introduction

This adventure was planned for a party of 2 to 6 characters from levels 2-3. 1st level PC's may have a hard time, so you might need to soften the challenges to better fit a group of newbies.

This is the perfect second adventure for a starting group, after the players have succeeded in their first challenge and are more familiarized with the rules and their characters.

You can easily run this adventure as a one-shot or as part of an ongoing campaign, as one of many possible side-quests. You can also run it in a West Marches kind of game, starting at the "Adventurers Wanted" section.

Adventure hooks

To get everybody invested in the adventure, consider they already know each other and are traveling together to a merchant town.

If they prefer otherwise, have them roll 1d6 on the adventure hooks table below. After that, proceed to the "Adventurers Wanted" section.

1d6	Adventure hook
1	Your former patron referred you to this town and instructed you to look for a dwarf merchant named Brumeer, in search of a job
2	After an ill-favored night of gambling at the local tavern, you find yourself without coin and in dire need of work to pay for your recent and substantial debt
3	You came to this town as part of a caravan and, after receiving your payment (2gp), you decide to explore the town in search of a new employer
4	Your father received a letter from an old acquaintance, a dwarf merchant named Brumeer, asking for help and he sent you
5	The search for adventure led you to this town, eager to start your next mission
6	Somehow, you managed to escape your pursuers. Now it's time to lay low, get out of town for a week or two until things settle down

Adventurers Wanted

There's a new post on the **Adventurers Wanted** billboard at the local tavern.

**Have time to kill
and want some easy coin?
Find Brumeer, the dwarf,
at the Market Square.
He may have a job for you!**

At the Market Square

Everybody knows Brumeer, the dwarf. He's a locally renowned merchant. After the PCs introduce themselves, Brumeer will pitch them a farmer named Arcbold was supposed to meet him at the Market Square a week ago to deliver the vegetables and preserves he had already paid for, as an investment. Brumeer can't leave town because he must close deals and make preparations for his trip back to the mountains with his span of mules.

He wants to hire the PCs to go to Arcbold's farm and find out why he missed his appointment.

Brumeer will pay 10 gp to be split by the group for their time. If they can bring him his goods, he will pay some more.

If the PCs accept the job, they have the rest of the day to prepare. They must leave the next morning and the dwarf will meet them at the North Gate for further instructions.

Let the PCs do whatever prep they want. The town is well served in terms of shops and goods, and they can buy anything from the equipment list at a 10% premium.

The PCs have the rest of the day off and a night on the town. You should follow their lead and improv scenes in shops, the inn and the tavern, according to what they decide to do.

The North Gate

At daybreak, they will find the dwarf merchant standing at the North Gate, waiting for them.

He will give them the following instructions on how to get to the farm:

"Follow the North Road the whole day towards the village of Combten but take an exit going South on a crossroads atop the hills. This will take you to the farm gate by sunset."



The North Road

Narrate the travel, roll random encounters (see the table below) or make them roll against intelligence or wisdom to find the right exit on the road. If they get lost or delayed, adjust the time they get to the farm gate accordingly.

Random encounters on the North Road

1d8	Encounter
1	A group of pilgrims led by an old cleric asks for donations
2	A farmer struggles to pull his cart and his irascible donkey out of the mud. He knows Arcbold!
3	A bard offers a song for a coin, and some news of the road
4	A duo of ne'er-do-wells stages an ambush with some twigs, hats, and cloaks in the bushes, pretending to be a larger band of robbers
5	A stray horse appears to be lost and hurt. If they can tend to it, it will be docile
6	Strange noises in the woods. Are they being followed?
7	A poor fellow fell from his horse and hurt his ankle. The horse got away. If helped, he will thank them and limp away to find his mount
8	A band of goblins (1 for each PC) tries to attack them with bows and clubs

The Farm Gate

The gate is open, broken and in disrepair. All is silent. No sign of cattle or people. A dwindling track contours a small orchard and leads towards the hill where they can see a small cottage.

Orcs in the Orchard

The PCs may spot them from a distance if they are being attentive.

The **Orcs** are digging, apparently searching for something. They're armed with cudgels and crude short swords and will attack the PCs on sight.

There should be one for each PC (half that if they're newbies) but two minimum.

A Goat in a Cocoon

Near the house two **Giant Rats** fight for a cobweb cocoon the size of a big dog.

Inside they will find a brown and white goat, dizzy and disturbed, but still alive. The goat is here to foreshadow that someone might still be alive after being captured by the spiders. Some players might think of instantly burning the cottage and in this case, they will hear the horrid screams of





Arcbold's wife, Tessa, as she wakes up inside a cocoon, being burned alive. It is unlikely the PCs will be able to save her. Oh, that's dark...

The Cobweb Cottage

The small cottage is completely covered in cobwebs. Doors, windows, roof, and chimney. Hundreds of spiders of all shapes and sizes crawl over the walls. Great cocoons and dried husks of dead goats hang as dreadful ornaments.

There are two possible ways in. The

front door and a hole on the thatch roof leading to the attic.

Webs can be burned with a torch as the PCs struggle to reach the door. Ask for DEX checks not to set the wood and thatch cottage on fire. (Poor Tessa!)

If they climb to the roof, they can easily access the attic through a hole in the thatch.

Inside the cottage, a large room with a table and a wood stove and a wall that supports the attic and forms a small bedroom.

On the table, rot meats, fruits and vegetables smell bad, drain ooze and attract all kinds of vermin. Large and sticky webs hang from above, closing the access to the attic.

The **Giant Rats** will attack from above when they approach the table or the stove.

Rats in the Attic

If they enter through the roof, two Giant Rats jump to attack.

“Will you walk into my parlour?” said the Spider...

The bedroom was taken over by a **Crab Spider** as its nest. Above the bed, a big cocoon (Tessa!) hangs from the ceiling. The spider will attack anyone who enters.

In the giant cocoon they will find Arcbold's wife, Tessa, alive but unconscious. She's weak, thirsty, famished, and poisoned.

If tended or healed by the PCs, she wakes up and has enough energy to tell her story before losing her senses again.

Tessa's Story

A few weeks ago, a star fell from the sky in the nearby swamp and Arcbold went there the next morning to investigate. He came back with the stone. She told him to get rid of it.

The next day the spiders came, and the vermin. Then, bigger spiders and even bigger vermin. Arcbold confessed he got greedy and hid the stone in the barn. He swore to get rid of it the next morning. But that night the animals were attacked. He ran to the barn and as soon as he left a giant spider came in through the roof and jumped on her.



The Barn

An old barn made of dark wood with a double sliding door on the front and an access upper window on the back. The window leads to the upper platform.



Through the Front Door

The stench hits them like a ton of bricks. Rot, sour and moldy. Smells like death, of the worst kind.

The carcasses of a horse and a cow are a feast for flies, maggots, and all kinds of vermin. Around them, spiders keep watch on their future prey.

The ground level is divided in a front area and the stables located under the upper platform. A flimsy ladder leads to the upper platform's double door.

The upper platform

Whether they access it through the inner doors or the outer back window, the result is the same: a stale and smelly room with an open square trapdoor at the center of the wooden floor.

There's hay and cobwebs everywhere. On a darker corner, there's a silhouette of a man leaning against the wall. It is Arcbold.

Arcbold

Arcbold is dead. But still moves. Covered in cobwebs and hay, his skin turned gray and his hollow eyes and gaping mouth producing a cascade of tiny spiders crawling over his body or tangling up and down in silk threads.

He points a bony finger to the PCs and utters something guttural and unnatural.

He will fight the players, trying to grab and toss them down through the trapdoor to the ground floor, below, where a **Crab Spider** is mounting guard over the entrance to the under cave.

The Hole

As soon as the **Crab Spider** hits half its Hit Points, it retreats and slides into a hole on the ground, disappearing into the Under Cave.

The Under Cave

The hole on the ground is large enough for a person to squeeze through it. There's a slight slide down on a rocky slope to access a small and moist cave where one can barely stand. The ceiling is supported by makeshift wood poles and beams. The walls are covered with rocks and roots. At the end of the cave lies a large, black, and gleaming stone. It is the **Dreadstone**. All around it there are a multitude of spiders, insects, centipedes, and all sorts of small underworld critters.





The Dreadstone

Perched atop a nest of cobweb, lies a roundish, shiny, and polished stone. It is black in color, with deep blue reflexes. Near the stone, the air tastes like ozone and a low-pitched hum resonates in the minds of all who get near it.

The **Crab Spider** from before is here, looking protective and jealous towards the stone. It will attack anyone who enters.

After killing it, they can deal with the stone. A few options:

If touched or attacked, the stone deals an electric shock (1d6) that knocks back any creature.

If covered in a blanket or cloth, the stone can be carried away, but it will attract spiders, insects, rats, and vermin from the vicinity. Orcs will be attracted as well, trying to rob the stone

The beams and poles can be forced to bring down the ceiling, burying it under the barn. STR tests to do it and DEX tests to escape the collapse of the ceiling

They can take the stone to the nearby swamp and leave it there.

The Old Oak in the Swamp

If they choose to take the Dreadstone back to the swamp where Arcbold one found it, they will walk for an hour or two until they reach a desolate place with the only feature being an old and twisted oak tree, with a big gaping hole on its trunk, giving it a monstrous look.

They can climb the tree and place the Dreadstone inside the hole in the oak where it will disappear inside the horrible tree. The humming in their mind will stop and they can leave without any consequence.

Ending the Adventure

Behind the barn, they will find Brumeer's cargo, ready to be carted down to the city. The vegetables are rotten and spoiled but the jugs and jars with the preserves can be cleaned. The dwarf merchant will pay another 10 gp for them.

They can take Tessa back with them, since the farm is ruined, but she will need healing or tending to resist the trip.

Brumeer will be very grateful and impressed with the Players and might turn into a valuable Patron. Maybe they can continue to work for him as guards in his way back to the mountain with his cargo.

But that's another story...



Monster Stats

Orc

Armor Class	6 [13]
Hit Dice	1 (4hp)
Attacks	1 × weapon (1d6 or by weapon)
THACO	19 [0]
Movement	120' (40')
Saving Throws	D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (1)
Morale	6 (8 with leader)
Alignment	Chaotic
XP	10 (leader: 10, chieftain: 75)

Number Appearing 2d4 (1d6 × 10)

Treasure Type D

Hate the sun: -1 to-hit in full daylight.

Weapons: Prefer axes, clubs, spears, or swords.

Crauen: Afraid of stronger creatures. Leaders may force them to fight.

Leader: Groups are led by an orc with 8 hit points. The leader gains a +1 to damage rolls.

Giant Rat

Armor Class	7 [12]
Hit Dice	½ (2hp)
Attacks	1 × bite (1d3 + disease)
THACO	19 [0]
Movement	120' (40') / 60' (20') swimming
Saving Throws	D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (1)
Morale	8
Alignment	Neutral
XP	5

Number Appearing 3d6 (3d10)

Treasure Type C

Disease: Afraid of fire

Crab Spider

Armor Class	7 [12]
Hit Dice	2* (9hp)
Attacks	1 × bite (1d8 + poison)
THACO	18 [+1]
Movement	120' (40')
Saving Throws	D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (1)
Morale	7
Alignment	Neutral
XP	25

Number Appearing 1d4 (1d4)

Treasure Type U

Ambush: Attack by dropping on victims from above.

Surprise: On a 1-4, due to camouflage.

Cling: Can walk on walls and ceilings.

Poison: Causes death in 1d4 turns (save versus poison with a +2 bonus).



Arcbold (Ghoul)

Armor Class	6 [13]
Hit Dice	2* (9hp)
Attacks	2 × claw (1d3 + paralysis), 1 × bite (1d3 + paralysis)
THACO	18 [+1]
Movement	90' (30')
Saving Throws	D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (2)
Morale	9
Alignment	Chaotic
XP	25
Number Appearing	1d6 (2d8)
Treasure Type	B

Paralysis: For 2d4 turns (save versus paralysis). Elves and creatures larger than ogres are unaffected. After paralyzing a target, ghouls will attack others.

Undead: Make no noise, until they attack. Immune to effects that affect living creatures (e.g., poison). Immune to mind-affecting or mind-reading spells (e.g., charm, hold, sleep).

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