

GM GEMS

A COLLECTION OF
GAME MASTER INSPIRATION



GOODMAN
GAMES

GM GEMS VOLUME 1: A COLLECTION OF GAME MASTER INSPIRATION

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INTRODUCTION

The job of the Game Master, despite that which makes it so rewarding, is often a thankless and tedious task exacerbated by the unpredictable nature of the average player. Even the most meticulous preparation takes you only so far when players throw an unexpected monkey wrench into the works, forcing you to improvise to keep the game from grinding to an unceremonious halt. That's where *GM Gems* comes in handy.

This systems-neutral collection of tips, tables, and inspirational articles for the beleaguered Game Master was written by some of the best known authors in the RPG industry, all of them veteran GMs, and the offerings found within its pages provide immediate usefulness for a wide variety of situations. Whether the adventurers spend time in the city, trek across the countryside, or explore the depths of a dungeon, *GM Gems* makes a Game Master's task easier, and may dramatically increase the quality of game play.

GM GEMS

If you enjoy the contents of *GM Gems*, please tell us about it on the Goodman Games forums at www.goodmangames.com or drop the authors a message at www.werecabbages.com.

Happy gaming!

This is a systems-neutral sourcebook. It is designed to be used with any role playing game you choose, in any edition. Most role playing games share certain conventions, such as attack rolls, saving throws (or their equivalent), and magical spells. We make reference to these generic terms where it helps to clarify a point, but you should feel free to apply them to the game of your choice.

Chapter One: The Urban Experience details unique inns and taverns that are sure to intrigue and entertain your players, random items the sticky-fingered pickpocket may come across while pinching purses in the city's market square, strange unorthodox holidays and suggestions for ways to use them in your campaign, rites of passage designed to add greater depth and meaning to character advancement, and more.

Chapter Two: Getting There is Half the Fun explodes with a wealth of options guaranteed to add thrills for any cross-country journey. It includes inspirational locales the characters may use as campsites, ancient ruins, and unique traveling merchants with some very unusual wares, sinister secrets, and intriguing rumors.

Chapter Three: The Dungeon contains articles and tables sure to liven up every aspect of your players' next dungeon crawl or wilderness expedition. From invigorating short encounters that will slap the glazed stares off their faces when the game bogs down, and alternate effects to unleash on your unsuspecting players when next they activate a *rod of wonder*, to 100 ready-made room dressings you can use to make even empty dungeon rooms interesting and fun.

In short, *GM Gems* helps you run the best planned and most colorfully improvised game sessions ever. It's like having a team of Game Masters in your corner. ♦



CHAPTER ONE: THE URBAN EXPERIENCE

ALCHEMICAL MISHAPS

When alchemy or potion-crafting fails, the event is usually glossed over or ignored. Why not add some fun to the next time things go awry? The following table lists unusual and entertaining side effects resulting from alchemical efforts that missed their mark, lab work debacles, or potions and tonics that have exceeded their shelf life. Select an appropriate effect to transform that boring failed skill check or that umpteenth quaffed potion into a memorable experience.

d% Alchemical Mishap

- 01 An attempt to create *dust of dimensional anchoring* opens an irresistible vortex to the Plane of Irony.
- 02 A potion evaporates, and the expanding cloud of golden mist turns all gold within 20 feet to flesh.
- 03 Vines spring from a flask and grow uncontrollably. All within 15 feet become *entangled* and become 1 year younger.
- 04 The alchemical admixture bubbles then desiccates, leaving behind gray pebbles. All creatures within 10 feet become two years older.
- 05 An explosion of noxious green fumes causes anyone within 10 feet to vomit out a single randomly determined potion. Players may collect the spew for later use.
- 06 All metal lab equipment corrodes, as if under attack by an invisible rust monster.
- 07 A potion's material components sizzle and pop, leaving behind a chalky *ioun stone* that reduces body weight by 50 percent.
- 08 A spilt snifter of brandy sullies a powdered magic ruby. When used as a material component, the ruby gives rise to a smoky void that, once dissipated, leaves behind a forever drunken homunculus.
- 09 Glowing blue vapors permeate the room, locate the single weakest magic item, and strip it of its powers.
- 10 The alchemist's hand pulses with a violet glow and begins to hum. The emanations escalate to unbearable extremes of light and sound. The effect appears permanent.
- 11 A small animal or wizard's familiar drinks several potions, grows to Gargantuan size, and stays that way for 3d6 hours.
- 12 Old potions left out in the open spontaneously transform into tiny oozes. Select the ooze type randomly.
- 13 An absentminded wizard's assistant mislabels a number of potion bottles.
- 14 An unstable potion reacts like a carbonated beverage whenever it is shaken vigorously, such as in the middle of combat.
- 15 Once uncorked, an old and unstable potion produces a random animal, as if it were a *bag of tricks*. The potion itself is undrinkable.
- 16 The potion produces the opposite of the intended effect.
- 17 The potion bottle turns out to be cracked and empty.
- 18 In addition to its normal effects, a sample of *sovereign glue* produces an effect similar to *dimensional anchor*.
- 19 During a fight, a jostled tanglefoot bag explodes on the hero carrying it.
- 20 A vial of *universal solvent* unexpectedly becomes a permanent, but diminutive stationary *gate* to a random plane.
- 21 The potion bottle contains a small bit of parchment. Invent the message most likely to send your heroes on a wild goose chase.
- 22 After it is used, a vial of magical oil attracts felines as if the user were of the same species and in heat.
- 23 The potion bottle screams when uncorked.
- 24 When activated, a malfunctioning sunrod flickers briefly, and then dies out.
- 25 In the wake of a thunderstone detonation, the area is permanently *silenced*.
- 26 An overpowered thunderstone produces a *gust of wind* spell.
- 27 An ill-made tanglefoot bag has moldered into green slime.
- 28 Alchemist's fire was improperly mixed with matter from the Elemental Plane of Air. The fire burns cold.
- 29 The person to the character's left just drank what he thought was a *cure light wounds* potion, but was, in fact, an *elixir of love*.
- 30 A curious-looking puddle of nearby chemicals acts like a *mirror of opposition*.
- 31 A dagger of alchemical silver hides a cold iron core.
- 32 Imbiber's skin is dyed a random color, and won't wash off!
- 33 The character's skin thickens abnormally. (Temporarily gains a +2 natural armor bonus, but receives a –1 penalty to Dexterity.)
- 34 Potion causes hair to fall out.
- 35 The imbiber's hair lengthens.
- 36 The imbiber's hair shortens.
- 37 A limb becomes abnormally long.
- 38 A limb becomes abnormally short.

d% Alchemical Mishap

- 39 The character's fingernails lengthen. (Temporarily gains a 1d6 natural claw attack.)
- 40 The potion causes the character's skin to dry and crack. It is extremely painful to do anything with her hands. (–1 penalty to all Dexterity-based skills and it requires a Concentration check to cast spells with somatic components.)
- 41 The concoction dyes the character's hair a random color, which won't wash out!
- 42 When the character opens the flask, a viscous liquid bubbles over the lip. It has the properties of *sovereign glue* and permanently bonds to anything it touches.
- 43 A burst of foul stench momentarily clouds the lab, and everyone inside smells like rotten mutton for 1d4 hours.
- 44 A bottle of highly reactive chemicals spontaneously combusts, setting a shelf on fire.
- 45 A slow leaking gas makes everyone in the lab sleepy.
- 46 A container of ashes is haunted by a ghost.
- 47 The character is missing an entire box of highly volatile chemicals. Be careful where you sit or suffer 1d6 fire damage from the unexpected explosion.
- 48 A group of pesky pixies keep rattling the alchemist's windows, breaking his concentration. After which they flee, laughing hysterically.
- 49 Half way through a concoction, the alchemist discovers there are missing pages in his recipe book. Pick another effect and—after 1d4 rounds—apply it to the unfinished brew.
- 50 A collection of herbs has moldered into toxic fungus.
- 51 A sudden change of pressure shatters all ceramic and glass items in the lab.
- 52 A vaporous cloud disintegrates all leather items in a 20-foot radius. No save.
- 53 Two chemicals spill; creating a pheromone that attracts dozens of female rats.
- 54 All the alchemist's potions have the side effect of making the imbiber extremely thirsty.
- 55 Touching the concoction gives the character warts.
- 56 The alchemist uses demon ichor as a secret ingredient, which corrupts good individuals exposed to it.
- 57 A virulent liquid explodes, instantly crystallizing any living flesh within in a 10-foot radius.
- 58 A blast of vapor oxidizes any iron in a 10-foot radius.
- 59 After drinking a potion, the character belches up a Diminutive humanoid-looking construct that obeys the character's command.
- 60 A freezing cold gas erupts from a beaker and sinks to the floor. Anyone standing in it gets frost bite up to their ankles.
- 61 Unbeknownst to the character, he has created a random potion. Roll secretly in the *DMG*.
- 62 Amnesia. The alchemist loses 1d6 Craft (alchemy) skill points and forgets the nature of the last concoction she brewed.
- 63 The alchemy lab equipment becomes a single and hostile Tiny, Small, or Medium animated object (GM's choice).
- 64 The lab equipment becomes a single and hostile Medium, Large, or Huge animated object (GM's choice).
- 65 The potion vial becomes a *bottle of air*.
- 66 The potion vial becomes an *eversmoking bottle*.
- 67 The alchemist's hair turns to snakes that start biting him.
- 68 The accident draws the attention of an ethereal filcher. It steals a random object and moves on.
- 69 A flash of light and the alchemist is affected by *permanency* and a random spell from the list below (roll 1d8). The alchemist must also pay the XP cost.
- 1d8 Spell & XP Cost**
- 1 *Arcane sight* 1,500 XP
 - 2 *Comprehend languages* 500 XP
 - 3 *Darkvision* 1,000 XP
 - 4 *Detect magic* 500 XP
 - 5 *Read magic* 500 XP
 - 6 *See invisibility* 1,000 XP
 - 7 *Tongues* 1,500 XP
 - 8 *Resistance* 500 XP
- 70 A loud concussion and the alchemist is unable to speak for 1d100 hours.
- 71 The alchemist becomes color blind and tone deaf.
- 72 Alchemist's hair transforms into dreadlocks.
- 73 Alchemist's alignment becomes lawful.
- 74 Alchemist's alignment becomes chaotic.
- 75 The alchemist is granted the divine rank of 0. This rank is only recognized by gnomes, who worship him accordingly.
- 76 The alchemist develops an unhealthy fear of potions (DC 10 Will save to open any bottle).

d% Alchemical Mishap

- 77 A huge pointy blue hat with big yellow stars appears on the alchemist's head. The hat is an intelligent, neutrally aligned item: Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 10, communicates by empathy, 30-foot vision and hearing, can use *detect magic* at will, Ego 4. Special Purpose: to be worn at all times. When not worn, the hat communicates feelings of deep sadness to the owner.
- 78 For 1d6 days the alchemist secretes an oily, musk-like chemical that nearly every form of animal life finds offensive. The alchemist gains SA: Stench (Ex). All living creatures within 30 feet must succeed on a DC 13 Fortitude save or be sickened for 1d10 rounds. Creatures that successfully save cannot be affected by the same stench for 24 hours. A *delay poison* or *neutralize poison* spell removes the effect from the sickened creature. Creatures with immunity to poison are unaffected, and creatures resistant to poison receive their normal bonus to their saving throws.
- 79 Alchemist spills the substance over his hands, which twist into hideous, unusable shapes.
- 80 The alchemist splashes substance over body, which becomes transparent. The alchemist's organs and bones are still visible, making him look like an undead monster.
- 81 An alchemical substance evaporates in a cloud of effervescent bubbles. When the bubbles pop, they release flashes of bright light that *daze* anyone in the area.
- 82 Alchemist inhales alchemical fumes and sets his nose hairs on fire! He takes 1d3 points of fire damage and loses all sense of smell for 1d4+1 days.
- 83 A failed potion animates as a Small elemental and furiously attacks the closest creature.
- 84 When exposed to air, the alchemical substance attracts a swarm of vicious wasps.
- 85 The alchemical substance dries up into a ball of sweet, chewy material. Chewing the substance slowly releases the effects of the original concoction, which activates 1d6 rounds later.
- 86 The substance implodes, destroying the container in which it is held. The glass fragments glow with ambient energy and can be added to the recipe to create a more powerful form of the original substance.
- 87 The substance defies gravity and causes the container it is placed in to levitate several feet off the ground.
- 88 A failed potion works normally, but anyone drinks it smells like rotting garbage until the potion wears off.
- 89 The alchemist spills a substance over a nearby plant. The plant spontaneously grows to enormous size, destroying much of the lab.
- 90 Alchemical fumes cause everyone within 20 feet to hiccup uncontrollably.
- 91 A flask of alchemist's fire is inert, but the liquid works as a potent lubricant and anyone struck is affected by an extended *grease* spell.
- 92 A batch of thunderstones creates a loud pig-like squeal instead of the usual bang.
- 93 A potion becomes intelligent and begs not to be drunk.
- 94 Alchemical substance becomes incorporeal and can affect incorporeal, but not corporeal, creatures normally.
- 95 An alchemical mixture spilled on the character's feet creates a dimly glowing trail of footprints wherever he or she walks. The effect lasts for 1d4 days.
- 96 A potion evaporates and reforms as a strangely colored cloud. The cloud unleashes the effects of the potion over a 20-foot area in the form of rain.
- 97 The imbiber swallows the substance and his tongue falls out. It squirms as if alive and tries to escape.
- 98 An unstable tanglefoot bag has a 50% chance of randomly detonating.
- 99 An antitoxin works normally, but creatures drinking it become shortsighted for 1d6 hours.
- 00 The alchemist explodes, but the potion works just fine.



100 DOCKSIDE EVENTS

Down at the docks the mundane and the exotic mingle. Mysterious cargoes from far-off lands come to ground, sorcerer tax collectors argue with one-eyed ship captains, and adventurers haggle over passage into danger. Because the docks stand as the border between one world and another—the sea and the land, the beginning of things and their endings—they are a place where anything might happen. So pry open a crate of intrigue, expect the unexpected, and let an old salt show you a little adventure!

Roll d% and find the result on the chart to the right or simply choose one from the list.

d% Dockside Event

- 01 A ship accidentally unmoors, causing a mysterious scroll to fall from its furled mast.
- 02 Sailors tell of a local fisherman who speaks with fish and refuses to hunt them any longer.
- 03 Citizens smash sacred eels against the front doors of their dockside shanties to prevent the lacedons from returning.
- 04 At the docks, a beggar belittles only those who give him a handout.
- 05 The lapping waves go suddenly, eerily silent.
- 06 Lightning strikes a ship and it sets sail on its own.
- 07 The dream self of a sleeping sailor disembodies and swims through the air. It does not seem to recognize its whereabouts, but nearby crewmates recognize the eidolon.
- 08 A fisherman unloads his catch, including an amphibious humanoid.
- 09 Cutthroats lead shackled foreigners from the holds of their ships to the slave market.
- 10 Everyone dockside hears a drowning man's telepathic death scream.
- 11 A vengeful evoker vaporizes a boat as it leaves the harbor.
- 12 Two shrieking sailors run past, flickering in and out of existence.
- 13 A fisherman on a pier stoops to pick up a golden hook and is yanked out into the water.
- 14 A panicked juggler insists that if he stops juggling crabs, one of them will explode.
- 15 A ship believed lost years before, sails into port.
- 16 Youngsters bring news that a colossal sea urchin has been found just offshore.
The locals prepare a cook out.
- 17 Gnoll pirates launch a night raid, hunting and seizing only halflings.
- 18 A marid threatens to sink any ship that sets sail without first answering his riddle.
- 19 The tide mysteriously rises several feet! All scurry for higher ground.
- 20 Something has chewed through an anchor chain.
- 21 Posters advertising a maritime circus appear spontaneously all around the docks.
- 22 A fisherman's wife plucks a fishhook from her squeamish man's derriere.
- 23 A youngster's sign offers 2 cp for the return of his lost seal.
- 24 A bottled love letter washes ashore.
- 25 An osprey lays a golden egg, and a riot breaks out.
- 26 Fishbone garlands, a local holiday decoration, festoon the docks. Hooligans appear and vandalize every last one of them.
- 27 A press gang armed with belaying pins lurks in a narrow alleyway.
- 28 Stevedores unloading a crate marked "Exotic Animal" drop it when a fistfight breaks out.
The crate cracks open.
- 29 A serpent formed of water crests out past the breakers. Arguments on its significance break out around the docks.
- 30 A cloud, shaped like a galleon, descends and sends a landing boat to shore.
- 31 The daily catch includes a fish with human eyes.
- 32 Someone sets off a consignment of fireworks in a docked ship's hold.
- 33 A mirror-plated warship blockades the port, halting all trade and blinding any who look at it too long.
- 34 A hurricane draws near.
- 35 The Longshoremen are on strike, and goods are rotting in their ships.
- 36 One of the imaginary atolls on a novelty nautical map is the PCs' actual homeland.
- 37 The latest haul of fish smells like flowers.
- 38 A man skulking in a wharf alleyway says, "Psst!" and gestures frantically.
- 39 A street performer blows bubbles in the shapes of ships that later sink at sea.
- 40 A press gang abducts the drunken son of a crime boss.
- 41 Gutting a shark reveals a merman's arm still clutching a coral dagger.
- 42 The local ruler proclaims a new mariner's tax, and citizens at dockside attack the announcing herald.
- 43 A body washes up on shore.
- 44 An angry druid confronts woodsman as they cart exotic timber to a ship.
- 45 A piper leads dancing children into the harbor (either from out of the water or down into it), all of which are somehow able to breathe under water.
- 46 Tattooed monks engage in a spectacular duel.
- 47 Overnight, an iceberg forms around a docked trireme.
- 48 A whirlpool forms in the bay.
- 49 Bilge water pumped from a merchant ship contains strange, multi-legged crustaceans.
- 50 A flower girl has lobster pincers in place of hands.

d% Dockside Event

- 51 A handless pickpocket covered in daisy petals lies dead on the pier.
- 52 Laughing children chase a rat through the PCs' legs.
- 53 A barroom brawl breaks out between the crews of rival ships.
- 54 A dozen soldiers conduct a dockside "witch hunt."
- 55 A four-legged whale tromps onto land and asks directions to an inland sea.
- 56 Recruiters hire manpower to filch dinosaur eggs from a tropical island.
- 57 A ship is hauled into dry dock for barnacle scraping.
- 58 Residents loot the gold-laden coffers of a sinking imperial treasure barge.
- 59 Children throw eggs against a *wall of force* blocking entry to the docks. From the appearance of the *wall*, this is a long-standing habit.
- 60 A carnival's owlbear goes berserk until its keeper toots a silent whistle.
- 61 An unmanned ship barrels into port and crashes through the docks.
- 62 A despondent wizard's spell book drips with brine as he shuffles past.
- 63 A merchant offers a barnacled magic lamp for sale, but its genie is only a *magic mouth*.
- 64 A disheveled dandy crawls around the pier on bloody hands and knees.
- 65 Mutineers dump their cargo overboard.
- 66 A tavern owner requires disposal of a cursed octopus eye.
- 67 A boy returns from paddling in the fjords with an oar mysteriously transformed into silver.
- 68 A bread shop's roof collapses and hungry gulls swarm by the hundreds.
- 69 Clerics of a death goddess carry three bodies onto a ship. No one stops them.
- 70 Sahaugin diplomats arrive unexpectedly, asking where they might set up their embassy.
- 71 A panicked carriage horse runs off the end of a pier.
- 72 An earthquake fells a lighthouse, which crashes from nearby cliffs directly onto the docks.
- 73 Women in dresses of red velvet confront the party with a proposition.
- 74 All by the docks feel a distinct, slowly strengthening tug toward the ocean.
- 75 A wealthy exporter is looking to hire bodyguards for himself and his cargo.
- 76 Three albino dolphins beach themselves, and the hair of any who touch them goes white!
- 77 The ever-worsening smell of sulfur rolls in off the waves.
- 78 Thin tongues of flame appear far out on the water.
- 79 When peasants discover they have been served zombie flesh at a noble's barbecue to benefit the poor, it sullies the event.
- 80 A sailor misses his boat.
- 81 The PCs spot crewmen stealing cargo from the crates they are offloading.
- 82 The ocean brine turns sweet, but then thousands of dead sea creatures drift into view.
- 83 An herbalist begs the PCs to dive for the kelp she needs to cure her rheumatism.
- 84 Workers repairing a collapsed pier discover a niche full of keys.
- 85 A cockfight in a back alley disbands when someone introduces a cockatrice.
- 86 Sailors mistake an irascible male elf for a woman.
- 87 Young boys herd purple sheep onto a ship.
- 88 A loud ship's horn announces an arrival, but the horizon is clear.
- 89 Bounty hunters ask after a man with gills who is wanted for mass murder.
- 90 A tavern spit-roasts a small kraken caught two days earlier.
- 91 A beggar woman swathes herself in fish innards to drum up sympathy.
- 92 A freak wave dumps a drowned noble and his luggage on the docks.
- 93 Sailors are afraid to untangle a flailing black albatross from their rigging.
Their ship cannot sail.
- 94 A drunken sailor's sea chantey harmonizes with a passing bard's mandolin strumming.
- 95 A man chases gold coins all around the dock.
The coins have a mind and mobility of their own.
- 96 A ship goes missing while its crew takes shore leave.
- 97 A ship captain places curses upon the harbormaster for quarantining his cargo.
- 98 A galleon brings important dignitaries. Soldiers clear the dock during a security sweep.
- 99 On a nearby pier, a crowd of people bid on a mollusk said to regenerate its edible parts.
- 00 An up and coming clothier insists on giving the PCs new swabby outfits free of charge.

LOCAL FOLKTALES AND THE TRUTH BEHIND THE MYTHS

In a world of science based upon rules of cause and effect, people still find themselves resorting to stories and fables to explain what they only partially understand. Imagine how those born into a realm of magic, where the inexplicable and the just plain baffling happens as often as the sunrise, might use legends to make sense of the world. Each of the following folktales comes with the truth behind the myth and an adventure hook to use them in your game.

ANGRY WATERS

The spirit of a little boy haunts the spring where he drowned. When angered the water runs red with blood and others suffer the same fate.

Truth: A black-hearted nixie drowned a young villager and sometimes manages to lure others to a similar doom. The red coloration comes when particularly heavy rains draw in large amounts of topsoil.

Adventure Hook: The characters arrive in town with a caravan during the rainy season. The locals have frightened the caravan leader with the tales of the haunted spring, and he refuses to risk crossing it until the adventurers go and make the way safe for him.

BASILISK BATHING HABITS

Basilisks shy away from water because they instinctively know that if they see their reflection, they could be turned to stone.

Truth: Basilisks are actually not very strong swimmers, so they avoid water when possible, but seeing their own reflection in water poses no threat to them.

Adventure Hook: A local farmer tries to convince the heroes to help him get rid of a basilisk that has encroached on his lands. He has come up with a plan to lure the creature to a pond and get it to petrify itself when it sees its reflection in the water. The farmer can't execute his plan on his own, though, and only the adventurers seem brave enough to help him.

THE BLACK HILLS OGRES

The ogres who live in the Black Hills are compulsive gamblers. A gnome once dined his way out of their cook pot.

Truth: The local folklore about the ogres is false. It is based on an inflated story about a gnome that used crooked dice and a carefully worded suggestion spell to escape the ogres' clutches.

Adventure Hook: An assassin hired by an enemy of the characters wants to hire the adventurers to deliver a sealed chest full of lead bricks, "gambling debts," to the Black Hill ogres in hopes that they will do his job for him.

COVEY OF HAGS

A covey of hags offers true prophecies to anyone who makes the hazardous climb to their mountain lair, but only on nights when the moon is full. On any other occasion, asking the old crones a question gives them power over the person, making him helpless to resist their savage attacks.

Truth: This is partially true. Three sisters, fully human and non-hostile, with the gift of soothsaying only when the moon is full, live in a nearby mountain cave. However, their magical abilities come with many deformities, and the copper deposits in their cave give them a greenish tinge.

Adventure Hook: A mountain climber desperate for answers to a perplexing problem has gone missing while making the trek to the sisters and his family fears the worst. Someone must search the cave of these notorious hags to rescue him, but take care to never actually ask them a question since the full moon is several weeks away.

EATING GARLIC

Eating five cloves of garlic and drinking a great deal of a local liquor distilled from indigenous tree bark and marshmoss before entering the nearby swamp protects travelers from a particularly vile curse called "Nathu's Doom."

Truth: This is only partially true. The swamp teems with an intestinal parasite all but guaranteed to make humanoids miserable, and in some extreme cases, it can actually kill. Though the garlic has no effect on them, the alcoholic concoction kills the parasites.

Adventure Hook: A proud local priest that preaches temperance intends to lead a procession into the swamp without the benefit of the local remedy. He claims that faith alone has the power to overcome the curse, and a number of impressionable locals plan to follow him. The odds of their survival are very slim unless someone can talk them out of it by revealing the truth or coming to their aid with the local remedy.

THE FINGER LORD

The lord that once lived in the abandoned keep just outside of town used to collect the fingers of his enemies and leave the rest of their corpses to rot. Now his ghost does the same to anyone who trespasses during the night. The horrible smell wafting from the keep suggests that he has found some recent victims.

Truth: This urban legend is partially true. The ghost of the former lord lurks in the abandoned keep and kills anyone who dares to enter his domain. However, he lacks the ability to cut off their fingers. Instead, a group of troglodytes that live in caves under the keep consider retrieving the fingers of the ghosts' victims a test of bravery. They are careful to do so during the day, though, when the ghost is less active. The horrible smell that has been reported is actually the lingering stench of the troglodytes.

Adventure Hook: The ghost in the keep has recently claimed the life of a courier wearing a magic ring owned by his employer. The ring's owner is willing to pay good money to the heroes to enter the haunted keep and retrieve it for him.

FOOD POISONING

When vampires feed on someone who is drunk or afflicted with a disease, they suffer from the same ill effects until it passes through their system. Sometimes sneezing or acting sick can deter a vampire attack.

Truth: As undead creatures, vampires are immune to diseases and all poisons, including alcohol.

Adventure Hook: A misguided church leader who has been given bad information tries to convince a paladin or cleric player character to deliberately infect himself with a debilitating disease and allow the vampire terrorizing the city to feed on him.

GARGOYLES AND COCKATRICE

Gargoyles are made of stone, that's why petrification cannot hurt them. They attack cockatrices without any fear at all.

Truth: A cockatrice lacks the ability to injure a gargoyle due to its damage reduction, which means it cannot use its petrification attack. However, gargoyles are vulnerable to other forms of petrification, such as spells and gaze attacks.

Adventure Hook: A wizard wants to hire the heroes to enlist the aid of a group of gargoyles using several scrolls of charm monster he has scribed. He hopes to use the gargoyles against a medusa whose lair in the Ghetrian desert is filled with treasure and magic he hopes to acquire, including a valuable relic the medusa stole.

LIBATIONS TO THE FOREST

Pouring strong spirits on the trail before you enter the Marsuval forest keeps the road clear and shows respect for the supernatural forces that live there.

Truth: This local legend is completely false. The smell of liquor actually attracts and enrages the shambling mounds that thrive within the forest. The bogus travelers' tip was started by an evil druid profiting from the gear of travelers killed by the shambling mounds.

Adventure Hook: The evil druid responsible for spreading this false travelers' tip hopes to swindle the heroes out of their possessions. He hires them under the false identity of a traveling sage compiling a book of strange folklore. He tells the PCs that he intends to verify the truthfulness of this local rumor by experimenting with various types of liquors and droughts that he knows the shambling mounds react most violently to.

RED WINTER PASS

During winter you should always wear a red cloak when traveling through the mountain pass. Those who don't wear red anger the spirits, leading to misfortune and disasters.

Truth: An irritable, but colorblind frost giant named Gruusksh throws huge snowballs at anyone he spots moving through the passes. Travelers wearing red are effectively invisible to him at such a remote distance.

Adventure Hook: The adventurers have business that forces them to use the mountain pass. Unfortunately for them, the skeptical merchant that sold them their red cloaks uses water-soluble dye to cut costs, and the weather is particularly snowy this time of year.

SING ALONG WITH THE HARPIES

It's a little known fact that harpies are completely helpless if you just sing along with them.

Truth: Years ago, a local commoner overheard an adventuring bard tell the story of how he used his skills to counter a harpy's song. Not understanding that bards, and only bards, possess the ability to counter a harpy's song, the man began spreading this erroneous tip.

Adventure Hook: A village elder has led the town's church choir into the nest of a nearby harpy in hopes of destroying the creature that has preyed upon them for years. If the adventurers act quickly, they may be able to avert a disaster.

TATTOOING A TROLL

Trolls use hot metal brands to create their versions of tattoos. The more brands a troll has the greater its status in troll society.

Truth: This is actually true. Trolls use branding rituals as tests of courage and stoicism. Those who don't flinch and ruin the image gain respect.

Adventure Hook: A troll left horribly burnt after a fight with an adventuring party pretends he deliberately inflicted the scars and now commands the respect and loyalty of many other trolls. The troll has mistakenly focused its desire for revenge on the player characters, and is planning an elaborate ambush for them with the help of its troll kin.

WISHFUL THINKING

The only way to get an efreeti to grant you a wish that won't backfire is to first make one for its benefit.

Truth: This is false, but efreet love spreading that rumor since it cuts down on the wishes they must actually grant. An efreeti will still look for loopholes in a wish even if someone wastes a wish to benefit him.

Adventure Hook: A young scholar, freshly graduated from the academy, needs some help recovering a genie bottle. He offers the adventurers one of the three wishes the efreeti will grant, explaining he needs only one and he plans to offer the efreeti the third as a way of getting the genie's cooperation. ♦

MEMORABLE NPC FRILLS

You can tell from your NPC's stat block that she's a muscular half-elf dressed in leather armor who punctures heroes with a rapier, but what about her stands out in a crowd or when she is cutting deals in a tavern? What helps your players remember her the next time they meet? Does your NPC wear a gaudy yellow sash? Is one boot high and the other low? Does she have a unique pet, or is she inordinately proud of a missing ear?

The following list presents one hundred small details of appearance that can help stamp an NPC into your players' minds. Roll d% or simply choose a special detail that fits your needs.

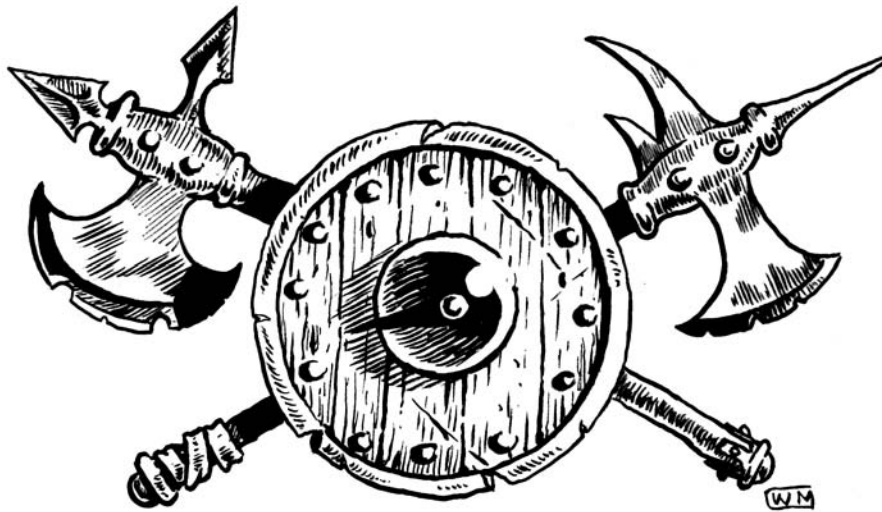
d% NPC Frill

- 01 A small, embroidered bag hanging from a belt. It contains beach sand from the NPC's homeport.
- 02 A backpack made from a dead vargouille.
- 03 Thirteen cold iron daggers tucked into a wide sash.
- 04 Gloves and matching scarf of electric blue velvet.
- 05 A polished ebony staff capped with a preserved pseudodragon head.
- 06 A necklace of dragon sinews strung with gold coins.
- 07 The NPC holds fresh thistle in her mouth for good luck during battles. She chews it for fun between battles and can discourse at length on varieties and thistle harvests.
- 08 Flyaway hair tied with small ribbons of different colors.
- 09 A strange and noisy breastplate made entirely from huge clamshells.
- 10 A large opal, with *continual flame* cast upon it, in place of an eye.
- 11 Boots, sleeves, and neckline trimmed with worn and dirty winter wolf fur. A wolf stole, head attached, completes the ensemble. One of the wolf's teeth is gold.
- 12 A long facial scar ending in a split lip that forces her to lisp and spray spittle.
- 13 A staff, carved from a stone giant's femur, riddled with cunningly concealed compartments for spell components.
- 14 The NPC blasphemously wears metal holy symbols as knee and elbow adornments.
- 15 A composite bow made from gnarled roots.
- 16 Padded leather helmet covered with small, slowly spinning spikes.
- 17 Wooden shoes painted bright yellow, and a pendant for prancing gleefully at the demise of foes.
- 18 A wicker shield with a coat of arms woven into it.
- 19 Flesh-eating beetles crawl beneath her clothes. She calls them her 'pets' and orders ale for them at inns.
- 20 A glove with a false finger. It replaces a missing digit with a sheathed poison blade.
- 21 A flashy silver medallion bearing a symbol of the merchant's guild.
- 22 A riding crop with the names of horses carved into it. Some of the names are stained with old blood.
- 23 A satchel brimming over with recently copied books and scrolls.
- 24 A belt made of snakeskin and rare feathers.
- 25 A wristband with a built-in flask that contains a poison antidote.
- 26 A very tall, flat-topped hat with pet bats inside. Intermittently one escapes, but the hat never empties.
- 27 Gold-trimmed cyan robes that conceal banded armor.
- 28 A long, flowing silk robe that billows along the ground.
- 29 A sash woven from the teeth and hair of fallen enemies.
- 30 Very long pearl earrings.
- 31 A hell hound hair shirt worn inside out for self-mortification.
- 32 Shoulder pads made from large, burnished turtle shells.
- 33 A long black wig hides terrible burn scars.
- 34 One all-white eye with a pinprick pupil that seems to look everywhere but at the person with whom she is talking.
- 35 Heavy gloves with no fingertips.
- 36 Votive candleholders on each shoulder. One day, every week, the candles are lit. Once a month, the flames burn green and smell of allspice.
- 37 A scarf covering mouth and nose, worn to hide a misshapen jaw.
- 38 A robe covered with astrological charts and symbols. The charts rotate when no one is looking.
- 39 Headpiece made of giant beetle mandibles that frame the NPC's jaw.
- 40 A sash with incantations in Draconic.
- 41 A long, silvered sword with a spiraling blade in a spiraling sheath.
- 42 A spotted fur vest and matching beret.
- 43 A goatskin cap with wooden flaps hanging over each ear.
- 44 Beggar's disguise, including crutches and a leg bound up to appear amputated at the knee.
- 45 Light crossbow made from the ribs and spine of a small dragon.
- 46 A scimitar with a dragon-tooth handle and blade cut to whistle when swung.
- 47 The NPC rides a miniature, armored elephant.
- 48 A hood made from a lion's head and mane.
- 49 Dozens of fine silver chains hang around her waist.
- 50 Long, braided hair woven with golden thread and gilded leaves.

d% **NPC Frill**

- 51 Thick, foggy spectacles.
- 52 A long bronze shepherd's crook with a holy symbol at the end of the hook.
- 53 A stiff leather slave's collar set with metal rings.
- 54 A tattoo of raking talons on the left side of the face.
- 55 A twisted mustache wrapped in thin bands of gold.
- 56 Hair curled tightly and shaved in the shape of a holy symbol.
- 57 Long hair pulled through a hole in the top of a conical helmet.
- 58 Black kohl worn around the eyes.
- 59 Glowing fire beetle glands hang from her belt, each marked with a strange rune.
- 60 A sword enchanted with a permanent *ghost sound* spell of men singing chants, stored in a padded sheath to muffle the sound.
- 61 A spyglass on a chain.
- 62 A ring on each finger, each showing the favor of a different guild.
- 63 A large flask of wine always kept in the off hand and ever full.
- 64 Dozens of leather bracelets, each commemorating a fallen friend.
- 65 Obscenely bulging eyeballs.
- 66 A ring full of keys hanging from a thick leather belt.
- 67 At all times, she wears one of three mood masks: frowning, smiling, or surprised. Often she switches them in mid-conversation, almost too fast to notice.
- 68 A necklace of wooden tabs, each inscribed with a subordinate's name.
- 69 A rag doll from childhood preserved inside a solid glass sphere.
- 70 A very thin shawl of raw silk.
- 71 A necklace with a complicated timepiece that chimes once a day.
- 72 A leather jerkin dyed seven bright colors and containing the coats of arms of seven brothers.
- 73 High boots with the seams sealed with a pungent, insect-attracting animal fat.
- 74 Long leather gloves with small tools hidden at the wrists.
- 75 A plain monk's robe decorated with a map of the constellations in winter.
- 76 A sheaf of papers and a megaphone made from a minotaur horn.
- 77 She wields a broom to clear aside objects and people wherever she walks.
- 78 Colorful face makeup.
- 79 Expensive pearls wired to each side of the nose.
- 80 Neck lengthened by adding metal rings.
- 81 A wax writing tablet used to take notes and draw diagrams.
- 82 She uses a hand puppet of a king to talk to strangers and refers to herself in the third person.
- 83 A robe with dried medicinal plants woven into it.
- 84 She sports obviously fake, oversized teeth and takes offense at any who mention them.
- 85 A flock of small birds fly about her and frequently perch on her shoulders and head before taking to the air.
- 86 A poultice and a thick leather collar cover an infected neck wound.
- 87 A bony, hairless ridge along the top of the head.
- 88 Patches of weretiger fur grafted onto open wounds.
- 89 When anxious, she rubs a small silver locket containing a painting of her lost love.
- 90 A shield with a broken mosaic of a wild boar.
- 91 A large, silver-plated drinking horn.
- 92 A scythe with spent runic magic carved all over the burn-stained blade.
- 93 Her shirt and leggings are stuffed with bags of sawdust to appear more muscular.
- 94 A rattling collection of pots, pans, and cooking utensils.
- 95 Drawstring pants that require constant retying.
- 96 A backpack made from thin leather sewn over a harpy's ribcage.
- 97 Packets of mint leaves stuffed inside clothing hide the scent of festering wounds.
- 98 A broken nose re-healed at a strange angle so one nostril opens directly forward.
- 99 A woven headband used to carry large loads.
- 00 She sports a painted, velum umbrella, which shades her from the sun and rain. She insists on carrying it open, even indoors.





rites of passage

Rites of passage are important turning points and ceremonies that we read about in popular fantasy and science fiction, that we witness in the real world, and that play a role in the backgrounds of our lovable characters. Rites of Passage help us to shape characters' personalities, motives, and quirks. But why not make these important steps in character evolution an active part of the game? Don't turn the growth and development of a character into merely scribbling down a few new skills or powers on a piece of paper. Explore, in game, how a character's new abilities were earned.

The following ceremonies are also an opportunity to expose your players to elements of local culture from your campaign world. Common folk, especially in small villages and towns, hold a broad array of beliefs and superstitions. Use rites of passage to expose your players to local viewpoints, to drive your story forward, and to help players immerse themselves in the setting.

A BOWL OF MAGGOTS AND A BOTTLE OF WHISKEY

Some of the more sinister and horrid cabals require candidates seeking entry to undertake a test wherein they must eat a pound of live maggots, then drown them with half a bottle of absinthe. They believe that if candidates can handle so nauseating (and potentially fatal) a physical test, they can tolerate the cabal's normal practices.

THE CRAFT OF PARADISE

Aspirants to the druidic order must earn their place by traveling alone into the wilds to collect the tail feather of a willing hawk, the claw of an amused predator capable of killing a man, and the heart of a tree. Communion with fauna and trial and error eventually yield the first two items, but the heart of a tree is slang for the diplomatic procurement of a dryad's ivy garter. Female aspirants may return with a dryad's ivy bracelet. When the tasks are complete, the new druid returns to the Order, connects the feather and claw into the garter or bracelet, and then wears it proudly for one year.

THE DRAG

Pirates, buccaneers, and other seafarers often perform a test called "The Drag" to measure the dedication and desire of aspiring crewmen. First, they lash candidates with a scourge that leaves dozens of bleeding cuts across their backs. Then the crew binds the hands of aspirants with 30 yards of rope, tosses them overboard, and drags them behind the ship. Seawater burns their cuts as the candidates struggle not to drown. If potential crewmembers keep their heads up for an hour, they may join the crew. Losing candidates drown or feed the sharks.

DREAM OF THE DRAGON

A hero who wishes to awaken the power of his draconic ancestry must drink from the Pool of Dreams, after which he slips into a deep sleep and is visited by the spirit of his forebears. Unfortunately, the pool is located deep within the Frosteye Mountains, and legend states that a dragon of great power stands guard over its waters. Only the "blooded" can hope to overcome arcane puzzles and traps the guardian has created to keep out all but the most worthy from the shores of the sacred pool.

FISTS OF STONE

In their high sanctuary, the monks of Lao Tsun practice a technique called the Stone Fist. They will teach their technique to any who first reach their sanctuary, and then succeed in a challenge. They bind the candidate's fists in rune-inscribed gauze, and then place them in two urns, each filled with wet concrete. Once dry, the urns are broken, leaving the contestants hands sealed in blocks of hardened, urn-shaped stone. The aspirant has five blows in which to shatter his concrete encased fists against a flat surface. If successful, the monks permit the candidate to join the monastery and learn their secrets. Lao Tsun training lasts four months, which is about the time it takes for the candidate's broken fists to heal.

HEART OF FIRE

Those sorcerers and wizards that specialize in fire magic hold that the fiery heart of ever smoking Ashfall Mountain contains untold magical secrets, and they also claim to feel a connection, almost an empathy, with the ancient volcano. To gain membership into the fire magickers' inner circle, the aspiring apprentice must journey into the heart of the volcano and bring back a piece of flaming rock from its heart. From the time they retrieve it until the close of their apprenticeships, novitiate fire specialists must never permit the flame of their stoves to die out.

LOFTED VOLLEY

In order to join the archer elite, a candidate must launch his first arrow upwards and then strike it from the air with another. The aspirant must continue this feat of arms until four shafts have produced three mid-air collisions—but before any shafts land. For this operation to work, the second arrow must strike the first as high off the ground as possible, and as distance decreases with each pull of the bowstring, the fourth arrow needs strike the third just before it lands. Those capable of completing this impressive task earn The Blaster, a badge shaped like an X, the four ends of which are tipped with sharpened silver arrowheads.

THE LONELY HUNT

In the wilds, to enter the ranks of the greatest hunters and outdoorsmen, young rangers must travel into the most hostile regions with only a bow, a hunting knife, and 10 arrows. There, aspiring hunters must slay one of the great and ferocious beasts that call the region home. Aspirants who survive the Lonely Hunt then carry the carcass of their foe back to the lodge, where it is roasted in a grand ceremonial feast, recognizing the successful candidate as a peer among the wilderness hunter elite.

THE NECROTIC EXOTIC

Those despicable few who desire induction into the necromantic arts must first root around in cemeteries and abattoirs, furtively harvesting carefully selected body parts from a diverse collection of corpses. They then carefully stitch these bestial and humanoid materials together, forming a multi-special flesh golem of abhorrent visage. Necromancer elders animate the makeshift golem just long enough for initiates to slay their own hard-won amalgamation, thereby proving both their stomach for the gore inherent in the necromantic trade and an utter lack of sentimentality.

POTION CRAFT

Among alchemists and potion-brewing arcanists, one of the tests to graduate from apprenticeship is the crafting of their first magic potion. Potion brewers must successfully create an effect that has never been created before (see Alchemical Mishaps in Chapter One to add some real excitement to this test!), and present their achievements to a circle of peers for approval.

RAM'S BANE

To join the proudest fighting force of the dwarven nations requires deeds that outstrip those of the average dwarven fighter. Dwarves who wish to join the grand corps of the warrior elite must travel to Mount Jhagun Daru to participate in a unique initiation rite. Candidates stand within a ten-foot wide circle of splintered bones upon a mountain ledge. They are allowed no armor, excepting a normal wooden tower shield. Judges from the corps loose seven trained rams, bred for strength and agility, upon the aspirant. They release the rams one at a time, and it is the warrior's task to endure the beasts' best attempts to batter him out of the circle. Should he stand firm, never leaving the circle, the aspiring dwarf earns the title of Hornworthy, and is welcomed into their ranks. If he fails, they give the shamed dwarf The Fool's Butt: the failed aspirant must turn his posterior to the victorious ram and accept a full charge. This tends to discourage attempting the rite without due seriousness and proper preparation.

THE SILVER DAGGER

For the lycanthrope hunter, silver is a potent weapon against the foe. The council of lycanthrope hunters honors those who prevail against a were-creature, unarmed and unarmored with a specially forged blade. The butt of this masterwork silver dagger is set with a pure white topaz and engraved with a stylized full moon motif.

SLIPPING THE VEIL

Some sects and cults, fascinated by the mysteries of life and death, believe that one must first taste both in order to gain true power. Candidates undergo a form of ritual murder, typically suffocation, and are then revived. Should they survive, they are inducted into the order and are entitled to learn the group's secret lore. On rare occasions, participants come through this ordeal with a permanent, though harmless, smoke-like film covering their eyes. The sects give the Veiled, as they are called, great honor and believe they see visions filled with harbingers of important events to come.

THE SPIDER BANE TREK

Regularly, many small villages are forced to protect their lands and possessions from nearby monsters. Such is the case for Spider Bane Hollow. Large man-eating spiders infest the surrounding woods and force the locals to fight continually to keep trade roads open. They are successful, but the cost is high. Every few years, the most capable member of the village must trek to the hills beyond the woods. There, he locates a spider-eater nest, provokes the creature into impregnating him, and then kills it. He is given the villages' treasured ring of *freedom of movement* to aid him on his quest. When he returns, the villagers hold a great festival, extract the eggs from the suffering hero, and set the young spider eaters loose on the vermin infesting their woods. This keeps the spider population in check for a few years, after which the villagers hold the Spider Bane Trek once again. Those who successfully complete the Trek are lionized as great heroes. They receive honorary rank and membership into nearly any organization they desire.

TEST OF METTLE

Among the most elite and brutal fighting classes, there exists no room for even a hint of softness. Members of the warrior elite must endure the most excruciating pain without shirking their obligations to their organization. After a few preliminary tests in weapon expertise and tactics to establish the aspirant's bonafides, judges hang the candidate from flesh hooks for three days in the burning sun; until the skin on the back grows so blistered the hooks tear out, and the candidate falls to the ground. If the candidates live, they are healed, fed, and granted membership to the organization.

THIEVES' GAMBIT

Among thieves, to leave the shadowy tutelage of one's mentor and 'go solo' marks an important evolution in a young filcher's career. The last test for full and independent membership in the Guild requires the candidate to make their first solo purse snatch. The more dangerous and foreign the mark, the more stature a fledgling rogue gains with her peers. Of course, the point of guild membership is that no thief stands alone. During their first solo snatch, unbeknownst to the candidates, the young thieves' brethren will hide nearby to witness their purse snatching triumph or to help them escape the consequences of failure. Those who fail must wait a year and a day before re-attempting the test.

THE TOURNEY

Young knights relish the opportunity to participate in their first tourney. Many knights make a name for themselves during these exhibitions, whether at jousting, swordplay, marksmanship, or other more strenuous physical tests. Jousting is held by many as the most prestigious event at which to excel. The first tourney for a young knight is one of the final tests leading to true knighthood. The secret is that it matters not if the young knights win, but rather, they are judged on how they conduct themselves—especially when losing.

THE WALK OF CONTEMPLATION

Certain monastic orders and naturalist organizations require their aspirants to climb a frost-covered mountain and from its peak pick the first flower that blossoms in the snow. The harsh conditions and solitude of the strenuous journey help candidates to reflect on the teachings of their organizations and to gain both greater self-awareness and wisdom.

WARRIOR SKIN-STAIN

In some barbaric cultures, the warrior class often mark themselves to show their elite status. In one such culture, young aspiring warriors bathe themselves in a specially prepared tanning acid. It stings and burns for several hours, staining the skin a reddish-brown. This ritual tanning marks the warrior and serves to cull those who do not care enough about their clan to endure the pain. ♦

SPECIALTY SHOPS

Where do adventurers go to purchase those special weapons they've had their eyes on? Where do they buy all of those helpful alchemical concoctions? Do animal companions just show up, or could it be that there is a special breeder in town that sells them? This article endeavors to answer these questions by presenting four specialty shops that cater to the unusual needs and wants of adventurers. Each shop described below also includes adventure ideas designed to make them even more useful to your game.

THE BUBBLING CAULDRON

Often mistaken by the uninformed as a store for potions, this shop—immediately noticeable for the many charred planks of its wooden siding—fills the street outside its door with an acrid stench. Those brave enough to set foot inside encounter a maze of racks and counters holding beakers, bubbling cauldrons, and complex alchemical contraptions. The exotic mix of smells frequently overpowers the unprepared, and those that venture beyond the entrance struggle with the stench for a few minutes before finally acclimating. Past the labyrinthine arrangement of tables and equipment, a counter at the back of the shop is the usual place to find the owner, Antridian, and his young apprentice.

Antridian (a male human with the equivalent of 10 levels in a spellcasting class) gave up adventuring early in his career, after a horde of goblins ambushed him and his fellow party members. Antridian and his familiar (a toad named Zeep) escaped with the aid of a smokestick. The others were not so fortunate. Certain that the rest of his party could have escaped as well had they been similarly equipped, Antridian has since dedicated his life to manufacturing tried and true alchemical adventuring aids and devising new ones.

The event that led Antridian to his shopkeeper's life also orphaned the young halfling child of an adventuring companion. Antridian took the child in and raised him as his own. Ulramm (a male halfling with the equivalent of 4 rogue levels and an ambiguous sense of morality) is a somber child, prone to fits of despair, with a penchant for poison-making. Though suicidal thoughts originally drove Ulramm to the art of potion brewing, Antridian schooled the child too well in business matters for him to ignore a potential market. As a result, Ulramm developed his poison-making skills in secret and supplies many of the underworld elements in the city with their toxic substances. Antridian remains unaware of Ulramm's elicit activities.

Adventure Hook: Ulramm vanishes, and Antridian takes his obligation toward the halfling very seriously. Antridian has seen Ulramm talking with a young man of dubious character and suspects that his ward may have fallen in with the wrong crowd. The shopkeeper is willing to pay the heroes in goods he makes—or even brew up some concoctions on request—if they can locate Ulramm and return him safely.

THE DANCING BLADE

The Dancing Blade is owned by Elardeen, an enigmatic weapons master. He sells nothing but the rarest of weapons. Elardeen (a male elf with the equivalent of 15 fighter levels) grew up in the frozen wastes of the north, a place where the word 'weapon' meant an amalgamation of tusks, antlers, or sharpened bone. Captured at the age of fifteen during his manhood ritual, Elardeen soon became a feared arena fighter, known for crafting exotic makeshift weapons from rope and bits of broken prison furniture. His owner saw value in the boy's skills and arranged proper training for Elardeen, who eventually outlived his master and won his freedom. Elardeen does not remember his servitude with fondness, but values the skills he gained during that time. His years in the arena exposed Elardeen to strange weapons from many different cultures, and he spent decades learning not only how to wield them, but the secrets of crafting these outlandish arms as well.

Customers entering Elardeen's well-established armory find racks of strange and curious weapons, immaculately maintained. Elardeen does not stock common weaponry such as long swords, crossbows, or even daggers. In fact, he disdains such weapons. Instead, the Dancing Blade stocks double-bladed swords, bolas, elaborate antlered pole-arms, shurikens, and many other exotic weapons (some of which are of Elardeen's own, clever design). Elardeen happily demonstrates any of the weapons that grace his shelves and racks. He even provides training in their use for those serious about learning.

All of Elardeen's armaments are masterwork functional replicas of the originals, constructed without undo ornamentation and emphasizing their cultural roots.

Adventure Hook: An acquaintance of Elardeen recently returned from an excursion in the jungle. There, she encountered a raving band of savage goblinoid creatures who wielded strange batons embedded with some form of teeth or perhaps glass. Though Elardeen's associate escaped the encounter with her life, she was unable to obtain any of the creatures' strange weapons.

Elardeen is willing to pay coin or goods and services if the characters will enter the jungles and procure one of the weapons for him. The procured weapon must be in good condition, so that Elardeen can study and duplicate it.

PFEIVER'S PERFECTLY PERILOUS PETS

Mallorae Pfeiver loves animals, perhaps too much for her own good. A gifted animal trainer, Mallorae (a female human with the equivalent of 8 levels of expert) never met an animal she could not train to perform amazing feats. Unfortunately for all around her, she has taken this to heart. Mallorae has trained everything from dire weasels to a vicious remorhaz, and as yet, her coterie of furry friends has never injured her.

Strangely, the concept of opening a business centered on the creatures she trained never occurred to Mallorae. That idea belonged to her brother, Valentin, a cruel man who saw the opportunity for gold pieces in the maimed figures of Mallorae's co-trainers. Valentin never told Mallorae the true purposes behind Pfeiver's Perfectly Perilous Pets, and Mallorae never

figured out the hint embedded in the name. Mallorae loves all strange creatures—the stranger the better—but Valentin steers the most violent and perilous creatures he can capture into her care, and then he sells the fully trained results into servitude as guardians, arena champions, and pets for the fabulously wealthy.

Located on the outskirts of the city, visitors can locate Pfeiver's Perfectly Perilous Pets from quite some distance by the inhuman screams of the many strange creatures trained there. While Mallorae herself permits only the gentlest treatment of her charges, Valentin is far more demanding and sends Mallorae's oft-maimed co-trainers into the pens at night with brutal orders for securing the creatures' obedience. As yet, Mallorae remains unaware of his actions and puzzled by the difficulties she has with her friends the day after these secret midnight sessions.

Adventure Hook: A rampaging remorhaz is on the loose, and the city watch places the blame squarely on Mallorae's shoulders. Mallorae pleads with the heroes to find and subdue the creature before it adds the death of city residents to the charges already laid at her feet. She assures the adventurers that Icicle the remorhaz is really just a fuzzy teddy bear at heart. Mallorae fears, quite justifiably, that if the adventurers fail, the city guard will surely kill little Icicle, and she will most likely share her pet's fate when the City Watch arrives seeking justice.

SHARRA'S SURVIVALIST SANCTUARY

Getting into Sharra's sanctuary is not easy. Even a hero isn't guaranteed easy entrance, though Sharra (female gnome with the equivalent of 12 levels of a rogue class) knows her clientele well enough to let them in eventually. As well-protected as the average dungeon vault, Sharra became a survivalist due to acute paranoia. Even her clients don't know what she looks like. Instead, upon entering Sharra's, they run a gauntlet of chamber after empty chamber, finally reaching a room that contains only the items they specifically requested in advance.

No one has ever been rebuffed in a request, though it may take Sharra time to procure more unique or obscure items. Cold weather gear, desert survival equipment, potions, and magic items designed to help the wearer underwater, even gear to help adventurers survive the deadly heat of a live volcano: Sharra has it all—or can get it if she does not have it on hand.

An eccentric gnome who has explored the world specifically looking for somewhere to avoid people, Sharra finally built the quietest refuge in the world, right in the middle of civilization's greatest city. Beyond her gates and chambers, she sells to others the opportunities she abandoned, so that she can afford to dwell in solitude beneath the dungeons and sewers of her city.

Adventure Hook: Sharra has disappeared, which causes great distress in the city. Too many heroes rely upon Sharra's good graces to survive the perils of their adventures. None are willing to simply leave the situation as it lies, but in order to locate Sharra the heroes must delve beyond the public rooms of her sanctuary, down into the well-guarded passages and chambers of her personal demesne. ◆

UNIQUE TAVERNS AND INNS

THE BLACK DRAGON INN

A hexagonal tower with six levels, the Black Dragon Inn rises above the surrounding cityscape like a dark finger stretching to the sky. The roof is covered with tiles of shiny black slate and the exterior walls are built out of black granite flecked with green. The interior levels contain open mezzanines, cored by a central shaft that leads up to the covered roof, where it lets smoke out and light in. The builders decorated the inn with red lacquer coated ash wood and placed a circular bar and a large grill for cooking at its center. Newcomers to the Black Dragon often complain of an acrid odor, to which they quickly grow accustomed.

The proprietor, Oo Loong, is a bitter elf, with pale skin and sunken black eyes that glitter, and a permanent scowl pasted to his face. He dresses in black satin robes and is known as a savvy business monger with his ear to the ground. Despite his outward bitterness, Oo Loong knows all the local thieving guilds and mercenary groups, and his establishment is a common meeting place for their ilk. Visitors that cross the proprietor of the Black Dragon Inn disappear or turn up, mangled and broken, in very public places. The city guards have never pinned anything on Oo Loong, despite their best attempts, because Oo Loong never leaves the Black Dragon Inn.

Many speculate on why he never leaves his inn, but very few people know the truth. Locals also know that Oo Loong frequently hires adventurers, but for what purpose is unclear.

Oo Loong's big secret is that he is not an elf. Once he plagued the countryside, rampaging and ravaging everything he touched as a black dragon. He went too far, though, and ransacked the wrong temple. The temple's goddess became angry. She broke his soul into six pieces, scattered them to the four winds, and then contorted his body into the shape of the Black Dragon Inn. With his body so cursed, Oo Loong's spirit cannot leave its presence. Oo Loong may only rejoin with his body and resume dragon form when he gathers the six pieces of his soul and makes proper obeisance to the goddess he angered so long ago. As further punishment, the goddess claimed the better half of Oo Loong's hoard and forced the dragon to destroy the finest pieces of his own treasure.

FÉD SÉD MÉD

Open only during daylight hours, rumors and innuendo fill Féd Séd Méd (pronounced Feed Seed Mead) like cheap alcohol fills the farmers and ranchers that come to swap tall tales. When asked about the tavern, locals explain, "It's a one-story building with a three-story minimum." The owner, Lonny Tar (the equivalent of a human 3rd-level rogue), long ago made enough money to live comfortably. He runs the tavern to pass the time and to help keep the community alive during the long winters. Heroes walking in fully armored and armed receive the cold shoulder, but a wily person could infiltrate this local watering hole and learn two times more than any Gather Information check would gain them on the streets*. Hay-stuffed gray ticking pads the booth benches, and three open fireplaces keep this one-story building warm during the cold winter months, when most of the farmers have only time on their hands.

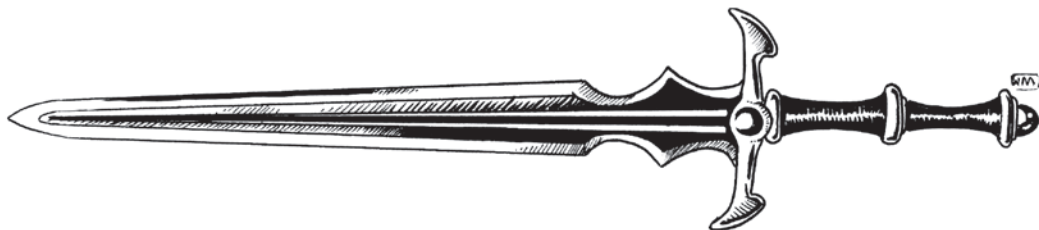
*Roll two times on Rumor Tables for every positive result when checking for Gather Information.

GRAVE DELIGHTS

Set atop a hill in the city's necropolis, Grave Delights caters to people of the magical persuasion. The builders converted the tavern from a mausoleum and added macabre bone furniture and skull decorations. Elaborate candelabras, flickering with blue and gold faerie fire, illuminate the commons area, and enchanted, floating skulls guide patrons to their seats. A fire pit at the center of each table keeps the chill of the cold mausoleum away and doubles as a food warmer. Cloying incense—cloves, roses, and other things—hangs in the air and clings to the food. Grave Delights serves simple meals: several varieties of broths, soups and stews, as well as rolls of dark rye bread. The bar features wines, liquors, and a staggering variety of teas. The tavern sets a plush arrangement of pillows and couches by the table's circular fire pit for familiars and waits on them exactly the same as their masters.

Grave Delights also supplies alchemical and material components for spellcasting, and many visitors spend time perusing their well-stocked warehouse. The staff invites customers to stay a while and conduct research (parchment and ink are free upon request), and they actively encourage open discussion of arcane matters among patrons.

The proprietor, Scherezade, keeps the clientele in line with a captive efreeti she refers to as "Father." Scherezade allows anyone to enter her establishment, but stoutly disallows any magic to be performed on the premises, especially conjuration or necromantic spells. Scherezade's detractors derisively refer to her as "Half-Dead," and she does fit the part. Her left side is gray and withered, giving the sunken half of her face a ghoulish look.



HEGAREG'S GRAVEL GROVE

Referred to as Hegareg's, or just "the Grove", this lively and pungent tavern originally sat outside the town walls and catered to the people of the wilds, those druids and rangers who had reason to visit the urban world. Hegareg's has always welcomed the trusted mounts and animal companions prohibited in town, making the Gravel Grove smell more like a stable than a tavern. Today, the town's new walls enclose Hegareg's, which now sits uncomfortably amid the wealthy homes and businesses of the "New Quarter".

Construction of the enclosing town walls prompted months of negotiating between Hegareg and the city leaders, as well as a few painful and one-sided brawls between his patrons and the new residents, who didn't appreciate the hygiene of the Grove's animal friends. In the end, Hegareg won the right to issue passes for the animals, and he takes personal responsibility for the behavior of his customers. He pays youngsters to stand with the guards at the new wall gate, primed to run to Hegareg's for an animal pass when an arriving patron requires it. The wealthy New Quarter residents still pinch their noses at the smell, gnash teeth, and complain under their breath, but the deal is done—and they just have to live with it.

Hegareg's rings with the shouts of old friends and the bellows, grunts, and calls of every animal imaginable. Companion birds fly freely through the rafters. The staff struggles to keep the place reasonably clean, but the floor is often slick with mud and animal droppings. Hegareg serves fresh feed and raw meat to his animal customers, as well as traditional fare for their humanoid companions. The tavern sports an open floor plan, and light pours in through wide openings in the wood slat roof and walls. The structure provides little more than modest protection against rain, wind and cold, but the patrons of Hegareg's Gravel Grove do not seem to mind.

LALAFORN MENU

Lalaforn's invitations read, "Menu specialties include grilled grape skins brushed with safflower honey, and treat yourself to our oil-rubbed bark steak cooked rare. Save room for the gooseberry acorn pudding! And try a glass of vintage Primrose Perry. Once you experience its bitter pear aftertaste your palate will be forever haunted by its absence."

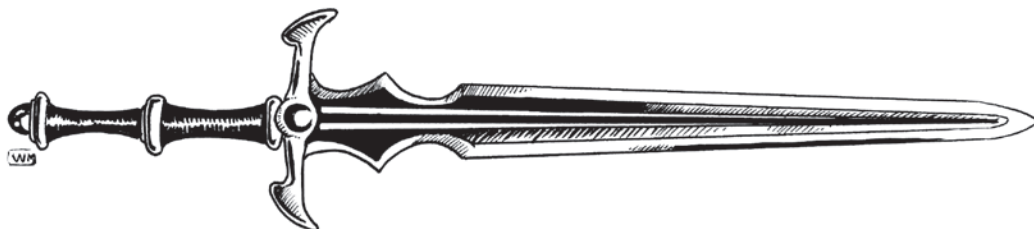
LALAFORN-THE FANTASTICAL FAERY BAR AND GRILL

*O'er Gingham Stitch knoll,
Past blue brier thorn,
Stands the hollow tree of Lalaforn.*

These are the only known directions to a tavern that caters almost exclusively to the fey. Built inside a massive, hollow oak, once home to its namesake, the dryad Lalaforn, fey congregate here night and day to drink and practice their mischief. A magical effect shrinks any fey capable of fitting through the arched doorway at the tree's base (Small-sized maximum) down to Tiny size. This equality of form makes for unique social interactions and allows for maximum customer capacity. Within Lalaforn, the proprietors have constructed ten spacious floors with lofty, intricately paneled ceilings. The first floor serves as entry lobby and coat room; the second and third contain a restaurant; the fourth is a kitchen and larder, the fifth through seventh are bars, and each bar hosts its own musicians catering to a specific age range; the eighth floor provides lodging for overnights or those needing to sleep it off; Queenie, the pixie proprietor, keeps her living quarters and office on the ninth; and the tenth floor is reputedly inhabited by the spectre of Lalaforn herself, who died centuries past, with her tree.

Oddly enough, it is easier for a male elf or human of mature age to enter Lalaforn than it is for a grig or leprechaun. The dryad Lalaforn took many slave lovers and made no apology for her appetites. Eventually, her tree became so receptive to incoming male energy that any adult male could walk into it, as if through a veil of mist, and be transported to the dryad's bedchambers in the fey realm. This aspect of the magical tree's powers still functions, if weakly; so, where faeries need to squeeze through the little entrance at the bottom of this grand oak, mortal men simply step through any part of the tree to be miniaturized. The gold of men is welcome within, but the fey are rarely kind to mortals, who swiftly become the butt of jeering or worse. The fey judge mortal male visitors outspokenly, loudly rating their attractiveness, style of dress, and grooming. Male characters with low Charisma, shabby clothes, or hygiene challenges are veritably crowd-roasted in Lalaforn, humiliated by an ocean of fey laughter.

The dryad ghost sees all within her tree, and if she spies a human male with an above average Charisma, she manifests in the form of a cloaked nymph and approaches him at the bar, attempting to charm him up to her room. Ordinarily, no one gets past the eighth floor bouncers, and any who try incite a donnybrook with the fey patrons (who usually number from forty to over two hundred during the busy hours). Any man taken to the tenth floor by Lalaforn's spirit ceases to exist in this world.



THE LUCKY LADY

The noble family of Taresdale did not originally intend to build a tavern, as that would be too common an affair for a family third in the line of succession. Instead, the Lucky Lady began life as a luxury sailing vessel, built for entertaining and showing off the Taresdale wealth. When the Taresdale family fortunes ran onto hard shoals, the Lucky Lady was still stuck in dry dock. One day, the youngest Taresdale scion noticed several workers playing dice games in the skeletal hull, and, inspired, he immediately set about converting the Lucky Lady into a tavern and gambling hall.

He called in a few favors and finished the Lady in record time. They converted the main cargo hold of the Lucky Lady into a double-leveled hall and held tournaments there. They knocked out the crew quarters and made private rooms that the proprietors rent by the hour, day, or week. The guest quarters they converted into luxury suites, and they transformed the galley into a full-service kitchen

The Lucky Lady was an instant hit with both locals and visitors, and its gambling rooms made the Taresdale family filthy rich again. The favorite drink of the house is the Lucky Draw, a randomly selected alcohol known only to the bartenders. If the drinker can guess what it is and where it's from, they win the Royal Treatment: a free night in the luxury suites with all meals and drinks covered. Guessing right isn't easy, as the staff regularly imports the finest, most rare and exotic liquors for the Lucky Draw.

Every night, the Taresdale heir that made his family wealthy again tacks up the first gold piece (with sovereign glue) won by the house, and now the Lucky Lady's bar glitters with the coinage of many realms. Because of that, the Lucky Lady is a tempting target for would-be thieves, but all those who sneak into the Lady intending to rob the place, never re-emerge. No one knows why, but after the local thieving guilds nearly depleted their membership making the attempt, they stopped trying. Rumor holds that the guild offers a hefty bounty to anyone who learns the secret of the Lucky Lady's defenses.

THE MOULDY CORVUS

They carved the oaken sign above the entrance to this tavern in the likeness of a green dusted crow on its back, spindly legs contorted in death. The bar and tables within were fashioned from the salvaged planks of local shipwrecks and are not comfortable. All the furniture has been stained black with squid ink. Maidenheads, carved to look maniacal and agonized, dot the walls, transforming the inn's common area into the demented trophy room of some demonic humanoid hunter. Intermittently, candlelit amber globes hang from nets tacked to the raftered ceiling, ensuring a shadowy and intimidating ambience.

The local constabulary understands that this drinking spot appears so imposing in order to hide its former purpose. Originally, the local thieves guild built The Mouldy Corvus as a front for fenced goods and as a regular meeting place for nefarious scheming with non-guild members. The authorities shut the Corvus down, until Deglas Minth, a retired gnomish actor, took it over.

Despite the tavern's utter lack of beauty, tourists arrive from far and wide for a good laugh and the thrill of quaffing ale where murders and heists were once planned as often as ale slid down the bar. At the Corvus, patrons have a chance to feel like heinous scoundrels. Deglas Minth encourages boisterous play-acting by both staff and guests.

However, the new owner does not know that an undiscovered secret entrance beneath one of the more secluded table benches leads down to the region's five story, underground thieves guild—still operating from below the tavern. Unbeknownst to the tourists, thieves continue to frequent this theme drinkery. It is their new cover: they proudly display their rapscaillon dress to impersonate marks impersonating thieves. Guild members speak aloud their actual plans in seemingly plain terms and with great gusto, but are careful to encode all details using what those in the know call the Corvus cant. For the time being, the guild is fooling the new owner and the authorities, both.

STYX

Deep beneath the bustling streets of the city above, the secret Styx waits. Lost in a maze of empty storage rooms, connected by identical-looking hallways, this dwarf-only club lies hidden behind no less than four secret doors. A sponsor dwarf leads potential members to the club only once and expects them to find it again on their own, if they wish to return.

The tavern itself sits in a long, low chamber. The walls alternate between floor-to-ceiling bookshelves and ever-burning fireplaces. Overstuffed chairs congregate throughout the hall: some around ornate card tables; many at the far end of the hall, surrounding a large dinner table; and a few in curtained alcoves separated from the main chamber. The Styx serves pipes and tobacco, mead and ale, pork and potatoes, though for the right price, the staff will fulfill nearly any desire. The Styx encourages patrons to indulge their fancies and pay only as they exit. The pressure of embarrassment before their peers means very few dwarves haggle over the Styx's unexpectedly high bills.

The knowledge stored at the Styx, both in the books that line its shelves and in the minds of the elder dwarves who practically live here, allows a player character dwarf a considerable bonus to informational types of skills (except for religion or the planes, as neither of these subjects are discussed at the tavern). Meals in this establishment run a minimum of 3 gp, while drinks start at 1 gp per glass. Rare and exotic dishes cost a minimum of 10 gp and can be anything the GM wishes (venison stuffed with squab and grapes, anaconda over asparagus, etc). An invisible stalker backs the old dwarf doorman as a bouncer, but is easily fooled by disguised patrons. ◆

UNUSUAL HOLIDAYS

In a world of fantasy or even science fiction, the holidays celebrated in the world your player character live in must be strange. Where dragons, men made of metal, or starships plying the galaxy are a reality, just what kinds of things do the people in those worlds celebrate? Below are a few ideas mainly intended for classic fantasy settings, but they may just as easily apply to a wide variety of game systems and genres.

BLESSING OF THE VINES

Early in planting season, the tiny villages around the Norte Mountains wait for the yearly visit of Father Pramas. The priest's arrival signals the beginning of spring, and the rural areas hold small festivals to honor the god of the grapevines. The day starts solemnly enough, with Father Pramas donning the intricate white garb of his faith. Two acolytes carry jugs of last year's wine to anoint the branches of grape leaves that Father Pramas uses during his morning litany.

After the service, the priest adds the wine-soaked branches to the village's compost heap and the feast begins. Finished with their huge meal, some villagers rest, some cavort, and most drink. The afternoon and evening are not strictly organized, and each village adds something to the post-feast celebration to make Father Pramas' stay unique.

The settlement of Tomton's innovation frightens Father Pramas and his acolytes. The settlement rests near a deep cavern filled with a staggering variety of mushrooms. Their celebration involves the village daredevils testing the magic-laced fungi—usually (but not always) to comic effect.

Adventure Hook: Tomton's mayor eats one of the polluted mushrooms and transforms into a cockatrice. The heroes must not only retrieve the blighted fellow from the nearby caverns and imprison him until the effects of the mushrooms wear off, but they must also locate a stone to flesh antidote to save his unintended victims.

THE DAY OF THE UNKNOWN PROPHET

On the day before spring planting, villagers ask the first stranger to enter the town bizarre questions to determine if the outsider brings them good luck or bad luck. Those the town folk believe bear good luck are thrown a fabulous feast; however, those bearing bad luck are unceremoniously tossed into the nearby river and pelted with balls of mud—then given a conciliatory feast.

Adventure Hook: An enemy of the adventurers arranges to have them convicted of bearing bad luck, and then treats the balls of mud with a nasty disease. Villagers succumb to the disease before the heroes, who are asked to help find a cure for the village.

THE EVE OF BURNING DEVILS

In the Northern provinces, citizens maintain a long-standing tradition, called the Eve of Burning Devils. This archaic holiday is so ancient that nobody remembers where or why it started, but most believe that the ceremony started when a group of devils were chased out of town.

During the holiday, local citizens run through the crowded streets carrying flaming barrels of tar, which they relay to randomly selected runners. The runners plow through the streets, pushing onlookers aside to clear a path. Still, it is a great honor to be chosen as a runner and hopefuls clamor toward the flaming barrels, anxious to be chosen to partake in the ritual. The ritual ends when the last runners clear the village and roll their tar barrels into the nearby lake.

Adventure Hook: As the adventurers watch, the last tar bearer clears the city, but arrows fired from a nearby copse of willow trees kill her before she can reach the lake. In the eerie light of the swiftly spreading fire, a two-headed giant in chainmail lifts a heavy fist and screams, "Tonight the devils are with ye!"

THE FESTIVAL OF DANCING DREAMS

In the heart of winter some tribes celebrate the Festival of Dancing Dreams to ensure that the winter has not eaten the sun. Observed on the longest night of winter, the festival features giant bonfires, drumming, and hilltop dances in an effort to entice the sun to return and to keep the darkness at bay.

The success of the festival is easy to measure, because each day after it lasts a little longer, and eventually the warmth of the returning sun grows undeniable.

At the end of the festival the people retire early, inhale the fumes of sacred plants, and dream what dreams the creator sees fit to send them. In the morning, the people gather and share the dreams with each other and their shaman. From these dreams, the shaman assembles a prophecy that guides the tribe in the coming year.

Adventure Hook: The tribe approaches the heroes convincing them this year's prophecy revealed that a horrible monster will arrive with the setting of the sun. If the heroes are not there to defeat the creature, the tribe is doomed to destruction.

THE FEAST OF SAINT SABANNAS

Once a year, townsfolk venerate the former Curate of the Shrine of the New Day, Sabannas Theophilus Olympius, to commemorate his sacrifice defending town and temple from the Deathknight, Harrok the Blasphemous. The people fast on the eve of the celebration, and during the pre-dawn hours, young initiates move from door to door warning the people that Harrok and his army approach. The populace attends high mass at the shrine as the dawn breaks. They spend the remainder of the day celebrating and parading human skulls from the temple's catacombs through the streets.

Adventure Hook: During the reenactment of the Warning of Harrok's Approach, initiates sent to the old mill don't return. As town folk argue over what to do, some notice friends and relatives absent from mass. All the missing folk live near the mill.

LARD

In the pig-raising town of Wallow, the stout dwarves test their constitution every year with a lard-eating contest. The dwarves cart great vats of the stuff to the Féd Séd Méd tavern (see Eight Unique Taverns in Chapter One), where a dozen or more contestants sit at a large table. Everyone present eats at least a spoonful to start the proceedings, but only the bravest—or most foolhardy—sit for hours consuming processed fat. The tavern owner, Zig Hillum, provides as much flatbread and beer to the challengers as they need to down the great scoops of lard, extending special discounts to those with the stomach to watch the proceedings.

Adventure Hook: While not the most conventional of competitions, in dwarven communities the victor of the lard-eating contest garners great respect, often earning discounts for items and services, is feted as local celebrity, and given endorsement offers from eateries and pubs.

Consider using victory in the lard-eating contest as an important rite of passage (see Rites of Passage in Chapter One for more thoughts on the topic) for gaining entrance into martial classes that specialize in hand to hand fighting and wrestling techniques in which heavier and stouter combatants hold a great advantage.

MOON HILL SAPPING

Every full moon, contingents from two neighboring villages don dark masks and gather atop Bald Hill, there they beat each other with saps until one side claims victory. The next night, the victors drink for free in the opposing village.

Adventure Hook: Villagers invite the adventurers to join in one of these battles, during which bandits take advantage of the situation and raid both villages. As each side accuses the other of shenanigans, the heroes must work quick to apprehend the real culprits or the next battle atop Bald Hill may be a real one.

NIGHT OF BONFIRES

Alexander the Holy One, an adventuring cleric of renown, traveled with a host of cohorts before settling down in the valley. One cohort, a sorcerer named Stephen the Wild, tapped into raw chaos to enhance his spells. On a quest to retrieve the Burleigh Emerald from the clutches of Ghulidrax, a draconic lich that no man could strike down, Alexander's group infiltrated the beast's lair deep underground, fighting the great beast to a stalemate. Facing the lich and fully ensconced in chaos, Stephen cast a protective spell on Alexander, causing a surge of wild magic to channel through their bodies and change their gender. The tide turned and the battle won, the women returned to the surface and handed over the emerald to the king and queen of the realm. They lived out their lives peacefully as Alexa and Steph, gathering a small group of followers for Alexa's church in the valley.

Now, many lifetimes later, the valley observes the days of winter's solstice in remembrance of the adventurers. The valley inhabitants each own colorful, masterwork suit of clothes suitable for the opposite gender and wear them for the

festivities. Each person in the valley spends most of the year learning new dances and songs for the celebration, trotting them out for the Night of Bonfires. Banners of yellow, orange, purple, and blue decorate the skeletal trees that surround the valley's longhouses, and shades of red dominate the decor. Fires of every size light the valley, and some are magical, giving off green or even white light. In the course of the evening, all celebrants must jump over a bonfire three times to prove themselves as brave as Alexa and Steph in Ghulidrax's lair.

Adventure Hook: A Ghulidrax-worshipping monster arrives to exact revenge on the descendants of Alexa and Steph. Finding all the men of the village dressed as the two heroines, it begins attacking every cross-dressing warrior in sight.

NIGHT OF RED FIREFLIES

At this children's festival, all the town's youngsters try to catch as many fireflies as possible. The child that catches the most is dressed in bright red clothing and given a hollow glass crown filled with all the captured fireflies. After a great feast, the winning child takes a portion of the fare and the crown to a secret location of their choosing, leaves the food, and releases the fireflies as an offering to the denizens of nearby rivers, streams, and lakes.

Adventure Hook: The winning child of last night's festival returned to the feast to find the village completely abandoned. The heroes arrive in town to find only the child sobbing in the town square.

SUMMER'S END

Summer's End is a festival that occurs once a year on the last night of summer. Summer's End is a "Day Between Nights" and as such, it is a very potent necromantic evening. On this night, at the moon's apogee, some believe the dead awaken and walk among the living. At Summer's End, that which separates past, present, and future is weakest, and the opportunity for accurate prophecy and divination at its greatest.

Those who celebrate the festival dress up as the risen dead and parade down to the local graveyard or necropolis to honor their ancestors and to remember those no longer among the living. At the burial ground, local priests, clerics, and all manner of holy folk perform the sacred Rites of Consecration, while the onlookers consume the fruit of that season's harvest. Celebrants believe that consecration prevents the "Crisly Harvest," when the dead would rise from their graves.

After the Consecration comes the Vigil: participants share tales of their ancestors with one eye on their forebears graves, just to make sure that the Consecration was effective and that the dead will remain dead until morning.

Adventure Hook: A traveling charlatan arrived in town just before the heroes and began convincing the locals that the dead really will rise from the grave this year. He promises to hold them back in exchange for goods and services. The confidence man's scheme is elaborate and involves at least two cohorts. The mayor of the town is uncertain about it and asks for the adventurers' to investigate.

SHIFTER'S WATERCRAFT

As the wind begins to blow from the north with the arrival of autumn, Shifter Lake takes on a rainbow hue. Thousands of trout return to the cold, deep waters and, one day each year, the elves of the nearby wood spend moonrise to moonrise flitting about the waters of Shifter Lake. Their boats run the gamut from hallowed-log canoes to elaborate and delicate crystal ships.

They tie all their boats together in a shallow bend called The Shifter's Eye, anchoring to a massive burr oak tree, named Chalixia, which grows out of the Eye. Elven children gather falling acorns and fashion wreaths from leaves, while older elven youths go 'guddling'—tickling fish to sleep before gathering them for the night's feast. Elders gift gems and small magicked baubles to the clever youngsters who create or catch the finest contributions to the upcoming banquet.

The feast is a seven-course affair, with matching wines and liqueurs for every dish. A mostly vegetarian feast, the main course contains braised trout with cracked pepper and mustard seeds. The finest white wine compliments this fiery dish, usually a vintage bottled before most of the elvish tribe was born. The elves offer remembrances to comrades past. All are reminded to think of the dead fondly. Songs and poetry praising the moon and lake fill the night as falling stars fill the sky.

The following day, elves devour desserts, and the flotilla of boats host games of wit and skill. On the final evening, mages and sorcerers unveil new magics, and all gather to watch the sun burn the west in brilliant oranges and purples.

Adventure Hook: A doorway opens in Chalixia's trunk, leading down into the Eye. Several brave elves enter but do not return. The elders ask the heroes to find the missing elves before the doorway closes.

THE TAX AUCTION

Once a year, the village of Whitemill chooses five citizens by lot to serve as tax collectors. They give each collector the right to claim one item from every resident and then put the item up for auction. At the auction festival, folks feast, dance, and drink with gusto. The tax collectors generally collect items of sentimental rather than real value. Often, neighbors bid competitively only to return their purchase to the original owner as a gift. All of the proceeds from the auction go to maintain the village and fund the militia.

Adventure Hook: The adventurers are staying at an inn in Whitemill on the day of the auction. The collectors claim various items from the heroes, such as holy symbols, backpacks, single pieces of armor, or even a familiar for the tax auction, unbeknownst to the adventurers. The day of the auction, the characters discover their missing items being auctioned off with the locals bidding furiously for them to generate income for the town. If the heroes are good sports about it, the general attitude of the town becomes friendly. Alternately, they leave many dead townsfolk behind them.

WEEK OF THE HOLY HARBINGERS

To commemorate the week in which a conquering orcish army fell to a horrible plague, each citizen fashions their very own papier-mâché orc corpse and drags it behind them with a rope. At the end of the week, the people burn all the effigies in a massive bonfire. The fire is lit in the city square amidst the revelry of a cheering throng.

Adventure Hook: The adventurers arrive the day after the bonfire to find the town's citizens sifting through the remains. A crowd gathers as neighborhood dogs drag a human corpse from the embers. Who was he and how did he end up in the bonfire?

WISH ROOST

This coastal holiday honors the day that eagles arrived in response to the desperate prayers of fishermen lost in a sea fog and led them back to shore. They hold the celebration of Wish Roost before each village's largest, most branch laden tree.

*"Write your wish on scrap of paper
Stuff in eel and aim for draper
High branch, low branch, mind ye reach
May eagle take ye wish in beak"*

Adventure Hook: A fledgling golden eagle soars above the tree and lands on a branch, dislodging a scrap of vellum to the ground. Nobody claims the cryptic message for his or her own. It bears the signature of a long-dead sage and foretells an ominous event to befall the village in only a few days hence.

WORST-BEST OF THE WORST

The long winter months prevent traveling merchants from visiting many of the smaller villages, and to ease the boredom, crafters bring the worst products they produced that season. Poorly finished furnishings, horribly gaudy clothing, bad paintings, and pathetic prose—all are brought to see whose work is the worst. Every entry is ostensibly anonymous, but in small villages everybody knows whose work is whose. The villagers vote by placing river stones in a crockery jar in front of the work. Two artisans are crowned the winners: whoever made the Worst of the Worst and whoever crafted the Best of the Worst. The village presents the winners with matching jester cap crowns, dangling with crude iron bells. The event bonds crafter to crafter, relieves winter boredom, and serves as a good excuse to have a party.

Adventure Hook: Someone rigs the voting and crowns a psychotic sorcerer with no sense of humor as "Worst." The insult prompts her and her half-orc underlings to exact a deadly and intricate vengeance on the innocent crafters. ♦

WHAT'S IN THOSE POCKETS?

People keep all sorts of odd and interesting things in their pockets, but coming up with items on the spur of the moment can be tricky and tedious process. This article presents 100 random items to use as the results of a Sleight of Hand attempt the next time this happens in your game. Either roll d% for a random item, or pick the one you like. Many of the items on the list could even become plot hooks for future adventures.

d%	Result
01	1d6 copper pieces in a dirty cloth purse.
02	A ball of bat guano wrapped in wax paper.
03	A thin dagger, with a bloodstain on the blade.
04	An explicit love letter from a local aristocrat.
05	Silver holy symbol of a deity of your choice.
06	Single silver sling bullet with the name "Wolves Bane" etched into it.
07	A white pearl worth 100 gold pieces.
08	Multicolored wad of lint.
09	A bell made from brass with ships engraved in it.
10	Partially melted black candle.
11	A prayer book with prayers dedicated to the deity of your choice.
12	A darkwood whistle.
13	Ball of sealing wax.
14	Empty potion bottle.
15	An unused potion (roll in the <i>DMG</i> or use one of the results from <i>Alchemical Mishaps</i> in Chapter One).
16	Cracked whetstone.
17	A magic wand (roll in the <i>DMG</i>).
18	Identification papers.
19	A folded and torn piece of paper containing a sketch of a strikingly beautiful woman.
20	1d3 tindertwigs.
21	Signet ring from a well-respected noble.
22	A letter requesting the recipient meet an anonymous author to discuss an assassination.
23	A cork that smells of cheap wine.
24	Several pieces of string and a sewing needle.
25	An ink pen made from a golden eagle feather.
26	1d6 silver pieces in a leather purse with the NPC's name stitched into it.
27	A small, round mirror.
28	A comb carved from a piece of pink coral.
29	Lady's hairbrush full of hair strands.
30	An odoriferous piece of cod fish wrapped in paper.
31	A folded up wanted poster containing a sketch and information about one of the party members.
32	A <i>pearl of power</i> , 1 st level.
33	Vial of <i>silversheen</i> in a velvet drawstring pouch.
34	A <i>gray bag of tricks</i> .
35	A <i>tree feather token</i> .
36	A small ring containing 3 curiously shaped keys.
37	A <i>bead of force</i> .
38	A sap made from oak with intricate carvings of angels and archons.
39	1d6 gold pieces (loose coins).
40	A compass, with an etching on the back that reads, "For my lover, so you can always find your way home."
41	A small topaz worth 25 gold pieces.
42	Leaky bottle of red ink.
43	A well-used sling.
44	Cleaning rag made of rough wool.
45	Used handkerchief made of silk.

d%	Result
46	A shuriken dipped in malys root poison (roll a poison use check for the pickpocket).
47	Small ruby worth 100 gold pieces.
48	A map of the city with 10 locations circled in red ink.
49	A crusty piece of bread.
50	Single human tooth.
51	Small vial of blood.
52	A pair of pliers.
53	A small knife of the sort used in leatherworking.
54	Silk gloves.
55	A wool hat.
56	1d3 platinum pieces (loose coins).
57	A pouch containing 500 gold pieces worth of diamond dust.
58	A live mouse.
59	Flask of cheap whiskey.
60	A wedge of cheese wrapped in cloth.
61	A map of the area around the city with a particular path into the hills marked.
62	Beef jerky.
63	A wooden holy symbol of a deity of your choice.
64	Flask of holy water.
65	A crystal rod.
66	A single smokestick.
67	Flask of alchemist's fire.
68	Magnifying glass.
69	A silver flute worth 100 gold pieces.
70	Set of lock picks.
71	A scarf.
72	Moonstone worth 50 gold pieces.
73	Flask of acid.
74	Silver necklace worth 20 gold pieces inside a small, wrapped package.
75	Brass knuckles.
76	A receipt from the local butcher, indicating a large meat order will be ready for pickup at noon the next day.
77	A silver thimble worth 10 gold pieces.
78	Perfume bottle.
79	A toy for a small child.
80	A poisoned green apple.
81	Directions to an address within the city.
82	A paintbrush with an ivory handle and bristles made from lamia hair.
83	A small jar containing several green pills.
84	Shiny black/gray rock.
85	Dice carved from bone.
86	A small whittling knife and a half-completed scrimshaw.
87	An empty syringe.
88	Dried herbs.
89	A bundle of wild flowers.
90	Tongs used in metalworking.
91	A novel with a bookmark one-third of the way through.
92	A poster advertising a new inn, named the Grinning Lion, is hiring staff.
93	A weight used in a merchant's scale.
94	Rag doll.
95	A magnet.
96	Bottle of black ink.
97	A "thank you" note written in Gnomish.
98	Scented bar of soap.
99	A star sapphire worth 1,000 gold pieces.
00	Pocket trap (see sidebar).

MEMORABLE INNS

Few things can cause as much stress for a GM as the moment when one of her players asks, "So what's the name of this inn we're staying at, anyway?" Some of the best GMs hear this question and begin to sweat and stammer; she hadn't planned on the inn being any place special—it's just another place for the party to rest for the evening.

Naming your inns and taverns doesn't need to be a chore, though. A simple trick will allow you to generate fun and evocative names for these places for years to come. Simply think of an adjective or action verb (grinning, frisky, bored, yawning, etc); then think of a noun (warrior, elf, elephant, sword, etc); stick the two together, and you have an instant name (The Frisky Sword, The Grinning Elf, The Yawning Elephant, etc).

When your players hit you with the dreaded question, you now have the ammunition to fire back quickly. And when you have time to plan out the location, using this method to develop a name can lead you on a path of discovery about the location's history, atmosphere, and so on (see Developing the Inn below).

Roll once from each table and combine the results or pick your own matches randomly. Never be lost when asked the name of the inn again!

POCKET TRAP

Wealthy dilettantes favor these expensive items. A pocket trap activates whenever something passes through the opening of the pocket without first depressing a button concealed in the fabric. The trap attacks whatever enters the pocket with a sharp, hollow needle, causing 1d2 points of damage. The needle injects a red ink onto the surface of whatever it attacks—often a thief's hand. The needle is exceptionally sharp; a pickpocket unable to tolerate the pain caused by this sharp needle cries out in pain, giving herself away.

Pocket Trap: CR 3; mechanical, location trigger; manual reset; Atk +15 (1d2 plus dye and pain); pain DC 20 Fortitude save or cry out in pain; Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 20 (if the pocket trap is on a garment that is currently worn, the wearer receives a Spot check at DC 12 to notice the attempt). Market price: 6,600 gp.

Table 1

d%	Name
01–02	Angry
03–04	Arcane
05–06	Arrogant
07–08	Beautiful
09–10	Boisterous
11–12	Bored
13–14	Burrowing
15–16	Clever
17–18	Climbing
19–20	Creepy
21–22	Dancing
23–24	Divine
25–26	Dry
27–28	Escaping
29–30	Experienced
31–32	Falling
33–34	Fickle
35–36	Floating
37–38	Flying
39–40	Frisky
41–42	Frugal
43–44	Grinning
45–46	Happy
47–48	Invisible
49–50	Mistaken
51–52	Mysterious
53–54	Nifty
55–56	Portly
57–58	Quiet
59–60	Reasonable
61–62	Roaring
63–64	Rowdy
65–66	Running
67–68	Sailing
69–70	Scorching
71–72	Singing
73–74	Sleeping
75–76	Sliding
77–78	Slippery
79–80	Soaring
81–82	Squeaky
83–84	Stomping
85–86	Swimming
87–88	Talkative
89–90	Tired
91–92	Ugly
93–94	Walking
95–96	Wandering
97–98	Whispering
99–00	Yawning

Table 2

d%	Name
01–02	Archon
03–04	Arrow
05–06	Bard
07–08	Basilisk
09–10	Beetle
11–12	Boar
13–14	Bog
15–16	Castle
17–18	Church
19–20	Cleric
21–22	Cloud
23–24	Devil
25–26	Dog
27–28	Doppelganger
29–30	Dragon
31–32	Dwarf
33–34	Elf
35–36	Goat
37–38	Goblin
39–40	God
41–42	Griffon
43–44	Hydra
45–46	Kobold
47–48	Lion
49–50	Lute
51–52	Mace
53–54	Mermaid
55–56	Mountain
57–58	Owl
59–60	Pearl
61–62	Pixie
63–64	Portal
65–66	Rat
67–68	Shark
69–70	Ship
71–72	Skunk
73–74	Spell
75–76	Sword
77–78	Thief
79–80	Tiger
81–82	Treant
83–84	Troll
85–86	Unicorn
87–88	Virgin
89–90	Wagon
91–92	Warrior
93–94	Wheel
95–96	Wizard
97–98	Wyvern
99–00	Zombie

DEVELOPING THE INN

Sometimes, you want more details about your inn. The players aren't staying at just any old place, after all; they're staying at the Grinning Lion. Don't be surprised if they ask you about the place. Names make people and places real, and once something becomes more real, your players will want to get to know it better. Here are six questions to consider when developing your inn. The answers should help you tell your players all about the Grinning Lion Inn. Remember to keep notes, so your locations are consistent from one visit to the next.

WHAT DOES THE PLACE LOOK LIKE?

This is your chance to paint the picture for your players. Is the inn well lit or gloomy? Is it decorated in rich tapestries or are the walls bare and drab? Putting a little thought into the general appearance of your establishment breathes life into the place. Consider things like color, cleanliness, and appointments, such as tables and chairs, a bar, the bedrooms, and so on.

WHO OWNS THE PLACE?

The owner breathes as much life into your establishment as the description. A tavern owned by a dour dwarf is a much different place than a tavern owned by a flirtatious elven bard, even if the two locations are described as looking exactly alike. You don't need a stat block for your proprietor, but you should know a few simple things about him or her, such as race, gender, character class, and any memorable or distinguishing traits.

WHAT IS ONE DISTINGUISHING FEATURE?

Adding one distinctive feature to your inn helps make it more memorable. Maybe the place has a 12-point buck's head mounted over the fireplace or the fireplace is intricately carved from a single block of marble. Once you have the feature in mind, be prepared for the characters to ask about it.

WHO FREQUENTS THE ESTABLISHMENT?

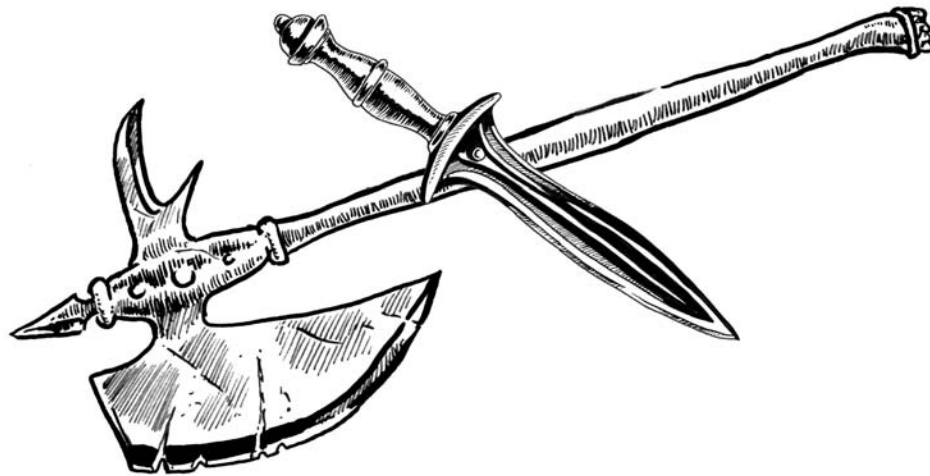
To some extent, an inn's location determines its patrons. It's highly unlikely that haughty nobles frequent the Grinning Lion if it's located near the docks in a seedy section of town. But you still need to know whom the characters are likely to encounter there. Perhaps the longshoremen come in after work to drink ale and blow off steam before heading home. Or maybe the local thieves' guild uses the place as a safe house. Figuring out the most likely clientele helps you quickly plan NPC realistic interactions.

WHAT IS IT KNOWN FOR?

This is similar to a distinguishing feature, but instead of being an object, it's a service offered by your inn. Maybe the Grinning Lion makes the best bowl of seafood chowder in the entire city, even though it's located in the rough-and-tumble dock district and frequented by boisterous longshoremen. Perhaps the owner is known for singing risqué songs after she's had a bit too much to drink. Or maybe the beds are perfectly fluffed and cleaned daily. There should be one thing your inn or tavern is really good at.

WHAT'S THE INN'S SECRET?

A secret helps make the inn a special place. Your players may not learn the secret for several levels, if at all. Some secrets aren't too important ("the owner waters down the kegs of ale"). They add a bit of flavor, though, and give your PCs something to figure out. Other secrets might lead to plot hooks ("the owner is actually a doppelganger who works for the thieves' guild"). Just be careful not to overuse the same secret! If every inn is operated by a doppelganger that works for the thieves' guild, the secret loses its impact.



CHAPTER TWO: GETTING THERE IS HALF THE FUN

A NEW LOOK AT CARAVANS

Few can resist the call of the open road; it is a siren's call that has snared many an adventurer. Traveling from town to town is sometimes risky, but it doesn't have to be boring. Each group of travelers has its own character, something special that makes it unique. The following descriptions can be used to make encountering or traveling with a caravan or similar groups a memorable experience.

THE ARCTIC EXPRESS

The frozen North's garrisons must be re-supplied even during the darkest winter. Magdalena Arnorsdottir, a hard-fighting but soft-spoken blond haired daughter of the North, has made it her calling to earn premium coin from the king to run critical supplies to the garrisons on the ice rim.

Her teamsters are among the strongest warriors of the barbarian tribes, armed with barbed wolf spears and slings. Her caravan consists of dozens of huge sleds drawn by two dire wolves each, giving each sled a cargo capacity of 1 1/2 tons. The sleds travel about 50 yards apart, with Magdalena's team on point. Her business associate, the frost giant Feardur, brings up the rear in a sled drawn by six winter wolves.

GM's Notes: Any attack on the caravan triggers a counter attack by Feardur, whose sled only carries additional weapons and missiles. The caravan moves through any attack and continues to their destination, while Feardur, and sometimes Magdalena, fight the attackers, often tracking attackers to their lair to discourage any thoughts of future assaults. Magdalena employs fir sorcerers armed with fire spells (or equivalent arcane spellcasters) to light nighttime campfires and stoke them all night long, keeping the dire wolves and teamsters alive during conditions that might otherwise kill normal mammals.



THE PALANQUIN OF THE PURPLE WIZARD

Legends abound among the common folk of meetings with the Palanquin. The stories usually begin with the rumbling and grinding of the Palanquin's enormous bearers. These two ornate stone golems, delicately carved from rosy marble and trimmed with precious metals, lumber single file down the road. Witnesses courageous enough to stand their ground are rewarded with an amazing sight: the golems bear between them a small palanquin draped in purple silk, barely large enough to hold a child. The arcane sigils woven in golden thread and the hanging skulls of unrecognizable creatures make it clear that its occupant is no child.

Tales of the Palanquin, handed down for generations, sometimes relate a glimpse of the occupant. Some say that when the weather is fair, particularly in the spring, the curtains might sometimes be drawn aside revealing the gray head of a gnomish woman, watching the miles roll by. There are rumors of this lady speaking to companions, though this only seems possible if the Palanquin were larger than it seems. The lady is said to be friendly and will some times speak with passersby, even going so far as purchasing (and paying handsomely for) fresh fruits or milk.

GM Notes: What is the point of arcane power if you don't indulge once in a while? The Palanquin of the Purple Wizard is a fairly simple way for an arcanist to travel in style. The bearers are more than capable of protecting both themselves and their cargo, and a permanent magnificent mansion (or equivalent effect) provides all the comforts of home. While the Purple Wizard's is surely one of the last, similar palanquins were quite popular during the Age of Lilies, and still are occasionally produced—particularly in large cities and places like Wizard Colleges where trips are short and teleporting is frowned upon. As an added bonus, after a quick Stone to Flesh spell, the whole thing can be teleported.

The Purple Wizard is a high-level wizard (or equivalent arcane spell caster) specializing in transmutation. While she was and is a capable adventurer, she does take vacations at least once a decade and loves the sight of sunrise over fields of barley.

SHORESPREAD SHIPPING LINE

A galley trailed by a long row of barges slinks across the foggy lake like ducklings following their mother on a morning swim. Hundreds of oars rhythmically stroke the water, making the tight line of vessels look like an enormous centipede crawling across the lake. The Shorespread Shipping Line is well known to merchants that trade in bulky and heavy cargo. Named because they will work on any shore, the caravan will also travel most rivers in the region provided their barges can fit.

The company prefers to ply the lakes region hauling raw ore from the mines to the smelting foundries. Many merchants trading in any number of wares use Shorespread, in the interest of security, for smaller items as well. Despite the valuable cargo they frequently carry, the watery caravan has rarely come under attack. Captain Gardi Stryborn, an older man of strong

build who always seems to be squinting, is renowned for his strength as well as his mercy. Armaments are clearly visible on the galley and every other barge, and Captain Stryborn's crew is dotted with seasoned navy sailors trained for combat. The trailing barge carries far less cargo than the others, but makes up for it with firepower. This formidable presence makes the jade-hued sails of the galley a welcome sight in dangerous waters.

The caravan offers tow to any vessel in need and accepts other tag-alongs to tie on for a nominal fee. The craft trailing the Shorespread Shipping Line are a varied bunch. Many interesting people can be met while being pulled along behind the barges. Because the sailors being towed do not have to work, there are many a story told over a bottle and a friendly game of dice.

GM Notes: An encounter with the water-borne caravan can be many things to different parties. This caravan can be used as a way to smooth over long river voyages by having the group's vessel towed along in safety. The Shorespread Shipping Line can also be used to help bail out the party's damaged boat and lend a hand with repairs or passage to a safe harbor. Finally, GMs can use this encounter as a way to sow seeds of intrigue and give clues to the heroes. Perhaps one of the sailors on a damaged craft, in a drunken ramble, lets slip what creature put a hole through their hull and what the ship's mission upstream actually was.



THE TINKER GNOME CARAVAN

This group of quiet nomadic gnomes is religiously obsessed with collecting objects made of iron. They refuse to mine it in its raw form for themselves, preferring instead to either scavenge the surface world for the choicest pieces or trade with other travelers, merchants, and adventurers in coin or services. Tightlipped when asked about this peculiar practice, they offer only that it is a tradition that they choose to follow.

Tinker gnomes, as they are known at large, often set up camp for a few days outside of small villages and towns to trade and craft all manner of wondrous devices and common iron goods, such as swords, armor, kettles, and nails. Wonderful craftfolk, they sell their wares for very reasonable prices.

GM Notes: The tinker gnomes worship a long forgotten gnome god whose metal body was fractured into small pieces during an ancient god war. The fragments of his body were scattered across the continents thousands of years ago. The tinker gnomes comb the known world seeking out these lost parts of their god, so that one day they may rebuild him and perform the sacred ceremony that will return his soul to his body. The gnomes have found and repaired his torso and head. They have locked this reconstruction inside a wagon protected by carefully concealed runes of power and a variety of traps to thwart the possibility of theft. Characters under the effects of detect magic (or equivalent spells or effects that allow them to see magical dweomers) may notice the dozens of glowing arcane symbols covering the gnomes' sacred wagon when they are near it.

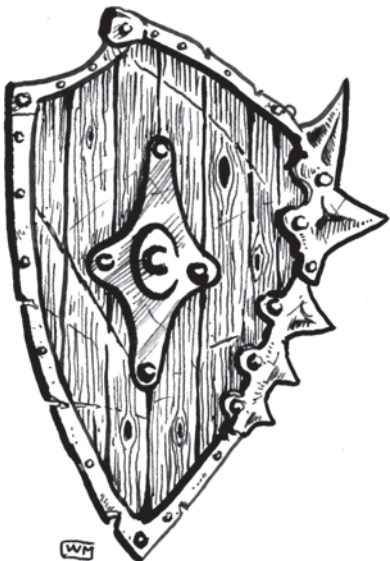
TRAVELING MOOT

Many small communities cannot afford to house prisoners and do not have a courtroom, forcing the locals to handle any and all crimes. Minor crimes are adjudicated by the town mayor or village elder, while major crimes rarely result in the need to house a prisoner as local lynch mobs generally handle the problem. However, sometimes a citizen of such a community gets accused of a crime that isn't so cut and dried. Local elected officials sometimes lack the confidence to try crimes against the crown or complicated land ownership cases. Since powerful nobles care little for these squabbles, as they take time away from their leisurely pursuits or warfare, many jurisdictions commission mercenary judges to travel the land to administer justice and punishment. The traveling judge is sometimes a landless noble or disabled knight, but occasionally, an ingratiating and corrupt barrister weasels his way into the position. These ingrates squeeze a community for every copper and every fee that the law allows, often more.

The judge's wagon is a fine affair, with insulated canvas walls, servants, and fineries. Rarely more than brutal thugs, the judge's bailiffs trot alongside the magistrate's wagon, or act as teamsters for the series of prisoner wagons that follow behind. Each season's prisoners are thrown into cages mounted on wagon wheels and accompany the judge until his return to the capital. Prisoners aren't usually fed well and are exposed to the elements, so the poor saps taken into custody early in the season are frequently haggard and diseased by the time the judge's caravan finally finishes its circuit and delivers the prisoners to the dungeons in the capital to serve the duration of the sentence. Townsfolk consider it a treat and an obligation to gather and harass the prisoners while the judge is in court in their area.

Judges base the fees they charge off estimates on how much it would cost the town to house a prisoner and keep a courtroom—charging a percentage of this estimate. Judges are rarely challenged on this fee, for everyone fears their authority. Some judges worry about discovery and vengeance and keep magical defenses and powerful bodyguards. Of course every judge has a head bailiff who also acts as an executioner and intimidator, standing guard over every trial, even minor ones, with a black hood and sharp axe. Executions are popular affairs and can be attended by the public, a privilege requiring a fee, of course...

GM's notes: PCs may well come into conflict with a judge's caravan in the wild; for remote areas judges and their bailiffs are little more than bandits with a commission. In some nations, judges sell prisoners they've taken off as slaves, and the adventurers may investigate the disappearance of a prisoner by concerned family members. Many of these cutthroat judges claim the prisoner died during the arduous circuit, but the characters may find the prisoner was sold into slavery, leading them on a spin off adventure, and possible political intrigue while they work against a judge with powerful connections among the area's nobility. ♦



EXTRAORDINARY CAMPSITES

The difficult and exciting life of an adventurer makes getting rest essential. When on the road, the places that adventurers rest for the night tend to rush by in a blur of banality. Heroes need campsites that live up to their standards and have the potential to shake things up from time to time. The following descriptions provide a number of interesting locales for characters to pass the night while out in the wild, and each includes adventure hooks for how to create a not-so-random encounter while the party has the cook pot bubbling and their feet propped up.

ABANDONED BOAT

A large hole in the hull of this boat looks like it was made when the boat was dashed against the rocks in some rough weather. The lake has since receded, leaving the wrecked boat to serve as a hostel for travelers who come to the lakeside to refresh their water supply and catch some fish. The boat can accommodate a dozen men.

The shoreline of this lake is greatly affected by the seasons, and this campsite only exists for a few months. As the lake rises through the year, the boat is carried off and deposited a short distance away—in far worse condition.

Adventure Hooks: Two previous sailors of this craft, Tomkin and Marshal, are still on board. The two sailors died years ago, but their souls have returned in the form of ghosts to haunt the site of their death. In the wee hours before dawn, campers hear a faraway argument. On deck, two ghosts bicker about what to do with the "new ones" on the boat. A map and ruby hidden on the boat hold particular interest for the ghosts. Tomkin, who seems genuine enough, wants the group to destroy the ruby; Marshal wants them to bring the ruby to the location on the map.

BASE CAMP

At the tree line of an ungodly tall mountain is a semi-permanent camp. Pilgrims and risk-takers seeking the exhilaration of the highest place in the world wait here for the right time to make their attempt. Many esoteric and knowledgeable people populate this base camp.

Nearly a tent village, party members can trade stories or supplies with the isolated campers who value needed supplies over any coin that PCs can provide, thus bartering is the only system used here. Many rare finds can be had for a month's rations and some good rope if the time is right.

Adventure Hooks: Near-mythic tales are told around the campfire from a number of pilgrims, but all pay some homage to the tale of how the mountain stretched so high into the sky. Legends claim an elemental lord of earth had amorous feelings for an elemental lady of air and sought to impress her with his ability to rise into the sky.

BLESSED WAYRESTS

A symbol marks the keystone of this small stone structure: a hand grasping a flaming sun. Within, a fire pit has been clearly established at the center of the structure, while fruit-bearing vines twine around a water font against the far wall.

Followers of the god or saint of travelers occasionally establish shelters such as this for wayward travelers in many dangerous and obscure locations. The interior is warded against evil and extraplanar creatures. The font contains a replenishing supply of clean, drinkable water, and the vines bear a variety of healthy, edible fruits. It is considered good luck to say a few words of thanks for the builders of the shelter, and to leave a small offering in the fire pit before taking one's leave the next day.

Adventure Hooks: The order responsible for building these shelters could hire the characters as bodyguards to escort them to areas of danger and watch over them while they construct a new wayrest. An evil organization or dangerous predator might seek to destroy the shelters, and the characters could be hired to put a stop to this foul practice.

CIRCLE OF THE ANCIENT

The ground of this camping area is flat and smooth in a roughly 30-foot diameter, with a fire pit located to one side against a sheltering outcropping of rock, obviously used frequently by past travelers.

Seemingly an ideal campsite, the area hides a dark secret. The floor of the campsite is actually the ceiling of a now-forgotten burial crypt from a past age. Long sealed, erosion and time have worn away the stones of the ceiling, and it could collapse inward at any time, sending unsuspecting campers down among the ancient dead, who may not look kindly upon such an intrusion.

Adventure Hooks: Being pitched unexpectedly into an ancient barrow should be enough adventure for most groups. However, characters might also be hired to rescue other campers that inadvertently fell into the crypt or investigate sightings of strange creatures in the area since the hole appeared.

EMPTY NEST

The limbs of an enormous tree dip down to within 10 feet of the forest floor, revealing a huge nest large enough to allow up to up five men to sleep comfortably within it. Vermin and other scuttling creatures scouring the earth below the welcoming heights of the tree branches may be all the motivation the characters need to clamber up to rest in the empty nest for the night.

Adventure Hooks: If the nest is found in their favored environments, giant eagles or perhaps even rocs use the huge nest seasonally. There is a small chance that the eagles will notice that their nest has been violated by the characters, and arrive to attack, devour, or simply repel the adventurers. There is a much greater chance that the nest is visited in the night by an inquisitive pair of dire weasels that have picked up the party's unfamiliar scent and arrive to investigate.

FEY GROTTA

Three willow trees grow by the side of a small pond choked with lily pads. Beneath the drooping limbs of the trees is a soft and comfortable patch of grass that is shielded from observations from those outside the branch's cover. Though serene and inviting, this grotto can be dangerous for the weak-willed.

Adventure Hooks: The characters may believe they discovered the fey grotto on their own, but often this isn't the case. Nixies commonly lure travelers to this cozy spot to work mischief or even use them as a buffer against their enemies. The Nixies may hope to use the adventurers to defend their home from a war party of goblins, bugbears, and orcs planning to invade the grotto during the night.

FROM THE MOUTHS OF GODS

A bed of windblown leaves forms a comfortable nest in the mouth of a titanic statue mostly buried beneath the ground. The head, staring out with an expression of agony, is all that is visible above ground level; its great, stony eyes are filled with eons-old sorrow and pain, evocative despite countless years of weathering.

Although secure from rain and the worst wind, some might feel nervous sleeping within the mouth of a cyclopean statue! Practitioners of the magical arts who study the statue may discern an indefinable magic aura lingering about it, but nothing more.

Adventure Hooks: No one knows the secret of the statue's origin and purpose, but many sages would pay dearly to find out. Characters could be commissioned to seek out lore pertaining to the statue, or even oversee an archeological dig to unearth the statue; this might reveal an opening into the statue's interior, where ancient secrets lie hidden, protected by powerful curses and traps. As a final possibility, the statue could simply rise from the ground in a massive displacement of earth, shake itself off, and begin striding for the horizon on an unimaginable errand. Imagine the surprise of campers sheltering in its mouth on the day this occurs!

THE HERMIT'S REACH

A solid, narrow stone tower rises above a clearing ringed by thorn bushes designed to keep out dangerous predators. There is no obvious means of accessing the single windowed chamber at the tower's top.

A mad hermit is said to dwell within the chamber at the top of the tower. Wise travelers propitiate the hermit by placing a gold coin in the stone bowl at the base of the structure; those who fail to do so are frequently visited by the most astonishing series of misfortunes for days or even weeks after camping here.

Adventure Hooks: Characters could seek out an audience with the hermit, seeking some obscure knowledge or item in his possession; of course, he would not offer up any such thing without something of equal value in exchange. Alternatively the stories of the hermit could be false, and the gold taken by a large community of mischievous gremlins that lurk in catacombs

below the tower. Those who fail to bribe the gremlins become subject to their pranks and jests until they grow bored with the game, which could take quite some time.

THE HUNTING BLIND

A sheltered area has been carefully prepared, sheltered from view by a cleverly woven net of reeds and grasses interwoven with living vines to provide a natural blind against scrutiny. The remains of feathers and wooden splinters attest to the presence of some past fletcher having sheltered here, preparing arrows while waiting for game.

Hunters often range the most dangerous parts of the world, taking shelter in carefully designed blinds that blend in with their surroundings. These blinds provide comfortable shelter to those lucky enough to stumble upon one.

Adventure Hooks: Hunting blinds are established in locations where animals are likely to gather, such as a game trail or watering hole. While the shelter may hide travelers from the sight of many animals, some of the most dangerous game may be smart enough to locate such a blind, particularly if the PCs do not take additional precautions (being very quiet and hiding their scent). Alternately, the hunters who built the blind might stumble across travelers sheltering there and decide to forego their usual prey to hunt down adventurers instead.

MOSS BED

Deep in underground caverns these colonies of soft, feathery moss grow and are harvested by the denizens of the depths to serve as padding for their beds. Adventurers sometimes find wild patches of the moss or caches of cultivated beds underground. The moss gives off a pheromone that irritates insects, so the beds are often very clean and safe.

The moss is recognizable by its pale white color and feathery tendrils. Adventurers have reported feeling a massaging effect from live, wild patches of the moss.

Adventure Hooks: Moss beds are very comfortable and keep vermin from disturbing the rest of all who sleep in them. This grants characters a bonus to skills involving healing and increases the amount of hit points characters would normally recover from an 8-hour rest.

RISEN ROCK

This natural formation is a perfect site for the group of adventurers that wish to keep an eye on their surroundings while they rest. This slight rise in the low landscape is comfortably flat on the top and surrounded by stunted bushes. This area could also be used to call attention to oneself by erecting a signal fire on the flat top.

Adventure Hooks: Lighting a fire atop Risen Rock without carefully concealing its glow is likely to draw the attention of local bandits who prey on passersby foolish enough to make their campsite known. The bandits come during the last watch of the night, hoping to surprise spellcasters up first preparing their spells instead of keeping a good lookout. In wilder environments, monstrous predators that understand the significance of campfires may arrive to make a meal out of the tasty creatures that like to gather around them.

SANDBAR

After rafting downriver for the better part of the day, a welcome sight greets the party. Where the river slows at a wide point and then bends alongside the canyon wall, a sandbar edges out into the river. This wide beach is perfect for pulling the craft out of the water for repairs, fishing, or resting a full night tucked safely against the canyon wall.

Clearly a popular stopping point for people following the river, there are three established fire pits. Previous campers have even left cookware, utensils, and other useful supplies at the site.

Adventure Hooks: The calm scene is shattered as night falls; the evening meal is interrupted by large stones crashing through the campsite. Stone giants hunt this bend in the canyon that lures river travelers. Their cunning leader targets the watercraft first and takes care to remove any debris, tents, or personal belongings from the campsite.



SNOW CAVE

Lucky adventurers wandering the snow- and ice-covered northern regions might discover what looks like a low mound of snow on the horizon of the bleak landscape. Nearer the site, footprints and a hole can be seen. Below ground, a cave dug out of the snow can accommodate up to five Medium creatures comfortably.

Adventure Hooks: The entrance to the snow cave is not so easily spotted. If the adventurers manage to find a snow cave, there is little chance that they will be disturbed during the night. Weather is a greater hazard. Blizzard-like conditions may push large drifts of snow in front of the cave, requiring the characters to clear the entrance, which can often take time and a lot of effort. Characters forced to dig themselves out might find that the heat generated by their bodies melts a thin ice wall, which reveals a small fissure in the ground leading to a series of ice caverns or some dangerous creature, frozen centuries ago, that is just now thawing out.

TRAVELERS SHRINE

A statue of a traveling figure pointing north is surrounded by a handful of tents and makeshift temporary structures. Pilgrims use this place as a safe place to rest overnight while on their journey. Warm food, safety, and interesting tales are often found at these shrines.

Adventure Hooks: A nook beneath the statue of the traveling figure hides a cache of all kinds of useful mundane items (candles, chain, crowbar, flint and steel, grappling hook, hammer, small vials of oil, rope, torches, tindertwigs, a vial of antitoxin, a vial of holy water). Words carved in the nook read, "Take what you need. Leave what you can."

THE VANISHING RUINS

Now in ruins and little more than a ring of stones, this abandoned tower seems to be an excellent place to rest for an evening—the crumbling walls provide cover, and the interior is grassy and flat.

This crumbling edifice is all that remains of the tower of a forgotten wizard, and it bears a strange curse. At midnight, the ruins magically transport themselves (and any sheltering within) to a random, new location. This does not occur every evening; a week or a month could go by without the ruins moving an inch, after which, it could change locations every night for weeks.

Adventure Hooks: Being transported comes as an unwelcome surprise to most travelers; it could add weeks or even months of travel to get to one's intended destination. Hapless travelers could even end up in dangerous countryside, and may decide to stick close to the ruins in hopes of being transported again. Alternately, it may be possible for daring explorers to enter the vaults hidden beneath the ruins. There, they can seek to locate the source of the curse, and either remove it or seek to predict where and when the ruins will shift location—they may even learn to control it!

WATERFALL SHELTER

The hollow behind a roaring waterfall has been enlarged, creating a dry, sheltered spot secure from view of travelers beyond the falls. Channels in the ceiling have been carved to funnel smoke out of the camping area and into the falling water, where it dissipates in the roaring spray.

Rangers, smugglers, and wary travelers have taken advantage of the area behind roaring waterfalls to set up campsites such as this. Travelers that know the location of the hollow can safely shelter there, secure in the knowledge that they will go unseen and unheard—except by others who know the secret of the shelter.

Adventure Hooks: Characters seeking shelter in one of these waterfall hideouts might surprise others already sheltering there, or be surprised themselves. Or an earthquake could cause the cliff face to fracture slightly, opening up a passage to a series of natural caves. The waterfall shelter could also be a secret access point to an underground dungeon complex. ♦



ROADSIDE RUINS

Do the roads between the important locations in your adventures all seem to be about the same? Have the player characters stayed at the same small farming hamlet owned by the same eccentric farm couple on different roads all over your world? If so, it's time to make your trade roads, caravan routes, and mountain trails a little more interesting. This article presents ten mysterious roadside ruins you can use to spice up your high roads and byroads, along with adventure ideas to make them even more relevant in your game. These locations are the last remnants of ancient races and crumbled empires, waiting for your players to uncover their lost secrets.

THE ABANDONED INN

For centuries, the crudely built Waywatcher Roadhouse stood on a low promontory overlooking a mountain trail. Nicknamed Parasite Point by seasoned travelers, the inn and its small stables survived by being the only decent shelter and warm bath within several days walk. The roof collapsed years ago, and it wasn't worth the owner's effort and coin to repair. The inn was abandoned, and it has since fallen to ruin. All the buildings are now surrounded and filled by pine forest. The mountain spring that provided water for the inn and its brewery is still a source of clean drinking water from which travelers stop to fill their waterskins. The remains of a wooden bridge mark the site where the stream cuts across the trail.

Adventure Hooks: A band of bugbears and a clever old mountain troll often use the Waywatcher as a seasonal lair. They pollute the stream and terrorize travelers until one of the towns at either end of the trail hires adventurers to drive them away. The monstrous terrorists have been cunning enough to avoid death at the hands of each group of mercenaries... so far.

CISTERN OF THE FORGOTTEN EMPIRE

Tumbled blocks, overgrown by hundreds of years of plant growth, conceal several exposed wells and the deteriorated remains of a mechanized water lift near a massive underground cistern. Curious explorers that have climbed down into the cistern have seen a large space broken up by a forest of hundreds of intricately carved marble columns, each approximately 30 feet in height. The columns are arranged in thirteen rows each consisting of twenty-six columns, and if the carvings on them are read in the correct order, they relate the history of the Caliphate of Ardishir the Magnificent and the fabled city of Zahadran. The columns tell the tale of how Ardishir instructed his vizier Godratt the Wise to create a magical barrier reminiscent of the crystal sky the gods created when they made the world. The barrier would protect the Caliph and his peoples from all of the world's ills by creating a palace garden paradise, while reminding the people of the power and majesty of their Caliph.

Adventure Hooks: Orcish brigands have been throwing the corpses of their victims into one end of the cistern for months. Presently, that end of the cistern is infested with vermin: rats, centipedes, spiders and scorpions. The other end of the cistern is home to the orcish raiders, their slave pits, and treasure.

Passersby—perhaps ambushed by an orcish raiding party—can track the orcs back to their cistern lair and put an end to this roadside menace. Alternately, if you plan to run DCC #32: The Golden Palace of Zahadran, exploration of the Cistern of the Forgotten Empire provides an excellent lead-in to that adventure.

CLIFF SIDE RUINS

Travelers and scholars alike frequently visit these ancient white marble caves, each hoping to unravel the secrets hidden in plain sight in the pictographs that were carved here thousands of years ago. There are hundreds of symbolic depictions of common turtles, snakes, wolves, birds, and humans. The most interesting of the pictographs show archetypal, heroic human hunters preying on all manner of mythical beasts: hydras, manticores, wyverns, and dragons.

Adventure Hooks: The ruins are actually a series of puzzles that, once solved, reveal a series of cleverly concealed secret doors to the tombs of these ancient hunters. Trapped as ancient tombs so frequently are, they contain the burial remains of a prehistoric race of humanoid hunters and their shamanic magical hunting spears—each attuned to hunt a specific monstrous creature of mythical origin.

THE FORTRESS OF HEP

Built long ago by animals enslaved by a satyr named Hep, this forest fortress had strong walls resembling pipes, surrounding a large cathedral-like hall. With the help of a passing druid, the enslaved animals rebelled against their fey master. They killed the satyr and destroyed his fortress. The hall and all but a few sections of the wall have collapsed, leaving the appearance of wooden organ pipes thrusting up from the forest floor.

Adventure Hooks: Hep's mischievous ghost haunts the collapsed ruins of his fortress, hunting down any animals that venture too close. Most animals sense the danger that the ruins represent and will not willingly approach them. Some say Hep's spirit knows almost everything about the surrounding area, and that he will answer one question truthfully if he is offered an animal sacrifice. Others say his pipes, which were said to have had many strange magical enchantments, still lie hidden somewhere within the ruins of the fortress.

THE OLD CROPSTONE FORT

Ages ago, the ruler of a long-forgotten nation ordered masons and military leaders to build stone forts at the border crossings of all the roads into his realm. From these forts, his soldiers watched for invasion and collected tolls and tariffs. The Old Cropstone Fort is one such fort, still in remarkable shape given its countless years of disuse. Stories among the local people tell of bad luck befalling anyone that removes even one stone from the fort. In fact, a few imaginative local farmers have declared that adding stones from their fields to the fort has helped their crops. Some of its walls are now stacked with new stones, making them strangely misshapen and even higher in places than they originally were.

Adventure Hooks: The local farmers know every stone in the old fort and are upset that large amounts of stone seem to have gone missing over the past few weeks. They've sent their young men off to investigate and pooled their gold to hire a group of adventurers. The stones must be found and restored before they can plant their crops.

PILLARS OF PAST OBSERVANCE

The four ancient pillars of the Wadi Basal depression have marked the caravan trail across the Ghetrian Desert since before the first tribe came and Harr-Jadd created the camel. Even when the worst sandstorms hide other landmarks below flowing dunes, the pillars stand tall. There were originally five pillars, arranged at the points of a pentagram. The ancient residents of the area marked the time for daily religious observance by the way the sun's shadow fell across the pillars. Only four pillars are left, and only one of those still reaches its full height of thirty feet. The bases of the pillars, including the missing one, are buried four feet below the hard-packed desert sands.

Adventure Hooks: The pillars are still sacred to the Haleeb, a tribe of ancient nomadic halflings. A group of Haleeb gathers at the site to kneel and pray whenever the shadow of the tallest pillar touches one of the others. They tolerate travelers passing by the site, but attack anyone who alters the site in any way, camps there for the night, or refuses to leave during their prayers.

THE RUINED ROADSIDE BATH OF HELIOSULPAS

The ruins known as the Roadside Bath of Heliosulpas lay a stone's throw from one of the busiest trade roads in Aereth. Crumbling aqueducts lead to towering collapsed archways and a variety of carved pools decorated by fading, chipped and scarred mosaics. Travelers sometimes pry pieces of the mosaics free and take them along on their journey, hoping that it will bring them luck. The baths were once part of a larger complex famed for having healing waters. Indeed, a few monastic orders exist that make a yearly pilgrimage to the ruins in homage to ancient gods, believing that the pools will grant them long and healthy lives.

Adventure Hooks: Tracing the ruined aqueducts back to the shattered water lift reveals a magical fresh water spring nestled next to an amethyst-veined cliff wall. The spring is fenced by a variety of humanoid skulls impaled on old, rusted weapons driven into the ground. This spirit wall is a warning for all to keep away from the pool. Those failing to heed the warning risk triggering a deadly trap. The waters of the pool are magically healing and restorative, but lose their potency an hour after being taken from the pool. An extremely territorial and ancient water naga lives at the very bottom in an underwater lair. The creature demands a terrible price from any interlopers that make it past the spirit wall, hoping to receive the benefits of the magical water.

SLAUGHTERED CARAVAN

A few old, rotting tarps flap in the breeze just off the trail, directing passing travelers' attention to a collection of abandoned carts. This is the last camp of the Slaughtered Caravan, a group of merchants slain by some unknown animal or monster as they rested for the night. Thieves scavenged everything of value from the camp years ago and found claw marks and blood throughout the camp, but no sign of the merchants. Because this stretch of road passes through an area unclaimed by the nearest kingdoms, no one has bothered to do anything about clearing the grisly scene.

Adventure Hooks: The merchants were slavers killed by a barghest that they mistook for an ordinary goblin. The barghest killed and devoured everyone in the caravan. The beast still lurks in the area. It has dug out a large burrow beneath an overturned cart and creeps out to devour lone travelers or small groups foolish enough to pick through the abandoned carts and debris. The creature has sensed a change coming. It knows that with a few more kills, it will transcend its current form and become a greater barghest. Consequently, it has become more daring in its attacks.

SUNROD CAVERNS

Stone monuments mark three pits that lead to a network of caverns once used as an alchemical workshop by a local warlord named Bansuul. Armored bugbear guards once stood at the pits, keeping the slave laborers in and any curious spies out. A series of tragic explosions and poisonous gas clouds reduced the slave population so severely that the warlord abandoned the site. Only Bansuul and his chief alchemists knew what strange projects were underway in the deepest caverns.

Adventure Hooks: Locals say the tortured souls of Bansuul's experimental subjects lie trapped below ground. Few people have ventured more than a few dozen feet into the foul-smelling pits, and only one returned. He emerged, killed a friend who was waiting for him on the surface, and then hung himself from a nearby tree.

TEMPLE OF THE MARILITH

This was once a grand stone temple that was erected around a summoning circle where a local ruler called upon the advice of a powerful marilith. Crumbling, faded images of the demon's serpentine body and six weapon-wielding arms cover the temple walls that still remain intact. The original summoning circle is still in perfect working condition, but it is buried beneath a thin layer of dirt and moss.

Adventure Hooks: The temple ruins frequently serve as a temporary home for wild animals and monstrous beasts indigenous to the area, although the subtle emanations of otherworldly evil eventually drives them away. Dozens of stone tablets strewn around the area recount the successful military campaigns that resulted from the marilith's advice, and may give clues to the fate of great warriors and the locations of ancient battlefields. A careful study of the archaic symbols engraved on the stone tablets also reveals the secret words used to summon the demon; however, doing so without the appropriate wards the original templars used is sure to end badly for the summoner. ◆

TRAVELING MERCHANTS

Merchants come and merchants go. On the road, characters encounter many merchants over the course of their careers. Oftentimes, these encounters quickly fall into the same, dull routine—the characters check if the vendor has a particular item, a transaction is completed, and both go on their merry way. A traveling merchant quickly becomes just another source of food; a merchant in town quickly becomes just another place to buy a new quiver full of arrows. Even simple facts like the race or gender of the merchant become meaningless to the players. They don't care that they're talking to yet another dwarven weaponsmith; they just want to buy a new sword.

Encounters with merchants needn't be staid or redundant. These brief encounters can fulfill several roles within the game, running the gamut from levity during tense moments to a dark moment that sharpens your players' focus when things get dull. Whether you're looking for a mute gnome who sells flowers, or a necromantic gnoll dealing in undead, the seven merchants described here should prove to your players, once and for all, that not all merchants are created equal.

GOLDRUM, THE FLOWER VENDOR

Goldrum is a mute gnome. His tongue was cut out by orcs during a war fought long ago; he was also scalped. Instead of turning to begging, Goldrum makes his living by walking from tavern to tavern during the revelry hours and peddling candy, trinkets, and small hand-held bouquets of flowers to patrons. He is not above using his pathetic appearance to tug on the heartstrings of customers in order to hustle tips and inflated prices. He sells small pieces of candy coated with sugary caramel in neatly folded wax paper. His base price is 5 pieces per cp. His trinkets, which include little paper puzzles and simple wooden figurines, cost 1 cp each, and for his bouquets of flowers, he asks at least 1 sp.

Goldrum has been such an omnipresent figure in the city for so many decades that no one pays much attention to him—an invisible creature would attract more notice. Goldrum doesn't steal and is honest to a fault, but he frequently acts as a surreptitious messenger. He hides messages in bouquets of flowers or uses the message paper to wrap candy. He will pass any message to anyone in town for 5 sp. Goldrum never reveals his sources or destinations. Someone receiving a message passed by Goldrum will receive a subtle wrap on the ankle with his cane. This signal is well known by his regular customers, but people from out of town must make a DC 20 Gather Information roll to have heard of this tactic. Spotting this maneuver (for someone not on the receiving end of the cane) is a DC 25 Spot check, as Goldrum has become adept at concealing it.

JIMAGUS, THE WISH PEDDLER

Once an influential advisor to the potentate of a distant desert kingdom, Jimagus was found guilty of corruption. As punishment he was cursed, stripped of his memories and banished from the land. Knowing that this would be the penalty for his many crimes, Jimagus took steps to avoid this fate by making a deal with a bottled genie that he had long enslaved. Should he be

exposed, the genie was to fly to his aid. But djinn are fickle beings—tired of his long servitude the djinn came to Jimagus' aid, but does nothing more than ensure he receives enough to eat, drink, and has adequate shelter to survive. Alone and friendless in a strange land, Jimagus has resorted to panhandling to live. The blessings he gives to those who offer him a copper directly translate into wishes the djinn grants to the former wizard's benefactor. "May you have a blessed day," and "May fortune smile down on thee," often take a quite literal turn for those who are generous with their coin. Should Jimagus ever figure out that he has such power available, he promptly wishes for the power to restore his mind and break the curse upon him. At that moment the conjurer (use the equivalent of a 23rd-level evil wizard specializing in conjuration and summoning spells) regains all his prepared spells and many potent magical items. How foul his demeanor is upon his return to power depends on how the characters have treated him...

MAKRAH

Makrah is a short old man with an iron-gray beard groomed into a single long braid. His long mustaches hang freely and brush the top of his chest. Despite his normal appearance, there is an air of something "not quite right" about him that is difficult to pinpoint. Makrah travels from town to town, pushing a rickety old cart that looks like it is a mere day away from collapsing where it stands. His prices attract the most attention—all of his goods, big or small, cost a mere gold piece. From exotic herbs to rare wines and preserved body parts to masterpieces of weaponsmithing, Makrah seems to be focused more on giving a bargain than making any profit. Where or how, or from whom, he acquires these goods is something that Makrah keeps to himself. The only goods that Makrah manufactures himself are a large variety of alchemical goods (see below), including varying grades of explosives. The explosives he doesn't sell to just anybody, but he has a keen eye for noticing the adventuring type.

MAKRAH'S MAGNIFICENT MOCHI

These rice cakes are dense and nutritious, not to mention magical. These cakes remove fatigue and exhaustion, count as the equivalent of food and water for a day, heal 1d8+5 hit points (or an equivalent healing effect), and have a 10% chance of restoring psionic power points or allowing a spell caster who prepares spells to recall a spell previously prepared, and then cast as though they had not expended the spell. Makrah keeps the precise method of making these cakes a closely guarded secret—it would be easier trying to get a dragon to part with its treasure than to get Makrah to part with this recipe.

MUAGH'S KARNEL KART

Muagh (use the equivalent of a 9th-level gnoll cleric of an evil death deity) is quite literally a merchant of death. The wily old gnoll peddles animated dead out of the back of his mobile shop, the Karnel Kart. The cart is a twelve-foot long covered wain, which extrudes the cloying smell of rotting flesh mixed with the smell of dried herbs. When his inventory reaches its maximum capacity, the limbs of dead things can be seen poking out from the back of the cart. Two silent troll skeletons draw the cart for Muagh, doubling as his guards. A pair of broad red sashes attached to either side of the cart sport white painted letters phonetically spelling out the name of the shop in the local Common tongue. Muagh frequently remains long after the other traveling merchants leave a marketplace after each gathering comes to an end. He knows that's the best time to find the fresh bodies of folks whose business did not go as they had expected.

PADHORN, THE ROAMING SWORD SELLER

Padhorn is a lean and wiry human weaponsmith who takes his wares to where the battle is. He roams areas of impending battle or adventure, looking for warriors who need new weapons or need to have their damaged weapons repaired. When terrain allows, he'll bring a whole wagon full of various common weapons; otherwise, he keeps his goods on four very intelligent pack mules named Doris, Bettina, Flodie, and Zebestra. His markup is tremendous (175% of the usual book value), but warriors in need rarely quibble about the price. While mending damaged weaponry, his sidekick, Brunethor, a venerable dwarf of incredible girth, entertains clients with his vast knowledge of military history and tactics, brewing up tea, or serving small cups of spiced ale while his boss works. Brunethor is a skilled orator and has been known to talk raiding orc bands out of attacking his boss with only his wit and humor. Brunethor is so old and well-traveled that listening to him may give the heroes some insight into the terrain or opposition likely found in the area in which they are currently adventuring.

THERA'S CORNUCOPIA

Thera the thin, called "the Hag" by the tactless, is a fruit seller. She wanders the countryside gathering only the finest and freshest of the earth's bounty and brings it to cities and towns to sell. While in larger communities, Thera takes orders from chefs seeking particular fruits and vegetables, charging a premium for the service. Professionals are willing to pay her steep prices because they know Thera will get it there as fresh as if it were just picked.

Thera's unfortunate appearance has earned her various cruel nicknames. She is extremely tall, when she actually stands up from her stooped position, and morbidly thin. While her gnarled hands are swollen with arthritis and her face is a mass of wrinkles, she has incongruously ageless eyes. The superstitious guard against the Evil Eye, believing a single glance entrances the unlucky into buying anything from her. Those who have gotten into heated haggling matches with Thera blame her when rodents damage their goods, their fruits spoil, or bread fails to rise. Thera has done nothing to dissuade the rumors—rumors draw in the curious, and curious is good for business.

XIOMAGORIA, PURVEYOR OF DREAMS

The spawn of a drow and the half-mad experiment of an aboleth psion, Xiomagoria is a warped, twisted creature (use the equivalent of a 6th-level psionic character) that peddles madness and nightmarish dreams to those seeking the ultimate thrill. She runs a covert business, catering specifically to wealthy nobles whose dull and pampered lives leave them desirous of her ability to fill their minds with dark taboos. As her work often reaps ruinous effects on her clients, she has been forced to relocate her practice on several occasions.

Xiomagoria currently works out of a small second floor apartment above a brothel and gambling hall; however, she maintains a covert back entrance that permits clients to retain their anonymity.

Finding the place requires a DC 25 Gather Information check. Those requesting her services must make an appointment with her booking agent, a disheveled halfling named Bolgras, whose bulging eyes never seem to focus on anything for more than a few seconds. She requires a 500-gp deposit from first-time clients and refuses to speak with anyone unless they have an appointment.

A full treatment costs 1,000 gp and takes about an hour to perform; however, the altered state she produces lasts for six more hours, during which time the client suffers from extreme visual and auditory hallucinations of a deeply disturbing nature. For this reason, her work is universally despised, and more than a few noble houses have placed sizeable rewards for her head after her treatments permanently scarred a family member or loved one. ♦



WAR TORN: ON THE MARCH

When an army marches, everything changes. A territory under attack by an invading army becomes a desperate place where basic necessities are rare and trust elusive. Laws disappear and justice is arbitrary. Good people are reduced to desperate and evil acts to preserve their way of life and survive. On the other hand, times of war present opportunities for the crafty and wise to prosper. This article presents 100 places and events adventurers might come across in a land torn by war.

1. Three soldiers have stabbed a merchant, left him for dead, and now loot his cart for tools and weapons.
2. A stable boy who lost both his parents in the fighting has decided to take his revenge by stealing the horses of six enemy soldiers and taking them to the resistance fighters.
3. One soldier and a few craftsmen guard a nearly completed wheeled catapult.
4. A cave next to a stream contains a hidden cache of cheese, stale bread, and 100 days of trail rations left by the invading army.
5. Soldiers spar with dull weapons while they wait in line to sharpen their blades at a blacksmith's shop.
6. A messenger on a griffon flies low; he carries battle plans between the leaders of two allied armies.
7. A large band of enemy soldiers and spellcasters force local people to take an oath of allegiance to the invading ruler or be branded as property and carted off as slaves.
8. Soldiers forcibly grab new army recruits from the young men and boys in a small village, but skip over any who can pay a bribe of at least 2 gold pieces.
9. Defending soldiers burn the fields of their own country and take the livestock of poor farmers to deny food to the approaching enemy.
10. Two tired and hungry deserters reveal the location and strength of their army's camps if given food, drink, and a place to stay.
11. A large group of refugees, cattle, sheep, and carts filled with personal items flees behind friendly lines.
12. Clerics of the invading army desecrate the temple of a local deity and pray to their own deities for success in battle.
13. A picket of three alert soldiers, including one who has climbed a tree and one with a pet dog, watch the approach to the main army's camp.
14. A halfling scout on a riding dog searches for signs of the enemy army and carries a *bird feather token* to deliver the message when he finds them.
15. An *arcane eye* scans the terrain out ahead of a small party of enemy sorcerers and rangers.
16. A few simple-minded lookouts cook their lunch in a makeshift hilltop fortification made of dry, flammable brush and logs.
17. A mob of people in a small village chant "death to the invaders" and beat the legs of two enemy collaborators with clubs.
18. Five soldiers lead twenty captured civilians, including the wealthy steward of the local castle, away as slaves.
19. A band of eight resistance fighters wait to ambush patrols behind enemy lines.
20. A damp cave guarded by four soldiers contains thirty starving prisoners of war that are being killed one at a time and dragged deeper into the cave by a patient athach.
21. Spiked pit traps protect a flank approach to a military camp.
22. Three enemy clerics sacrifice a captive wizard to their deity by submersing her in a bog.
23. One wounded soldier still survives on a four-day old battlefield of rotting corpses and mass graves.
24. Soldiers standing guard along a ridge to slow the enemies' advance are only decoys stuffed with grass and leaves.
25. An enemy garrison patrols a small town, but has been unable to gain entry to the local monastery.
26. Two soldiers and four wagons filled with mundane looted items head back toward enemy lands.
27. An owlbear trained to fight and harnessed for pulling war machines has escaped and is on a rampage.
28. Soldier light signals fires along a ridge to announce the approach of the enemy army.
29. Invaders force the people of a small town to play music and dance in the town square, while soldiers publicly execute their leaders.
30. Assassin vines under the command of a druid attack the forces besieging a small wooden keep.
31. Invading soldiers contract a terrible blistering disease sent by the local deity.
32. Two powerful sorcerers and two skilled fighters *teleport* onto a bridge and begin setting up defensive positions by casting *wall of stone* spells for protection.
33. Commoners armed with picks, shovels, and clubs rise up and attack the enemy army's baggage train.
34. A field hospital set up in an old mill beside a stream is full of soldiers covered in electricity burns.
35. Gnomes mounted on griffons fly overhead to check out enemy strength and positions.
36. A traveling blacksmith with a dark sense of humor makes good money sharpening weapons and repairing armor for soldiers.
37. A necromancer raises an undead army from a battlefield of bodies charred by fire and lightning.
38. A mother sends her young daughter to bring poisoned wine and bread to enemy troops.
39. Soldiers have forced local peasants to build three catapults to attack the small tower of a local knight.
40. Well-armed enemy woodcutters fell trees and cart them off to make fortifications and siege weapons.

41. A group of children hide in an abandoned town where all the buildings were burned and the well poisoned.
42. An invading army fords a river by lowering it with *control water* spells.
43. Ravens and rat swarms scavenge the remains of an ambushed patrol.
44. Conquering soldiers and political leaders conscript locals build a statue of their victorious leader.
45. A group of desperate refugees have set up a camp in the woods and turned to banditry to survive.
46. The local military governor has tied the bodies of nine resistance fighters to poles along the road as an example to others.
47. A horn blows as tired defenders on horseback rally for a counterattack against the invaders.
48. Soldiers collect rocks and dirt to damn a river that supplies water and fills the moats of a fortress under siege.
49. An open field contains piles of weapons burned to deny them to the enemy, yet there are still serviceable daggers, short swords, and one masterwork longsword.
50. A cult of an evil deity sacrifices a wounded soldier on a hill, which was the site of a recent, terrible battle.
51. Young boys with wooden swords reenact a scene of soldiers forcing innocent villagers over a rocky cliff.
52. Sooty smoke from mass funeral pyres reduces visibility and makes eyes burn.
53. Soldiers and their huge half-orc lieutenant force a blacksmiths to make chains and collars for slaves.
54. An enemy officer receives a field promotion for his ruthless suppression of resistance among a group of farmers.
55. Farmers search for livestock they drove away before soldiers passed through.
56. City gates are only opened for residents and merchants with traveling papers, and they are never opened after sundown.
57. A bandit gang led by a notorious outlaw has become an effective resistance group.
58. An army under attack signals for reinforcements by creating smoke and casting *fireballs* in the sky.
59. Hundreds of worn and dirty tents, fire pits, and supply wagons cover what used to be a cornfield.
60. Swarms of biting flies hover over a trench that carries wastewater from a military camp to a nearby stream.
61. Craftsmen replace a burned bridge with connected rafts.
62. Military leaders attend a worship ceremony at an impressive temple built of rough-cut logs.
63. A local strongman and his thugs kidnapped the mayor and took control of a small town with the consent of the conquering army.
64. A unit of 100 lightly armored cavalry scouts the region, looking for enemy armies or spies.
65. In fulfillment of an ancient debt, an army of *svirfneblin* emerges from underground to help defend the region.
66. An unusually high river prevents two armies from reaching each other across a ford, so they shout taunts and build *ballistae*.
67. Prices of weapons and basic necessities triple, while the cost of luxuries like fancy clothes and jewelry drop.
68. Defending soldiers build a simple fort on a ridge, with wattle walls and small hand-powered catapults.
69. A small flock of fake sheep is a lure to draw foraging enemy soldiers into an ambush.
70. A messenger raven flies overhead, carrying a small leather pouch containing a warning of an upcoming attack.
71. A brushfire caused by battle magic rages out of control, threatening an isolated monastery.
72. A small band of army deserters dressed in peasant clothes and led by a self-absorbed aristocrat makes its way back toward home.
73. Soldiers collect tolls along all major roadways to support the war.
74. A painful skin disease works its way through a military encampment and the nearby town where they commandeer supplies.
75. Hundreds of war dogs and their trainers terrorize a town they believe is hiding a local prince.
76. A ruthless captain moves down a line of enemies impaled on poles, drinking a little blood of each one from a silver chalice.
77. A small band of rangers climbs dangerous cliffs to bring supplies and information to a besieged city.
78. A walled town opens its gates to the enemy and flies purple banners, signifying that it is free and neutral in the current fight.
79. The inns have been looted by soldiers, so they have no fresh meat or bread, and serve a brew of chicory and nettles instead of ale.
80. Gruff warriors have ordered uncooperative townsfolk to stand on one foot in the town square, whipping them if they lose their balance.
81. The horizon is black with smoke from campfires and pyres burning dead bodies.
82. A wounded, insane bard walks along the road singing a depressing dirge of death and destruction; he will not stop or be consoled.
83. A starving band of warriors has resorted to banditry and cannibalism.
84. Soldiers of the invading army each have a tattoo of a coiled scorpion to show their allegiance, and some have many other tattoos from previous campaigns.
85. Orc mercenaries waiting in ambush along a mountain pass have found a beautifully decorated cave.
86. Military musicians practice their craft in a farm field and attract the attention of fey creatures from the adjoining forest.
87. A distraught merchant moves frantically around the woods, trying to remember where he hid his treasure.
88. Hill giants and trained elephants build two border forts and clear the way for a new road between them.
89. Powerful druids cause a volcano to erupt and cut off the enemy's advance.
90. Enemy soldiers carve their names and rude sayings into standing stones held sacred by the local people.
91. Enemy armies fight a battle amid the fallen walls and columns of an ancient city.
92. A small band of blind monks fights its way into the city to recover an ancient document taken by enemy soldier.
93. Enemy soldiers rob the tombs of ancient rulers.
94. Invaders convince a red dragon to fly ahead of them and burn enemy towns.
95. Local villagers bring food and treats to soldiers on watch atop a long defensive wall.
96. Soldiers herd enemy prisoners of war into a narrow river canyon and prepare to flood it by destroying a dam upriver.
97. Warships land a large army of spearmen and archers along the coast.
98. Merfolk attack enemy supply ships.
99. A patrol of well-armed dwarves gets sidetracked by rumors of a hidden treasure.
100. Sorcerers control conquered enemies with *mark of justice* spells.

WEATHERING THE STORM

Bad weather, even catastrophic storms, often serves as little more than background ambience to set a certain mood or facilitate a particular event only marginally related to the weather condition itself. A clear, sunny day or a cold, snowy one doesn't usually impact the game. The weather fades into the background, if it even gets mentioned at all. But what if the weather took center stage? What if the rain or snow or wind led directly to the next adventure the heroes faced? Below are some distinct events and adventure ideas tied to various types of weather to drop into your next gaming session.

ACIDIC HAIL

As the storm rages, hail begins to fall from the sky. As you look closer, you notice the hail is tinged pale yellow. As it begins to melt, the ground hisses.

Thankfully, this event is extremely rare. Like most hail storms, this event occurs during the warm weather of the summer months as intense updrafts super-cool the water vapors in the clouds. However, unlike the more mundane hail, which is just water, these hailstones are comprised of an acidic substance that gives the stones their pale yellow coloration. When the stones melt, they burn whatever they come in contact with, decimating crops and killing livestock and even people foolish enough to stand outside during such a storm.

Adventure Hooks: The local alchemist would like to hire the adventurers to collect samples of acidic hail before it melts so she can study its properties and learn how to counter it. Alternatively, citizens living at the edges of town in buildings susceptible to the destructive power of the acidic hail may need to be gathered and brought into stone shelters within the town proper. Braving the open spaces and the burning hailstones may tax the heroes' to the very limit, but earn them the town's undying gratitude.

BALL LIGHTNING

A blue and white ball flies toward the party. It spins across the ground, throwing off sparks and shocking those it comes in contact with.

These mysterious glowing balls of light vary in size from as small as an acorn, to as large as a melon. They come in a variety of iridescent colors, make little noise, give off no odor, and disappear in a flash of light upon hitting magical shields or other enchanted equipment. In the most violent cases, the balls explode in waves of heat and crackling electricity. This phenomenon is most common during thunderstorms.

Adventure Hooks: Adventurers that encounter ball lightning often assume that they have come under magical attack by a rogue spellcaster and immediately attempt to investigate its source. While they'll never find what they're looking for, an encounter with ball lightning can precipitate other adventures based on their responses. On the road, this type of encounter can be used to divert players onto a side adventure. In town, it can be the pretext for the players becoming local heroes as they search for the source of the strange phenomenon.

DEVIL'S BLIZZARD

The storm has raged for nearly a week, leaving snow piled higher than you have ever seen. With it's the storm's passing, something big and sinister appears out of the snowdrifts. The fiendish creature is an insectile humanoid armed with a massive spear, and it's headed this way.

These are no ordinary blizzards. The snows fall and the winds howl for a week, and sometimes longer. The end of the excruciatingly long storm is just the beginning of the trouble, however. These rare storms sometimes form a connection between the realm of the ice devils and the world of men, allowing ice devils to pass through. The cold aftermath of a Devil's Blizzard creates an environment comfortable for the fiends to perform their vile deeds. On rare occasions, two or more ice devils vie for the same snowed-in region, battling each other with no thought or concern for the devastation they inflict upon their surroundings.

Adventure Hooks: When this event occurs, great heroes are needed to fend off the marauding ice devil, either by destroying it outright, or driving it back through the tenuous connection between the two worlds. Powerful characters might even need to take the fight to Hell itself in order to sever the planar rift before it becomes permanent.

THE DRAGON'S STORM

As rain pummels the ground and thunder shakes the mountains, you see an unbelievable sight with each flash of lightning. Dragons, typically hostile towards one another, gather in the middle of the storm, soaking in their surroundings.

Sages have yet to ascertain why, but there is something momentous about a thunderstorm in the desert on the night of a new moon. Blue dragons treat this confluence of lunar cycle and meteorological phenomenon as a sacred event. During the storm, and for some time afterwards, blue dragons for hundreds of miles around converge on the area. While usually territorial creatures, during these events they are oddly passive; they seek out locations of lightning strikes, share lore with one another, and commune with their dark gods. Interlopers—that is, any non-dragons—are hunted down and devoured by the dragons. Therefore eyewitness accounts of these draconic events are scanty and rare.

Adventure Hooks: PCs caught in such a storm might find themselves in a situation that quickly spins out of their control. Alternatively, perhaps the characters are employed to seek out this event for a local sage and bring back observations while trying to stay out of view of the massive wyrms.

THE DUSANU

The world has been devoured in a thick, choking mist of white vapors that swirl and churn slowly to unseen winds, as if strange creatures just beyond the range of your vision stir them into sluggish motion.

Footsteps echo oddly in the mist, and other, difficult to identify noises can occasionally be heard, issuing from some unknown distance.

There are many forms of mist, from a light haze to a fog thick as pea soup, but none quite as eerie as the spectral fume known as the Dusanu, or Mist of the Otherworld. The Dusanu comes in late winter, particularly in years following a late, Indian summer. It rises before daybreak as a thick, choking mist. Those who travel abroad in it have been known to go irrevocably insane, or simply vanish. Others report seeing ghostly faces and apparitions in the mist, or tell of strange sounds, as if unseen things move through the fog.

Adventure Hooks: Characters who go out in the fog might encounter all manner of strange spirits, including the apparitions of dead loved ones or even slain enemies. In some civilizations, the Dusanu may be a welcome and frequent phenomenon, wherein the living may consult with the dead if they are careful to take the necessary precautions to protect themselves. Characters of a divine nature may be hired to use their training to ward away evil spirits and act as liaisons with friendly ones. Friends could vanish during the Dusanu, and the adventurers might become embroiled in a quest to discover their whereabouts and rescue them if possible. Alternately, the characters may find themselves swallowed up by the mist and taken to whatever location the Game Master desires.

HELLWIND

A steady, warm wind whips by you, pressing on your bodies in a choking wave of heat. The moaning of the wind is eerie, like the distant cries of damned souls.

It is said that when the torment of those damned to the Hells becomes too great, their cries of suffering sound across the planes and manifest in our world as a Hellwind. This is a steady, hot breeze that blows for a considerable amount of time—sometimes for weeks. The air carries an unpleasant stench of brimstone and rot, and many claim they can hear the distant cries of the damned if they listen closely. Suicides, murder, and other violent crimes are much more likely to occur when the Hellwind blows; others simply hunker down and ride it out.

Adventure Hooks: A wide variety of crimes are committed when the Hellwind blows. The characters may be recruited by the local law enforcement agents to help track down a serial killer or some other threat that has arisen. More powerful characters may be asked to seek out the source of the Hellwind and attempt to bring an end to this horrible phenomenon once and for all.

HURRICANE DETRITUS

As the rough sea churns and crashes against the rocky dikes, a strange old ship heaves into view. Covered in seaweed and barnacles, the powerful sea currents force it closer and closer to the shore.

Dozens of years ago, a mighty ship called the Evestanus disappeared at sea. It and its crew's fate have been a great mystery and the topic of many superstitious dockside tales ever since. The truth is that it sunk and its crew all drowned in the briny deep.

Adventure Hooks: A recent hurricane has churned the coastal water to its very depths and dredged up the Evestanus from its murky grave. Dozens of undead sailors inhabit the ruined ship and begin to invade the nearby coastal town. Dealing with the ravenous undead requires the skill of seasoned adventurers. Additionally, perhaps the rightful owner of the ship would like to hire the heroes to clear out the danger, so the ship's valuable cargo can be recovered. In doing so, the adventurers may learn the sinister truth behind the fate of the Evestanus, leading them to further adventures to solve an ancient oceanic mystery.

LUCID SHROUD

A shimmering film hangs in the air, suspended over the desert sands. Inside appears a scene as from a dream, as if seen through a thin curtain or mist.

These oasis-like visions are seen by desert travelers in the heat of the afternoon sun, under the clear sky that follows a heavy rain. The scenes depicted beyond the shroud are real, simple reflections of events occurring many miles away. Some mages believe the shrouds can be used for travel or even divining the future, but have yet to discover a means to do so.

Adventure Hooks: The characters view an event through a lucid shroud, and while they do not know any of the parties involved, the knowledge endangers their lives. Perhaps it was a crime, a plot to overthrow a local lord, or the movement of invading troops. Soon after, assassins and thugs become a constant plague. They become involved, whether they like it or not, and need to investigate further if they are to outmaneuver their enemies.

PLANAR RIFT

A vast tornado spins wildly, flinging dust and debris everywhere. Above the tumult, a tremendous tearing sound accompanies a gaping hole torn in the sky itself, as if a hole in reality had suddenly been opened.

Tornadoes are a destructive fact of life on the plains during the summer months. Some of these twisters are more dangerous than others, however. A planar rift occurs when the strongest of tornadoes spins at just the right angle, ripping a hole between two planes. These rifts allow beings from the joined plane to pass through, often to the detriment of those living nearby.

Adventure Hooks: Dealing with whatever passes through the planar rift should keep any group of adventurers busy. Perhaps damned souls are released from a prison plane and the heroes must capture them and return them to their keepers (see the Hellwind). Or the planar rift allows dozens of elemental creatures through, which the adventurers must destroy before they wreak total devastation upon the surrounding lands. Alternately, the party may need to seek out these phenomena as a means to perform some random plane-hopping.

ROSE RAIN

A gentle rain descends from the sky, falling in a light sprinkle and coating your skin in a slick wash of red-tinged water.

Every three to six years in late spring, the rose rain comes. This pale reddish precipitation carries within it the immature form of a species of troublesome, short-lived fey creature. The rain always comes in the hour before dawn, falling in a gentle mist. With the coming of the dawn the rosy liquid evaporates and millions of miniscule faeries—each elfin, winged, but only about the size of a gnat—rise up and fly about the area in great, rainbow-colored clouds. Though a lone specimen is harmless, encountered in large enough numbers the tiny fey can cause all sorts of mischief. However, by sunset they reach the end of their tiny life spans, and mortals breathe a sigh of relief.

Adventure Hooks: Though short-lived, these tiny fey can cause all manner of trouble. The characters would have their hands full helping undo some of their works, while avoiding adverse effects themselves. An interesting alternative could be that a local community has a special “Fey Banquet” whenever the Rose Rain comes—a holiday feast at which all creatures are invited, no matter how strange, and many monsters might take advantage of this unusual role-playing opportunity to sup peacefully with the townsfolk and their faerie guests.

SKYFIRE

Spectacular lines of flame stretch across the sky in shimmering contrails of red and orange, lighting the heavens with an eerie glow. They slowly ripple and shift, moving in the great winds in the vault of the sky far above.

In the hottest seasons in some tropical lands, the very sky catches flame in dancing streamers that echo the auroras seen in much colder climates. Contrary to popular belief, skyfire is not a magical phenomenon, but is caused when a certain form of airborne pollen exceeds a base temperature and combusts. This results in long streamers of red to orange flames that streak across the sky high in the atmosphere, providing a spectacular light show at night. Skyfire is only dangerous to high-flying creatures, and lasts for two days to a week.

Adventure Hooks: A local prophecy holds that, “When the skyfire runs blue, doom shall be measured in the turning of the moon.” When this phenomenon actually occurs, people start to panic, thinking their doom is nigh. An enterprising band of adventurers may find many opportunities for employment in such a case, whether to avert the doom, protect wealthy citizens, or use the chaos to hunt down their enemies with less fear of intervention by the law. In more normal times, a sage or wizard could hire the characters to travel high into the sky and collect samples of the pollen for research. This could result in encounters with flying monsters and the like attracted to the skyfire or some mysterious locale or object hidden within.

THE TORPORANCE

The air around you is utterly still, cloaking you in a strange hush. Not a blade of grass stirs, and tiny motes of dust do not dance in sunlight, but drift slowly down toward the ground.

When fools complain about an overabundance of rain or wind, elders may chastise them, telling them to count themselves lucky, for any weather is better than the Torporance, a time of utter stillness when not a breath of wind blows across the land. This period of unnatural stillness can last days or weeks. There is no wind— and hence no clouds or rain— other than a low mist that may sometimes rise in the mornings. Ships unfortunate enough to be caught in it may lie becalmed on the sea; entire crops have been lost to the lack of rain caused by the Torporance. No one knows its cause; thankfully, it only occurs once every 20–30 years.

Adventure Hooks: On a sea voyage, the Torporance can be a potentially deadly danger. Sailors may blame the adventurers as a source of ill luck to bring this foul weather upon them, and tempers may fray the longer the ship is becalmed, as stores of food and potable water diminish. On land, characters might be hired to journey to a mountain fastness and treat with the overlord living there, who maintains a large reservoir of water that could be used to irrigate failing crops. Perhaps the Torporance has a more sinister source and the PCs are tasked with solving this great mystery once and for all. Their investigation could take them beyond the boundaries of their world and even sanity itself.

WATER DEVIL

A funnel of water rises out of the nearby lake, darting from side to side like the neck of a great creature. A hissing sound escapes the end, as bubbles and water vapor pour into the sky.

Often mistaken for “beasts” of the water, these naturally occurring whirlwinds occasionally form over bodies of warm water. Mariners have reported similar events occurring over the sea—huge gouts of water suddenly splitting the surface of the deep, sometimes reaching so high they touch the clouds.

Adventure Hooks: Smaller water devils are often mistaken for dinosaurs and other creatures of local myth. Investigating these rumors can lead to any number of adventures, leaving the folklore intact. Larger water devils can capsize boats, and are feared by mariners. Many a ship's crew has mutinied on sighting a large water devil, not wanting to continue with the voyage after such an ill sign. These phenomena are also the tricks of aquatic druids and monstrous sea creatures with supernatural control over the elements, which the heroes must confront to ensure their safety as they ply the open seas. ◆

CHAPTER THREE: THE DUNGEON

ALTERNATE “WONDERS” FOR THE ROD OF WONDER

Banal mechanical boosts and transmutations are not all that fanciful. Returning true wonder to this powerful device, below are 100 new ways to shock and amaze! Roll d% and consult the table.

d%	Result
01	A flaming horse appears in a cloud of black smoke. This is not a nightmare, but a living horse that is on fire.
02	Plant growth grows out of control in a 30-foot radius.
03	A strange ray shoots forth; turning everything it strikes black and white.
04	Everyone within 60 feet learns a secret kept by the target. They also know a secret kept by the rod wielder.
05	All liquids in a 20-foot radius freeze up.
06	The rod grows a yellow-toothed mouth and vomits copiously. All within sight must make a DC 18 Fortitude save or become nauseous.
07	A candlelit dinner for two appears, including a vase of roses and a bottle of red wine. Ethereal violin music accompanies the dinner.
08	The target becomes a stranger to luck; all the target's die rolls are average, with fractions rounded down (thus a 1d20 roll results in a 10, while a 2d6 roll results in a 7) for the next 24 hours.
09	A blessed crossbow bolt shoots from end of wand, hitting automatically for one point of damage and slaying rakshasas.
10	The rod sprays beer like a fire hose.
11	Bludgeoning weapons in a 30-foot radius turn into legs of mutton.
12	Slashing weapons in a 30-foot radius become giant quills.
13	Piercing weapons in a 30-foot radius turn into tasty baguettes.
14	An ooze appears from the top of the rod to protect the wielder, blocking the next melee or ranged attack. The guardian ooze remains for 1 hour, and then vanishes.
15	The wielder's garb changes into a costumed parody of the target, suitable for a festival or parade. The garb changes back after 8 hours.
16	Water becomes fire in a random 10-foot cube away from the wielder. Determine the direction of the effect as per the thrown splash weapon rules.
17	Hundreds of chittering mice converge on the target from all directions. They follow the target faithfully for 24 hours, or until killed.
18	Three duplicate rod-wielders appear within 20 feet. Each duplicate targets a random creature within 60 feet (excluding themselves or each other, but including the true rod wielder) and discharges their rods once before vanishing. This drains three additional charges from the true rod.
19	Plumes of colored smoke spill from the rod, and an inebriate djinni appears.
20	Whenever the target speaks, his words appear written overhead in flaming letters for several seconds. The coloration of the letters changes to create the best contrast with the surrounding environment. This effect is permanent.
21	The target grows a cocoon of clear crystal and remains within it in suspended animation until the crystal is shattered. The crystalline prison is extremely fragile and any damage destroys it.
22	Wielder affected by <i>stoneskin</i> spell, but his skin turns into orange rock for the duration.
23	The target's weapon becomes: 01–25 A teddy bear 26–50 A just hatching megaraptor egg 51–75 A ladle 76–100 A red herring
24	A random plant or animal is the target of an <i>awaken</i> spell.
25	The rod becomes a <i>broom of flying</i> , though it acts under the GM's control.
26	The target permanently ceases aging. This effect ends if the target takes any damage. The target is aware of this effect, and of what could cause it to end.
27	A random creature in a 60-foot radius gains a shadow double.
28	A 30-foot cone of rust-colored mist spews forth, turning iron and iron alloys to rust (as <i>rusting grasp</i>).
29	The rod falls out of the wielder's hand into a pile of 100 identical, though useless, rods.
30	The wielder's immediate family is teleported before him. If the wielder has no immediate family, the corpses of the wielder's parents appear.
31	Spiked tentacles erupt from the end of the rod, entangling the target.
32	The rod transforms into a drinking vessel holding the wielder's favorite tipple. Once emptied, it reverts to rod form.
33	An earsplitting chorale of music and singing surrounds the wielder.
34	A random creature that threatens the wielder becomes incorporeal for 1d6 rounds.
35	Heavy rain falls in a 60-foot radius centered on the target for 10 minutes.
36	The rod pelts opponents with a hail of eyeballs.

d% Result

- 37 Fire becomes water in a random 10-foot cube away from the wielder. Determine the direction of the effect as per the thrown splash weapon rules.
- 38 The life force of the wielder and the target are connected. If one takes damage, the other takes a like amount that bypasses all resistances and immunities. This effect lasts 12 hours.
- 39 All non-magical wood in a 20-foot radius suddenly rots away.
- 40 The target's kneecaps bend in the opposite direction.
- 41 A floating skull engraved with silvery runes appears, looks at the strongest opponent in the room, declares its weakness, and then vanishes in a cloud of green smoke.
- 42 All dust within 100 feet disintegrates.
- 43 A flesh wall of conjoined bards forms between the wielder and the target lasting 8 rounds.
- 44 A 30-foot area around the wielder turns into mud, leaving only the wielder on solid ground.
- 45 The area within 40 feet of the wielder fills with millions of colorful butterflies that obscure vision as much as thick fog. They disperse in one minute if not destroyed first.
- 46 A grease spell is centered under the target and each subsequent fall triggers a voice that booms, "Down you go!"
- 47 A large book entitled *My Story* appears at the feet of the wielder. It details every event of the wielder's life, including the reading of this book, but ends with, "And then everything went horribly wrong when..."
- 48 The target's neck glows softly for a moment and the words "vorpal proof" appear tattooed on the front of the target's neck. The target becomes immune to vorpal effects for one time only, but the tattoo is mischievously permanent.
- 49 The rod blasts a 30-foot cone of sticky web-like material (as a tanglefoot bag).
- 50 The target vanishes to the Land of the Foot Twisters, only to reappear a round later, huddled and shaken, moaning, "The tools... the tools..." The victim's feet are now on backwards.
- 51 A swarm of tiny winged cherubs erupts from the tip of the rod, firing a volley of dart-sized arrows that cause anyone struck to fall madly in love with the wielder.
- 52 Metals fuse together in a 30-foot radius around the wielder.
- 53 All the contents of non-magical parchment, books, and maps of the wielder's companions transform into the founding scripture of a religion whose alignment is diametrically opposed to that of each owner. Sketches of ivy adorn documents of a neutral character.
- 54 A palanquin appears, borne by six shadowy figures. The conveyance will bear one creature for up to 8 hours before vanishing.
- 55 Earth becomes air in a random 10-foot cube away from the wielder. Determine the direction of the effect as per the thrown splash weapon rules.
- 56 Two uniformed officials appear and start commentating on the actions of the wielder and his opponents.
- 57 The target experiences one week of extreme dyslexia, making reading so difficult that there is a 50% chance any magical scroll read by the target fails.
- 58 A small, masterwork ivory statuette of the targeted creature appears in the wielder's hand.
- 59 Roll 1d100; each effect lasts a maximum of 1 hour:
01-50 Target turns invisible, but objects worn or held remain visible
51-00 Objects worn or held by the target turn invisible; target remains visible
- 60 All liquids in a 20-foot radius boil away.



d% Result

- 61 Transparent images of the holy symbols from every major and minor deity rotate around the wielder's head for 1 hour, offering guidance appropriate to their principles. If the campaign world has no gods, a black ankh silently circles the wielder's head.
- 62 A white flag extends from the tip of the rod and the wielder becomes incapable of fighting for 12 hours, though he can assist others in combat.
- 63 Cerulean mushrooms sprout from the ground wherever the wielder treads henceforth, until *dispel magic* is cast.
- 64 A random magic-using creature (spells or spell-like abilities) becomes the subject of a targeted *mage's disjunction* spell.
- 65 Armor and clothing gain the *glamered* property for 24 hours.
- 66 The target has two functioning hands protruding from his stomach. If the target is wearing restrictive armor, penalties due to discomfort apply.
- 67 Wielder communes with the sleeping mind of a tarrasque and must remain quiet for 1–4 rounds or risk waking it.
- 68 A ring appears on each of the wielder's unadorned fingers. *Identify* reveals that they are all *ring of three wishes*. They do not have any charges left, but, at the GM's discretion, there is a 1% chance that one of the rings has a single wish left.
- 69 A duplicate of the wielder, though much older (2 age categories) appears 10 feet away shouting prophecies for 1 round before evaporating.
- 70 The target suffers an incredible thirst, taking 1d3 points of damage every round until he spends one full round drinking water (DC 15 save avoids).
- 71 The hand and arm bones in the target's off-hand fuse together permanently.
- 72 The target disgorges 1d20 platinum pieces, each engraved with an image of the target regurgitating coins.
- 73 The target leaves an after-image behind them wherever they go for 1 hour. Anyone, including the target, walking through the after-image will suffer obscured vision.
- 74 The wielder is instantly aware of the layout of the surrounding area in a 100-foot radius. This includes secret doors, but not creatures or objects.
- 75 A piglet appears wearing miniature non-magical versions of each party members' equipment.
- 76 The rod's tip transforms into a thunderous steam whistle for 1 round.
- 77 The target's vocabulary is reduced to "me", "kitty," and "yum-yum" for 1 day.
- 78 A pear tree sprouts from the ground at the targeted point, and over the period of one minute grows to full size and bears succulent fruit. The tree is permanent.
- 79 Air in a 10-foot cube around the wielder turns to hydrogen. Any open flames cause it to ignite, but damage only applies if underground or indoors.
- 80 Surface of target's armor, hide, or skin permanently animates with the faces of the damned.
- 81 If the target creature bears an object in hand, the rod switches places with that object. This opponent becomes aware of how to activate the rod and is capable of using it. If this opponent's hands are empty, the rod simply dematerializes. Objects return to their respective owners after 10 minutes have passed.
- 82 Wielder affected by *protection from energy/electricity* for 48 points/1 hour.
- 83 The rod transforms into flaming marshmallows on a stick.
- 84 A mob of ghostly apparitions flies from the head of the rod, affecting all opponents within a 30-foot radius with effects identical to a *fear* spell.
- 85 1d10 runes appear on the ground. When shattered, a rune fires off a randomly chosen divine spell. Divination of the runes will not reveal what spell it casts.
- 86 Both the wielder and target are encapsulated within a giant soap bubble for one minute. The bubble is unbreakable and protects the inhabitants from environmental effects, such as poison gas, lava, water, etc.
- 87 The target sprouts four giant, black spider legs from its back and gains *spider climb* permanently.
- 88 A dire albatross appears and demands to be carried by the wielder or else.
- 89 The target seems to *disintegrate* in a horrible welter of dissolving flesh, but transports one day into the future.
- 90 The wielder's gold pieces each turn into 1-pound statuettes of mythological figures. Encumbrance rules apply.
- 91 The rod cracks open and unfurls to reveal a scroll bearing a map to a nearby location the wielder has never visited. The location is marked "Treasure!" but leads to a deadly monster or trap.
- 92 The targeted creature's handedness reverses permanently (i.e., a right-handed creature becomes a lefty, and vice versa).
- 93 The rod spews forth a paper scroll with a random creature drawn upon it. If the scroll is damaged, treat as a *summon monster* spell of a random level.
- 94 A random creature that protects the wielder gains the celestial creature template for 10 rounds.
- 95 The rod goes limp and turns into a pool of viscous, sticky goop for several minutes, entangling all creatures in a 5-foot radius.
- 96 A wizened gnome appears in a flash of light, sets up an easel, and begins painting the scene. He is not afraid to shout directions and suggestions, and is immune to all harm. He completes his masterpiece in 10 minutes and disappears.
- 97 Air becomes earth in a random 10-foot cube away from wielder. Determine the direction of the effect as per the thrown splash weapon rules.
- 98 A high-pitched whistle fills the air. All animals, including familiars and summoned animals, become feral, and, if appropriate, *un-awakened* for 1d4 rounds.
- 99 A swarm of venomous snakes twines around the wielder, forming a hissing suit of armor.
- 00 Cabbages sprout abundantly within a 30-foot radius.

EMPTY ROOMS WORTH DESCRIBING

Ah, the black sheep of any dungeon... the empty room; assigned no clear function or purpose, it is without occupant or treasure, and likely plays no role in the advancement of the story. An oversight in planning becomes an unnecessary and unnecessarily tedious encounter for players. Just because a room is empty does not mean it cannot allude to some mysteries and histories beyond the stock description, "It's an empty room."

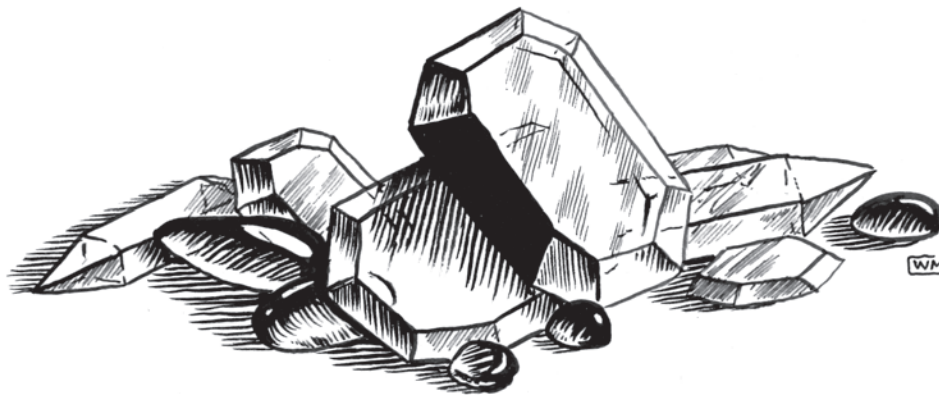
Roll d% for a random room description or pick one you like from the list.

d% Result

- 01 The acrid stink of this room makes its temporary purpose all too obvious as a makeshift urinal.
- 02 Orc graffiti, no more sophisticated than cave paintings, covers every square inch of this room.
- 03 Bloody hooks hang from the ceiling, and the floor is stained black in this now abandoned abattoir.
- 04 Some overwhelming force smashed much of the masonry in this room to pebbles.
- 05 A gravestone juts from the center of this room, with nothing buried below.
- 06 This doorless room has been vacant so long that cobwebs completely obscure the ceiling.
- 07 There is a bowled-out depression in the floor of this chamber, though its function is not clear.
- 08 Thick curtains of algae hang from the damp walls.
- 09 Someone began construction on a dividing wall in this room, but never completed it.
- 10 Every surface of this room has been charred black from a massive incendiary blast.
- 11 This room's temperature is inexplicably radically hotter or colder than the rest of the dungeon.
- 12 The floor pitches to a slight angle, and several finger-width, snake-like grooves traverse its surface.
There are half a dozen small marbles resting at its lowest point.

d% Result

- 13 Shadows of screaming human faces appear burnt into the walls.
- 14 A badly rusted iron grate covers a deep, dark hole in the center of the floor.
- 15 A pile of moldering and blood-spattered clothing sits in the far corner.
- 16 The skins of several hundred rats are pinned to the room's plaster walls. A small rusted bucket in the corner holds the rat's bones.
- 17 Several viscosly pried floorboards suggest someone was looking for something here.
- 18 Someone has sloppily bricked up a second doorway on the far end of the room.
- 19 A permanent *unseen servant* opens the door to the room as the characters approach.
- 20 The floor is made of loose cobblestones.
- 21 A strange array of small holes bored into one of the walls creates an annoying whistling sound as cold air blows through them.
- 22 The room features a mosaic in the floor that depicts one or more divine entities.
- 23 Slimy mud smothers the floor, creating the perfect environment for several dozen leeches. In one corner, there sits a haphazardly stacked pyramid of dusty jars. Above the jars, a charcoal message crudely scripted in goblin reads, "Leetchuz I copper eetch."
- 24 Large chunks of stone have fallen from the ceiling.
- 25 A large, bloody cage dangles from a chain mount in the ceiling. Something tore its way out, past bands of iron.
- 26 The room appears vacant except for a pair of warm dice resting on the floor.
- 27 Lead lines the walls of this room, either unnoticeably planted just under the surface, or inexpertly tacked on from pounded bits of scrap.
- 28 A ghostly figure enters through one wall of the room and exits through the wall opposite.
- 29 The room's floor is a type unique to the dungeon, i.e., wood parquet in a stone-tiled complex, or decorative ceramic tiles in a rough cave system.
- 30 The floor is inlaid with an intricate mosaic of sea creatures.



d% Result

- 31 Moisture covers the walls of this room, running to the ground in droplets. Characters in the room listening carefully may hear a nearby source of running water.
- 32 A dingy wool tapestry hangs from the wall.
- 33 Some force has melted several flagstones in this charred room.
- 34 Hundreds of woven bones adorn the walls and ceiling.
- 35 Framed paintings depicting murder cover all available wall space.
- 36 Ink-scribbled parchment covers the walls, revealing the extensive journal of a lunatic.
- 37 Someone scrawled the number 37 in six-foot-tall characters on the wall.
- 38 The grinning countenance of a devilish skull beams down from the frescoed ceiling.
- 39 Seven splintered shields occupy a corner of the room.
- 40 Shattered glass rises to a depth of six inches in this room.
- 41 Roots growing down through the ceiling obscure the bas-relief of a god of trickery on the far wall.
- 42 Pages of unholy scripture written in blood cover every square inch of the floor.
- 43 The highly polished steel walls of this room are enchanted to reveal the viewer's reflection, sans clothing.
- 44 A single orchid grows in a shaft of blue-tinted light just inside the doorway.
- 45 Each of the inner three painted walls of this room displays a bold primary color.
- 46 A mock wall-safe and charcoal-written attempted combinations hide behind a hinged painting.
- 47 A soiled codpiece lies near a rusty bucket in this small room.
- 48 Empty and broken-open vaults line the walls of this room from top to bottom.
- 49 The floor is made of glass, providing a view of a chamber below this room.
- 50 A one-foot wide shaft leads straight up into the ceiling, with sunlight filtering through from the outside. Bat guano on the floor suggests this is not the room to be in at night.
- 51 Several pieces of the stone floor are broken away, revealing an empty rectangular hole. A pile of dirt and a shovel are nearby.
- 52 A large wooden tub filled with dirty water sits in the corner. Clean laundry hangs from a wooden rack nearby.
- 53 Alchemical equations and formulas coat the walls; expert examination reveals they are faulty.
- 54 An iron cauldron filled with hardened wax is set up in the corner. A rancid odor emanates from it.
- 55 A blood trail runs along the floor, then up the wall to the ceiling.
- 56 A faint, misty haze that seems to swirl and shift with the movement of unseen presences fills the area.
- 57 When the characters enter this featureless room, the hair on the backs of their hands and neck rise up in gooseflesh, and they have the distinct sensation of being watched.
- 58 This canted room has a partially collapsed foundation. Both the floor and ceiling look distinctly unstable.
- 59 This chamber is pristine, with not a speck of dust or hint of clutter.
- 60 A half-dozen fist-sized cave moths flutter about, dancing over a low mound festooned with bloated, yellowish toadstools.
- 61 An invisible, noxious gas seeps through cracks in the floor in this area. Those spending any time here start to feel dizzy and faint, and flames burn low. Prolonged exposure may result in suffocation.
- 62 Nothing in this area casts a shadow, no matter the light source.



d% Result

- 63 Runes in an ancient language over the entrance to this room state, "Chamber of Dreams." Anyone who sleeps here experiences prophetic dreams of future events (GM's discretion).
- 64 Naturally occurring gray lichen produces an oily slick. A thin layer of dust makes it difficult to spot. Anyone moving about in the chamber is likely to slip and fall.
- 65 Slimy slug-like trails crisscross the floor, passing into the walls.
- 66 This is a mudroom, furnished with an empty coat rack and shoe stand.
- 67 The cart and dumbwaiter in this food-preparation room have caved in.
- 68 A steady drip of water falls from a mineral-stained ceiling into a half-filled bucket.
- 69 This room contains a heap of straw in the corner and several crudely woven straw baskets.
- 70 This room serves as an observatory, empty but for a single chair at its center, its whitewashed walls stained from rain that has entered through an overhead skylight.
- 71 This room contains a greenhouse covered with tinted glass. Dim light reveals rows of withered stalks in beds of cracked earth.
- 72 In this rectangular cubby, a wooden swing hangs from the ceiling facing an open window.
- 73 A crawl space leads to a dead end, where lies a single strand of red yarn.
- 74 This room was once a gallery, its walls lined by the faded outlines of missing paintings, studded with broken nails.
- 75 This room is a pantry, nestled below a flight of stairs with barren shelves and choked with dust.
- 76 This room is a foyer commanded by a short flight of stairs; its floor covered in the rags of old costumes and discarded stage props.
- 77 Once a smokehouse, this empty room's walls are carbon-stained, and the air is thick with the aroma of curing meats and spices.
- 78 Grime covers the walls; except for where there are clean patches shaped like recently removed furniture.
- 79 This room's gluey walls buzz angrily with hundreds of trapped insects.
- 80 Straw and goat droppings litter the floor. There is a manger and a pot of water in one corner, and a milk pail hanging by the door.
- 81 A chemical stink accompanies the dozens of frames upon which stretch the curing hides of rodents.
- 82 This room contains a pile of old wooden fence-rails. Hundreds of small, harmless snakes and bugs swarm out if the pile is disturbed.
- 83 Bits of refuse strewn around the remains of a rudimentary fire pit suggest adventurers recently camped in this old storage room.
- 84 An old armchair with a can of ashes beside it squats at the middle of this tobacco-scented room.
- 85 Heaps of smashed furniture obscure a back corner where, out of sight of the door, stand a makeshift table and chairs. Cards, knucklebones, and bits of shiny shells are scattered on the table.
- 86 This room has fine wood paneling on the walls painted in a garish shade of green.
- 87 The door to this room opens outward. Inside, a ladder leans against the door lintel, forcing anyone that enters to pass under it.
- 88 A frayed rope secured to an iron ring in the floor extends straight up, halfway to the ceiling, defying gravity (*reverse gravity* in this room).
- 89 Crystalline deposits glitter in the walls, refracting light like a million stars.
- 90 Illusion cloaks the chamber, making it look dusty and unused. It actually contains an unusual object or deadly creature of the GM's choice.
- 91 The eye-burning, nauseating stench in this room is owed to the taxidermy paraphernalia and wealth of animal carcasses that hang from the ceiling.
- 92 A broken-open secret door reveals a collapsed hallway behind it.
- 93 A mound of rotting cabbages in the far corner of the room is crawling with insects.
- 94 The floor is filled ankle-high with wriggling maggots feeding on bodies that are beyond recognition.
- 95 Embedded into the stone floor of this one-time prison space are several square holes, all in a row from wall to wall. An overhead portcullis and its winch are rusted solid.
- 96 A sprung trap in a false treasure room failed to reset. Crushed between two spike-ended walls that slid with astonishing force from each side, lays a hapless man's looted and festering remains.
- 97 This one-time gondola room is open to the sky, and an abandoned cable car lies below where the cable once ran up thousands of feet to a mountain lodge in the distance.
- 98 This one-time aviary's perches are in serious disrepair, but a petite human could still climb up through coop openings to the outside.
- 99 Termite-ridden, unoccupied coffins are stacked against the wall.
- 00 This room has a working fireplace. Sifting through the ashes reveals a few decipherable scraps of paper from a collection of burned love letters.

FAMILIAR CREATURES WITH UNFAMILIAR FACES

Who needs a new monster manual when the thousand you already have at your fingertips may cross with one another to form bizarre and compelling new creations? Imagine a variant medusa whose piercing shriek easily shatters mirrors, or a wild horse with *fast healing*. We've provided 20 monster variations along with a table for the effortless randomization of a monster's appearance, attacks, and special qualities, but don't stop there. Let mutation reign across your bestiaries!

ACID VINE

This relative of the assassin vine exudes a weak acid affecting only organic material. Crafty assassins like to strip their victims naked and toss them into patches of these vines, where quick work is made of the bodies. Well-fed acid vines have pink tips to their leaves, and the berries have a distinctive raspberry flavor.

- Base stats as assassin vine.
- Remove cold resistance.
- Remove immunity to electricity.
- Add immunity to acid.
- Slam and constrict attacks deal an additional 1d4 points of acid damage

FEYFEAR

This beast lives up to its reputation. Where these creatures live, no fey will enter willingly. Sages theorize demons created these creatures as hunting animals. They have thick, supple black coats and flat, purplish eyes that refuse to reflect light.

- Base stats as leopard.
- Natural attacks are treated as cold iron for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.
- Add damage reduction 5/cold iron.
- Racial bonus to Hide applies in all terrains.

HUESHA

Initial inspection would mistake the hueshae for harpies, but their brilliant, rainbow-colored wings quickly dispel that assessment. A huesha usually willingly serve couatls and lillends, as they feel that the noble qualities of these two creatures will benefit them. They have an unbridled hatred for harpies.

- Base stats as harpy.
- Change alignment to "Usually Chaotic Good."
- Replace Persuasive feat with Negotiator Feat.
- Remove the racial skill bonus from the Bluff skill and add it to the Diplomacy skill.

JUFREETI

Closely resembling efreet, a jufreeti is usually very mellow and easy going, more likely found sampling fine fruits and wine than vying for their own tower of brass. Their skin is a bright azure blue and their hair is dark black and coiffed in intricate hairstyles. They prefer flowing clothing of white, blue, and yellow silks. The jufreeti's calm nature disappears when the person or area they are guarding is threatened.

- Base stats as efreeti.
- Change heat special attack to "shock" (deals electricity damage).
- Change *scorching ray* spell-like ability to "*shocking ray*" (deals electricity damage).
- Remove the following spell-like abilities: *produce flame* and *wall of fire*.
- Add the following spell like abilities: *faerie fire* (at will) and *call lightning storm* (3/day).

MAGATI

Hailing originally from the Elemental Plane of Fire, magatis are content to swim through the lava that is their home, wherever they find it. Magatis continue to grow as they age much like catfish, and tales of giant magatis sailing in magma chambers are told among azers and magmin alike. A magati's skin changes color depending on its surroundings, and they can change their colors as a chameleon. Magatis seldom live outside of lava flows, but some reside near thermal vents in the waters of tropical volcanic regions.

- Base stats as a manta ray.
- Change type to Elemental with the extraplanar and fire subtypes.
- Add the heat and burn special attacks (see *thoqqua*).

MINING BEETLE

Able to melt stone away as if it were ice, these beetles are prized the world over for their rarity and usefulness. Sages speculate that they first appeared among the *svirfneblin*, but they are more commonly found in dwarven mining communities.

- Base stats as giant bombardier beetle.
- Replace *darkvision* 60 ft. with *blindsight* 60 ft.
- Acid spray deals double damage to stone and ignores the hardness rating of stone objects.
- Change environment to "underground."
- Add the light sensitivity special quality.

MOURNING ROC

Mourning rocs are actually closer kin to giant eagles rather than actual rocs. These voracious, hawk-like raptors stand 8 to 10 feet tall and sport somber charcoal, gray, or white plumage, with jet-black hoods. Like vultures, they subsist mainly on carrion, but when hungry, they sometimes attack anything smaller than themselves. They favor humanoids and zombies in particular, pouncing on prey like owls on mice, and shredding away with their powerful claws and beaks. When such tactics fail, they turn to using their mournful call, which magically allows them to sap the fight and life out of their targets.

- Base stats as dragonne.
- Base land speed 30 ft.
- Base fly speed 40 ft. (average).
- Speaks Common.



SIROCCO CATS

These elegant, regal cats are slim and angular, with reddish fur lightening to a paler cream-color on their stomachs and neck ruff. Unbelievably fast, these cats are highly prized by druids and rangers as animal companions. A cub can fetch as much as 5,000 gp on the open market.

- Base stats as cheetah.
- Double base land speed and sprint distance.
- Increase Intelligence score to 8.
- Add the following permanent spell-like abilities (always active): *endure elements*, *know direction*, *pass without trace*.
- CR +1.

RAZORHIDE RHINO

Denizens of the savannahs, these rhinos are even more short-tempered than their smaller cousins. Razorhide rhinos will charge without provocation at the slightest trespass upon their territory, and take down fully mature dire lions in their prime. These rhinos have a rusty shark-like hide that fades to a polished metallic black at the edges. Superstitious folk believe that a razorhide's reddish appearance owes to its ever-growing legacy of ample bloodshed.

- Base stats as rhinoceros.
- Add the ferocity special attack (see dire boar).
- Add the rage special attack (see dire badger).

REVERSAL SPIDER

Reversal spiders usually haunt old forests and abandoned buildings, particularly cathedrals. They build their nests in canopies or ceilings and leave sticky, dangling threads to entrap their prey. Once these threads entangle a creature, reversal spiders use their *reverse gravity* ability to launch down, quickly subdue their prey, and then fly back up to the nest. Reversal spiders usually have a mottled, dappled hide in greens, browns and blacks.

- Base stats as phase spider.
- Replace *ethereal jaunt* ability with *reverse gravity*.
- Add the web special attack of a Large monstrous spider.

TINDERTAIL

Large magical rodents the size of badgers, tindertails (or fire squirrels) are the bane of many orchard growers. The tindertail takes its name from its ability to ignite its bushy orange tail into a torch-like flame when startled, cornered, or courting. The tail flames work well in warning off predators, not only due to the instinctual fear most creatures feel towards fire, but also the debilitating levels of heat given off. Multiple tindertails can radiate fatal amounts of heat and start a large fire.

- Base stats as shocker lizard.
- Replace all electricity damage and effects with fire damage and effects.
- Tail sheds light as a torch.

WITHERWALK

Said to be relatives of driders, witherwalks are the results of a dying dryad's curse on those that cut down her tree. Their bloated, bluish-white spider bodies top off with gaunt and skeletal humanoid upper bodies. Witherwalks wait to jump down upon their prey and drain the fluids from their body.

- Base stats as drider.
- Increase bite damage to 1d8.
- Reduce poison initial and secondary poison damage to 1d4 Str.
- Add *vampiric touch* as a spell-like ability usable 1/day. ◆

SHAKE N' BAKE CREATURE FEATURES

Roll a d20 for a random way to change a creature's appearance and abilities. Reroll if the results are inapplicable. Descriptions for all new abilities are given after the table. Note some new abilities carry a CR adjustment.

d20 Result

- 01 Magebane (CR +1). *This creature's skin crawls with purplish, flickering sigils.*
- 02 Constrict. *The monster's body appears stretched and taut.*
- 03 Powerful Bite. *This thing has massive, oversized jaws, and thickly corded neck muscles.*
- 04 Poisonous Hide (CR +1). *The creature's skin exudes an oily, sour-smelling substance.*
- 05 Blindsight. *The eyes of this creature are unusually small, while its ears are oversized and move about independently.*
- 06 Festering Bite (CR +1). *Thick strings of drool dribble uncontrollably from the creature's mouth.*
- 07 Charming Gaze (CR +1). *This creature's eyes are set wider than seems normal.*
- 08 Goring Horns. *Thick horns sprout from the creature's head, and its body is covered in bony protrusions.*
- 09 Sticky Grip. *The creature's feet and hands are spread wide apart and are covered in sticky pads.*
- 10 Fear Aura (CR +1). *The creature's entire body is shrouded in an inky black aura.*
- 11 Burrow. *The forelimbs on this creature are thickly muscled, and its wide hands end in blunt claws.*
- 12 Agile Flyer. *This creature's wings are sleek and glossy.*
- 13 Spider Climb. *The creature's appendages are covered in fine, sticky hairs.*
- 14 Planar Aura (CR +1). *This thing's body is a mottled blue, purple, black, and dull white.*
- 15 Slow Movement (CR -1). *The creature moves ponderously on thick, swollen joints.*
- 16 Mimicry (CR +1). *This creature's skin appears to be a freakish mix of different textures.*
- 17 Elemental Reversal. *The monster's body is orange-red, blue-white, mottled brown, sea green, or azure blue.*
- 18 Fast Movement. *This creature moves about in quick, frantic bursts of speed.*
- 19 Mutating Attack (CR +1). *The creature's skin ripples in metallic shades, as it reorients its attack.*
- 20 Roll twice; ignore this result if rolled again.



Agile Flyer (Ex): The creature's aerial maneuverability rating increases two steps. For example, a manticore normally has a maneuverability rating of clumsy in the air, but a manticore with the agile flyer ability has a maneuverability rating of average.

Blindsight (Ex): The creature gains blindsight out to a distance of 60 ft.

Burrow (Ex): The creature gains a burrow speed equal to one half its base land speed.

Charming Gaze (Su): As *charm person*, 30-foot range, Will save negates. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Constrict (Ex): A creature with this special attack can crush an opponent, dealing bludgeoning damage, after making a successful grapple check. The constriction deals damage equal to the creature's primary natural attack (bite, claw, etc.). If the creature also has the improved grab ability, it deals constriction damage in addition to the damage dealt by the weapon used to grab.

Elemental Reversal (Ex): The creature's elemental subtype changes to its diametrically opposed type. The creature loses all abilities and weaknesses associated with its old subtype and gains those of the new subtype. To determine a creature's diametrically opposed subtype, see the table below.

Subtype	Opposed
Air	Earth
Cold	Fire
Earth	Air
Fire	Water or Cold
Water	Fire

Fast Movement (Ex): The base speed for all the creature's movement modes are doubled.

Fear Aura (Ex): The creature can radiate a 20-foot-radius fear aura as a free action. A creature in the area must succeed on a Will save or be affected as though by a *fear* spell (caster level equal to the creature's Hit Dice). An opponent that successfully saves cannot be affected again by the same creature's aura for 24 hours. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Festering Bite (Ex): The creature's bite attack carries a terrible disease. Targets taking damage from the creature's bite attack must succeed at a Fortitude saving throw or contract the disease red ache (or a disease of the GM's choice). The save DC is Constitution-based.

Goring Horns (Ex): The creature gains a gore attack. Threat this as a natural secondary attack, unless it is the creature's only natural weapon, in which case it is the primary natural attack. The gore attack deals damage based on the creature's size, as shown on the table below.

Size	Damage
Fine	1
Diminutive	1
Tiny	1d2
Small	1d4
Medium	1d6
Large	1d8
Huge	2d6
Gargantuan	3d6
Colossal	4d6

LEFT BEHIND

Magebane (Su): When any arcane spell is targeted upon the creature, there is 10% chance that the spell will rebound upon the caster in the form of a *magic missile* spell with a caster level equal the level of the original spell.

Mimicry (Ex): The creature can assume the general shape of any object of roughly its own size. A creature's body is hard and has a rough texture, no matter what appearance it might present. Anyone who examines the creature can detect the ruse with a successful Spot check opposed by the creature's Disguise check. The creature also gains a +8 racial bonus on Disguise checks.

Mutating Attack (Su): Whenever the creature encounters a target with damage reduction, it can align its own natural attacks to overcome that damage reduction. After initial contact, the creature's natural attacks in one round per 5 points of damage reduction the target has. For example, if a creature with this ability encountered an ice devil (DR 10/good), it could overcome the ice devil's damage reduction two rounds after initial contact. A creature with this ability cannot overcome damage reduction with a dash (-) after the slash.

Planar Aura (Su): The creature is aligned to specific outer plane (GM's choice). It gains the extraplanar subtype and its natural attacks are considered aligned (good, evil, chaotic, or lawful) for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction. In addition, its natural attacks inflict an additional 1d6 points of damage to outsiders with a diametrically opposed alignment (good vs. evil, chaos vs. law).

Poisonous Hide (Ex): The creature's skin exudes a powerful contact poison. Any creature that touches the creature or strikes it with a natural attack must succeed at a Fortitude saving throw or be poisoned. The poison deals 1d4 points of initial and secondary Constitution damage. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Powerful Bite (Ex): The creature's bite damage increases by one step (1d6 becomes 1d8, 1d8 becomes 2d6, etc.). In addition, the creature applies 1.5 times its Strength modifier on damage rolls with its bite attack.

Slow Movement (Ex): The creature's base land speed is halved, and it may only take a single action very round.

Spider Climb (Ex): The creature can climb sheer surfaces as though with the *spider climb* spell.

Sticky Grip (Ex): The creature has abnormally sticky hands and feet. It gains the improved grab ability with any claw or slam attack. In addition, the creature gains a climb speed equal to half its base land speed. ◆



Many students of the arcane arts scorn familiars, viewing them as of little consequence, sometimes even as burdens seemingly designed merely to slow them down. Some, however, marveling at their ability to endow a simple creature of the forest or field with sentience and even magical abilities, never lose their sense of wonder. Employing all their cunning and mystical lore, they delve deeply into the mysteries of familiars, and sometimes make surprising discoveries along the way. Awaking strange abilities in their companions, endowing them with eldritch powers, crafting potent gear specifically for their most trusted of allies, these arcane students frequently turn their familiars into their most potent asset. Very rarely, those who lavish such time and magical energy upon their familiars grant them the greatest gift of all – the power to outlive their masters. Each of the creatures detailed below began its existence as a normal familiar, yet somehow, whether due to a quirk of fate or carefully planned magic, evolved into something more with the death of its master. Each is an adventure waiting to happen and a story just itching to be told if the adventurers are attentive and recognize the hallmarks that set these magical creatures apart from their normal kin.

Ashpaws, a cat (hp16, Int 10) lost his mistress, a sorceress named Fadala when she went into labor just over nine years ago. The child survived, and somehow Fadala's frantic need to protect her baby, a girl named Darlise, left Ashpaws with his faculties intact and one final mission. After her mother's estate was looted by greedy relatives, who abandoned her at a foundling house, Darlise grew up without anyone she considered family. As soon as she learned to fend for herself, Darlise fled the orphanage and the cruel caretakers that treated the children like slaves, preferring a life on her own to their harsh treatment.

Despite the harsh reality of the orphanage and life as a street urchin, Darlise has, so far, managed to cling to a basic sense of humanity, though she must steal in order to survive. Ashpaws, almost completely white, with merely a band of dusky charcoal around each of his feet, desperately wants to find a way for her to escape the life of misery and poverty that seems her destiny. His intellect, ability to speak with other cats, and font of hit points, has made him the undisputed king of the city's alley cats. On one occasion he even managed to rouse up a "swarm" of cats to help Darlise when she got in over her head.

Ashpaws does not know how long he can keep protecting Darlise, but he is ready to die if necessary. While only able to speak with other cats, Ashpaws would welcome any attempts at communication, whether by a druid, another cat familiar, or something even more unusual. He knows that Darlise's aunts and uncles cheated her out of her inheritance, and suspects that she might one day develop her mother's magical gifts, giving him two possible approaches if he manages to make contact with an adventuring band.

Crawdin, a raven with more than a touch of crow (hp 26, Int 13), lost his mistress, a powerful wizard named Valerine, a notorious mischief-maker, when she was executed for treason. Her attempts to spark a civil war, the final straw in a lifetime of malicious service to anarchy and bedlam, finally proved too much even for those who admired her undisputed genius for magic. Unknown to her accusers, however, Valerine had prepared for just such an eventuality, causing her to laugh even as the flames consumed her. The lords of entropy, who oversee chaos throughout the multiverse, stretched out their hand and allowed Crawdin to keep his mind and abilities intact. He knows that if he can manage to sow enough turmoil on his own, his mistress will get a second chance to walk the earth.

Like any raven familiar, Crawdin has the ability to speak a language, in his case Common, but he also enjoys a talent for mimicry, allowing him to imitate any voice he hears with virtual perfection. He usually prefers to act as a normal bird, keeping his keen wits and ability to converse a secret, simply uttering a few amusing words to entertain anyone he meets. Crawdin even permits his new "owner" to put him in a cage, though most locks prove absurdly simple for him to spring when the time comes to move on.



Once inside a household as a mere pet, Crawdin bides his time, studying the situation, looking for weak points and secrets. When he finds a target, someone with a jealous and greedy heart, he lays the groundwork for tragedy.

Working at night, while everyone sleeps, Crawdin plants evidence for his dupe to find. When he deems his victim primed, Crawdin then uses his masterstroke, imitating the voice of someone else in the household, acting like a dumb animal simply repeating an overheard conversation. An unfaithful wife, a son scheming to kill his father, a brother plotting to take control of the family business, so far Crawdin has instigated four murders, and with each he gets a bit little closer to returning his mistress to the mortal realm.

Essphus, a snake (hp 44, Int 12), parted ways with her master, an accomplished necromancer named Myrgallin, when he attempted to become a lich, callously intending for her to die or lose her sentience in the process. Somehow, the magic that bound the two together interfered with the ritual, trapping Myrgallin in a halfway stage between mortality and undeath. Essphus, realizing the betrayal, fled for her life, but now must hide from the minions of her former master, intent upon killing her and freeing him from his feeble state.

While Myrgallin languishes, Essphus has learned how to tap into a tiny portion of her former master's power, allowing her to cast *command undead* twice per day. Despite her inability to speak, she still manages to convey her orders to any undead that fall under her control, favoring non-intelligent undead since they get no saving throw to resist the spell. Essphus,

as evil and calculating as her former master, feels the same need to dominate and control others. She is perfectly willing to play the helpless victim, however, particularly if she can find a party of "heroes" willing to use her inside knowledge to dispose of Myrgallin for her. How much, if any, of his power she would gain upon his final death is up to the GM.

Loredrip, a toad (hp 13, Int 11), lost his master, a wizard named Granger, a celebrated scholar and antiquarian, when barbarian raiders put his library to the torch. Granger died, consumed along with his beloved books, but his desire to preserve knowledge cascaded through Loredrip like thunderbolts. The entire contents of Granger's library, thousands of books, somehow merged with Loredrip, transforming him into a living embodiment of his master's lifework. Though Loredrip lacks the means to access this information himself, anyone who comes in contact with the magical perspiration oozing from the vivid orange and green ridges along Loredrip's back experiences a brief, but intense, hallucination. These hallucinations always convey some tiny portion of the information once contained in Granger's library. Frequently, those wrestling with a particular problem find that this hallucination offers some special insight or helpful fact. Loredrip, desperate to preserve and pass on the

wisdom that was his master's legacy, sometimes consciously chooses to "infect" people by rubbing against doorknobs, drinking mugs, and similar objects in hopes that someone will gain a vision when touching them.

Whispergloom, a bat (hp 9, Int 8), lost her master, a journeyman human wizard named Trylanis, when he and his entire party fell at the hands of a drow ambush while exploring far beneath the surface. Prior to setting off on the expedition, Trylanis created a magic item tailored specifically to Whispergloom, a bat sized collar that allowed its wearer to create a *daylight* effect once per day. Taken by surprise, Whispergloom watched her master and his friends die one by one, leaving the guilt-plagued creature to seek refuge amongst the thousands of normal bats that swarm the vast cavern complex where he met his end.

Whispergloom patrols the caverns daily, seeking surface dwellers that could benefit from a surprise explosion of light when confronting drow, particularly if they appear threatened by another ambush. So far, three drow war bands have fallen with her assistance, prompting both the drow and the adventuring bands she helped to spread rumors of the strange "ghost" haunting the caverns. Whispergloom takes a trophy off the body of each drow slain, something small, like a house pin or an insignia badge, and places it in a nearby crevice she treats as a shrine to her dead master. Since she lacks the ability to speak, Whispergloom has no interest in interacting with those she helps, though a druid or similar character might discover a way to learn her story and perhaps help her come to terms with her loss. ♦

NEW AND UNUSUAL LIGHT SOURCES

Surface races use a variety of items to see in the dark, ranging from simple candles or torchlight to powerful magical spells and items. In many campaigns, lighting sources seem to fade into the background, barely acknowledged on character sheets or glossed over by a GM while describing NPCs. There isn't much of interest about a torch or a candle. They are simple tools to get the job done.

Sources of light need not induce sleepwalking. In fact, they can be quite extraordinary. Presented below are 22 new and mysterious light-shedding items for immediate use in your game. Make them available to your players like any other equipment, or introduce them through your NPCs, providing something novel for your players to marvel over as they discover new ways to beat back the darkness.

AXEBURY ROCK

Twenty-five years ago, a meteorite struck just outside the hamlet of Axebury. Seen as an omen from the gods, the site became holy ground. Not long afterward, priests working in the area made an incredible accidental discovery. Whenever steel strikes against the metals in the meteorite, the meteorite begins to flicker with blue light equal to that of a torch. The heatless flare lasts for an hour, but simply striking the meteorite chunk again causes it to glow anew. Priests from Axebury reward pious congregants with pieces of the meteorite to use as a light source as well as a status symbol.

BOLTS OF BRAZEN GLORY

In his time, the archmage Axidrass created several hundred magical bolts for his boon companions for battles against the fiends of night. These crossbow bolts are thin brass rods capped with steel tips that shine with a warm, brassy glow. They now see much use by adventurers as a handy light source, for until launched, these +1 bolts glow unabated with the intensity of a torch.

BRIGHT MOSS

Bright moss grows in underground caverns. It has traces of magnesium in its cells, which cause it to twinkle in a variety of colorful hues, though they shed only a diffuse white light. Subterranean races cultivate these mosses to use in their living space to alight their prized art pieces, using the moss to aid in the display of their artwork's true colors. When picked, bright moss continues to produce light for four hours before fading. A small handful of the lichen sheds light equivalent to a candle.

BRIGHTWICK CANDLE

Lit in tall candlesticks in the holiest of places, these elegantly tapered, snowy candles shine a pure white light. Clergy use Brightwick candles for special ceremonies and for warding off evil. Threads of spun silver, gold, and angel's hair form their special wicks, and these candles burn with the intensity of daylight continuously for one week. The holy brilliance given off by a Brightwick candle repels creatures affected by bright light.

CAGED-FIRE MEPHIT

Armies that wish to make their awesome presence known during late night charges outfit their soldiers and siege engines with enough torches to create the image of a river of fire marauding towards the city walls. The fell creatures of the lower planes take this much further and hang fire mephits in iron cages from their siege engines and sometimes off poles carried by their larger soldiers. A caged fire mephit flares with anger, providing brightness equivalent to a small campfire.

CANDELIER

Oft times the light of a candle or small lamp is insufficient for a workspace. Angdon Thrum, a master gem and lens cutter, as well as a lifelong pledged night owl, created this device to aid him during his late night craftwork. The cut of this foot-tall tube of fine crystal scatters and intensifies candlelight. A single candle in the candelier will fill a large room and burns with the brightness of a chandelier.

DREAM-LIGHTS OF KADOUN ELD

A figure of legend, Kadoun Eld, also known as the Dreaming Mage, devoted his life to exploring the landscapes of dream and nightmare. It is said that he could physically travel to the dreams of others, and return with substances and treasures that could not possibly exist in the real world. One such discovery was dream-light: crystals bathed in the light from dreams that continue to shed a strange, soft, ghostly luminance. Dream-light crystals are fragile, and lose all magic if ever exposed to even a hint of true daylight, but they are still sometimes found in ancient wizards' troves, deep dungeons, and forgotten crypts. They emit a perpetual murky gray light with the brightness of a three-branch candelabrum.

FIREFLY TORCH

Containing a giant firefly is as difficult as the intermittent light it produces is annoying, but then came the discovery that if drained of its light-giving organic fluids while lit, these fluids continue to produce illumination. Firefly torches are normal sticks dipped into a leather pouch filled with firefly essence. A surface area slathered in firefly essence beams as bright as a torch for one hour.

FLICKERWEB

Some woodland humanoids capture lightning bugs for ambient lighting in their camps. The flickerweb is a strange adaptation of this practice. Adults in camp give the children forked branches strung with spider webs to play with and catch the glowing insects.

The webs merely hold the creatures and do no damage, so they continue to emit their soft, flickering light. Flickerwebs are found in woodland campsites and give off a soft flicker equivalent to half the brightness of a torch.

GLOWWORM TUBE

Used by creatures that dwell in the shallow depths of the earth, these foot long tubes of glass contain dimly glowing larvae and the leaves they feed on. These tubes hang as lanterns for study, but many travelers dangle them from long poles to illumine areas ahead. The larvae emit light when feeding or when agitated, so when the light grows dim, all one need do is shake the tube. The larvae can live inside the tube for their entire lifespan of one month, and the tube sheds a dim greenish light equivalent to half the brightness of a torch. A variant version, called the glowfish tube, operates identically, except that the light from its bioluminescent cavefish is soft white.

IZLENBERRY WINE

The elves of the Warderwood produce a delightfully sweet and highly alcoholic wine from Izlenberries. Izlenberries are normally poisonous, but careful distillation during the winemaking process renders the poison inert for consumption. This wine interacts oddly with the metabolism of humanoid creatures; within 30 minutes of consuming a 4-ounce serving of the wine, the creature's skin begins to glow a light shade of violet. This light is harmless, merely the body's way of flushing out the berries' unique phytochemicals. The light is about as bright as a candle, and continues to glow for two hours. Further consumption of wine can extend the effects, though the imbiber runs a greater risk of intoxication. The elves take great delight in serving the wine to guests who are unfamiliar with its peculiar side effect.

LANTERN OF LIES

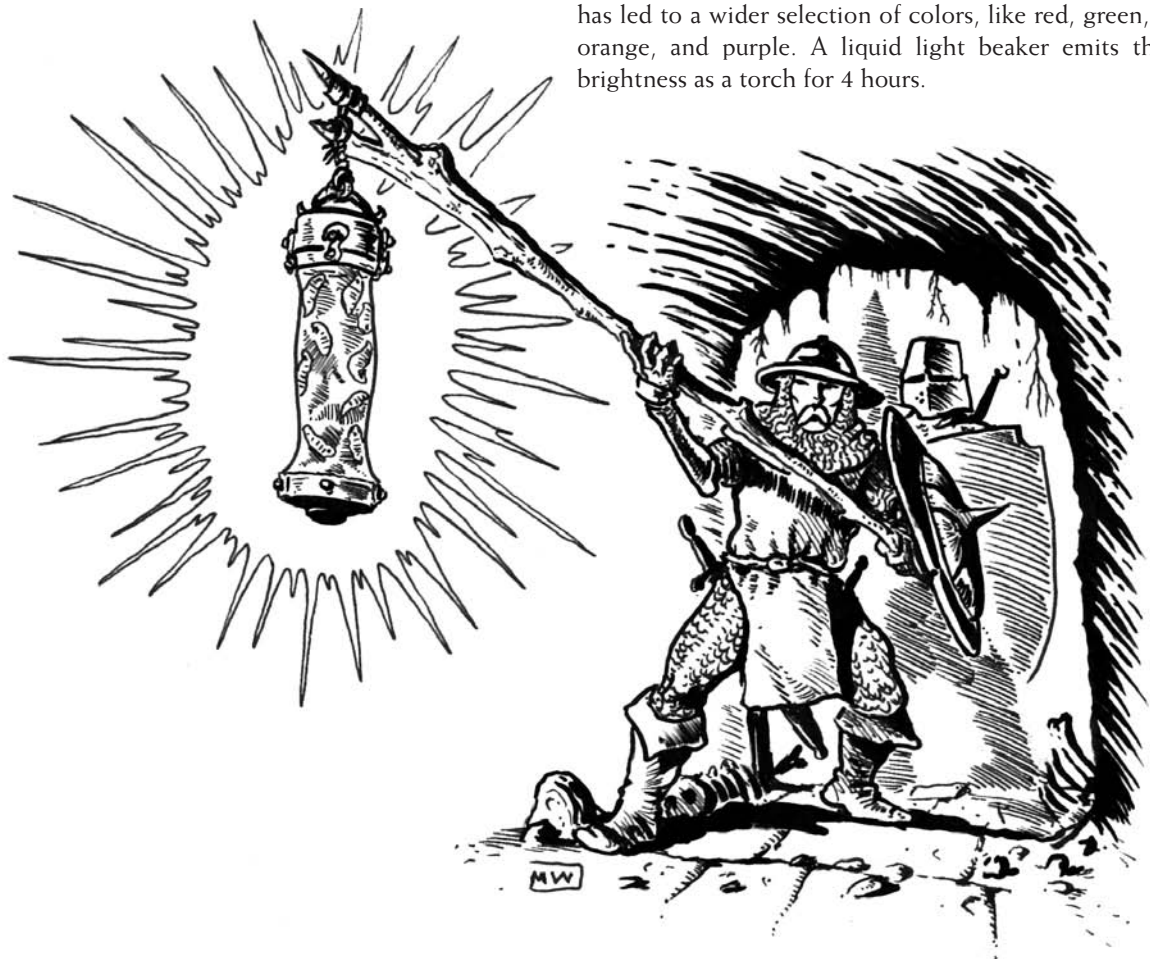
These magical lanterns always tie to a particular location, be it a room, a building, a dungeon level, or the like. By all appearances, it is a normal lantern, though it does not run on fuel and is inextinguishable. Where it differs from traditional magical light sources is that the light produced by the lantern is illusory, and objects revealed by the lantern are likewise illusions of the real thing. For the lamp to be effective, these illusions typically mimic the exact appearance of the area lit. However, there may be occasions when the false light fails to reveal something truly there, or the light might reveal a cryptic rhyme, object, or other interesting detail that does not truly exist, making possession of the lantern both a hazard and a possible necessity.

LIGHTNING MILL

A gnome inventor is doubtless the creator of this means of lighting, designing a series of water wheels to generate an electrical current that runs along a pair of rods set in grooves in the ceiling. Fat sparks and arcs of actinic blue electricity jump from rod to rod, providing a crackling, dangerous source of light.

LIQUID LIGHT

Discovered by cloistered alchemists, this divided beaker has a sealed cap with the head of a key. Turning this key spins a forked rod inside the beaker and breaks the thin glass divider, allowing two separated chemicals to mix. The first of these beakers provided a globe of blue light, but further research has led to a wider selection of colors, like red, green, yellow, orange, and purple. A liquid light beaker emits the same brightness as a torch for 4 hours.



PHANTASMAGORIC TAPESTRIES

The master artist and wizard Sir Valrinn of Kynde created over three score tapestries in his life that depict moving scenes and dioramas upon command. Cycling perpetually, these wondrous arrases serve as sumptuous entertainment while incidentally lighting the area around them.

PHASE DISK

The dark of night finds its radiant companion in the moon. High priests of moon deities sometimes carry a silver disk that, if shifted by hand, can rotate to depict the many phases of the moon. When a worshiper of a lunar deity turns the disk to reveal a particular lunar phase, it generates a pale globe of light equivalent in brightness to the corresponding level of moonlight. On the dark nights of a new moon, a worshiper with a phase disc can provide a full moon for their followers.

PHOSPHORESCENT CHALK

Originally developed by dwarven alchemists who wanted to aid the poor-sighted human miners they worked alongside in the deep mines, these sticks of chalk shine brightly when scratched off against stone. They mark places to dig, warn of dangers, and lead to exits. Since its discovery, phosphorescent chalk finds use with adventurers for very similar purposes. The twinkling writing from the chalk provides no real illumination but remains visible for 24 hours.

POSITIVE ENERGY DISTILLATE

Kept within a rune-etched vial or sphere of crystal of surpassing clarity, this substance is the concentrated, purified essence of the Positive Energy Plane itself. Wards on the sphere contain the essence, which radiates a bright white light almost painful to look at directly, casting clear illumination out to 40 feet, and dim illumination for a further 40 feet. Should the vessel be shattered, the resultant energy burst heals living creatures and damages undead within a 40-foot radius for 3d8 points for every 10 feet of its aura of brightness, to a maximum of 10d8—Will save allowed for half damage, DC14 + 1 per 10 feet of brightness.

SPECTRAL CAGES

These delicate constructs resemble ornamental cages for birds or other small animals; however, their design traps incorporeal spirits, such as ghosts, and forces them to remain manifest in the prime material plane. The spectral presence of many such phantoms can provide a source of eerie illumination, shedding half the brightness of a torch, though should the cage be broken, an undoubtedly livid spirit is unleashed to wreak vengeance.

SUNSCRY

Mages use crystal balls or pools or water to scry on those people, objects, and places they wish to remotely view. One enterprising sorcerer stole this basic principle and invented the suns cry, a scrying device that focuses upon the sun from a fixed location and tracks its arc across the sky. Sunscrys convey the strength of actual sunlight and are useful underground, providing a nourishing daylight cycle for lush subterranean forests and crops.

SUNSTONES

In badlands and deserts baked by the sun, travelers tell tales of finding stones that glow at night. When these round, quartz-striated limestone rocks sit outside from sunrise to sundown, they absorb the sun's energy and provide a bright light throughout the night. The stones slowly begin to glow at sundown, intensify throughout the night, and dim come dawn. At their brightest, the luminescence from the stones is equivalent to twice the brightness of a torch.

SWAMPLIGHT BLADDER

Often hung in the trees at camps in swamps and marshes, these animal bladders gleam with a dim red light. Denizens of swamps and marshes sometimes find the vents where the ghostly radiance of swamp gas emanates, and then stretch a washed animal stomach over the vent to collect the gas before it begins to glimmer. These swamp gasses are toxic and many collectors die at the vents. The thin membranes of the stomach allow interaction between the warm, damp air and the toxic gas, chemically creating a glow. The bladder sheds a dim red light half the brightness of a torch for 6 hours. ◆

THE NOSE KNOWS

Explorers of deep underground tunnels, castle dungeons, and sealed chambers in ancient tombs all have one common experience: the strange and overpowering smell of these places. Describing smells to your characters can add depth to their experiences, create a sense of horror and dread, give important clues about recent events or foreshadow their next encounter.

PLACES

Places smell. Places deep inside a dungeon or cave system, with little air circulation, can really smell. Think about each of the rooms in your castle or dungeon. Is one newly excavated and smelling of fresh earth, or is another an old cave that has the chalky odor of wet limestone? Is the furniture made of rotting oak? Is the bedding full of mold and dead vermin? If there were a fountain of blood in the center, or a river of flowing lava, what would that smell like? If the chamber was sealed up tight centuries ago, what exactly decayed and filled the air with its remains?

The air in a tomb may be saturated with thousands of years of rot and decay, enough to burn the party's throats and make their eyes water. The dungeon of a castle beside the sea may be fraught with a disturbing mix of odors from filthy, dying prisoners, salt brine, and rotting fish. The sickly sweet smell of the formian queen and a strange, sedating scent similar to formaldehyde may be inescapable in the lower chambers of her nest. Adventurers wandering a deserted cavern deep below the ground may trigger the release of a trapped pocket of deadly sulfuric gases. The tangy metallic taste and smell of a giant's foundry may reach the heroes long before they find it. And when the adventure is over, the familiar, though not pleasant, waft of the tannery in their home neighborhood may welcome them back to town.

CREATURES

Creatures smell. Even the wealthiest humanoids in most civilized societies do little to slough their natural odor, though they may mask it with perfumes. Creatures living in the deepest caverns or the chambers of a neglected dungeon most assuredly emanate an eye-watering funk.

While you should be careful not to give all of your characters the equivalent of the scent ability, you can use smells to warn them about creatures up ahead and build suspense. They might get a whiff of the bugbear barracks on the other side of the door, or the acrid tang of a huge plant growing out of control in the cave below. If they are hiding from patrolling sentries, they may smell the guard's musky sweat as he paces by, even if they cannot see them.

Creature smells can also add drama to encounters. Should not a paralyzed hero wither beneath the malodorously heavy and sour breath of the vargouille about to seal his fate with a kiss? Does the pungent intestinal reek of decades of guano burn the adventurers' throats and make their stomachs quiver as they fight a gargantuan bat in its lair? Will they experience the sharp, intensely interesting aroma of a succubus as she drains their levels, or the smell of decay and failed digestion in the last breath of the dying old man that gives them their next clue? Should not the party, and everyone they pass, notice the smell of the remains of the dead party member they are bringing back to the city to be resurrected?

MAGIC

Some types of magic smell. As a required part of spell casting, one regularly crushes a wide variety of material components, burns them, or releases them into the air.

While a few spells like *stinking cloud* create smells as a primary effect, many others might conjure up odors as a side effect. Does the air fill with smoke and ash and burnt flesh after a *fireball* kills creatures and destroys everything flammable? Does a *lightning bolt* tinge the air with ozone? Will a summoned fiendish tiger reek of noxious fumes from the abyss? Would the fragrance of pine forest and wildflowers leak from a shimmering portal to an arboreal plane of unadulterated nature? Does a sophisticated illusion include smells? Do spells, in general, fill the air with the smell of their material components?

ADVENTURERS

Sometimes adventurers smell. If your typical adventure involves days of traveling in the wilderness or sleeping in deep caverns without chance to bathe or remove armor, the smell of your party may be as strong as that of any creatures they encounter. Think about every environment they have passed through, everything they are carrying, their mounts and animal companions, and the curses and diseases that afflict them. Ask your players to think about what their characters do and what they might smell like. Add a "smells like:" line to their character sheets.

Does your barbarian remove his boots and rub his feet whenever the party stops for a rest? Does he have a strong odor after he rages? Is a diseased character spreading their foul breath and the reek of their festering sores? Do your arcane caster carry bull

dung, bat guano, and rotting meat as material components for spells? Has mold set in on wet undergarments that have passed through many swamps, but have not seen the light of day for weeks? Does your fighter grease his chain mail with animal fat to keep it from rusting? Does your dwarf have intestinal distress from eating human food? Does your bard wear too much cologne? What does a hero smell like once raised from the dead?

THINGS

Lots of things smell. Describing the distinctive smells of ordinary objects encountered by the party can help them imagine themselves in their setting. Do they smell the caustic, suffocating fumes from a large iron forge, or the aroma of eastern spices used to prepare a rakshasa's most recent meal? Can they detect the tangy essence of sparks flying from the picks of duergar miners? Will a hint of burning oil lamps and fatty candles lead them to the main temple area? Can they follow fermentation smells to a deep gnome brewery? Are the kobolds up ahead aromatically spit roasting a monitor lizard? What does a healing potion smell like, or fresh ink on a scroll?

SMELLS AS A STORYLINE

It is possible to make smells knit together the stories in your campaign. Does a peculiar scent always precede the appearance of a recurring villain? Can a specific odor trigger lost memories of one of the heroes or send the party into a flashback encounter? Are the adventurers hired to rid a town of the rotten smell hanging over it? Could you use the aroma of fresh baked bread to lure them to the inn where their patron waits? What would the world be like for a hero that used a spell or potion to acquire the scent ability to track a fleeing enemy? Does temporary blindness or complete darkness force your party to rely more on their noses? Consider using smells as the clues that get your characters from encounter to encounter in your campaign.

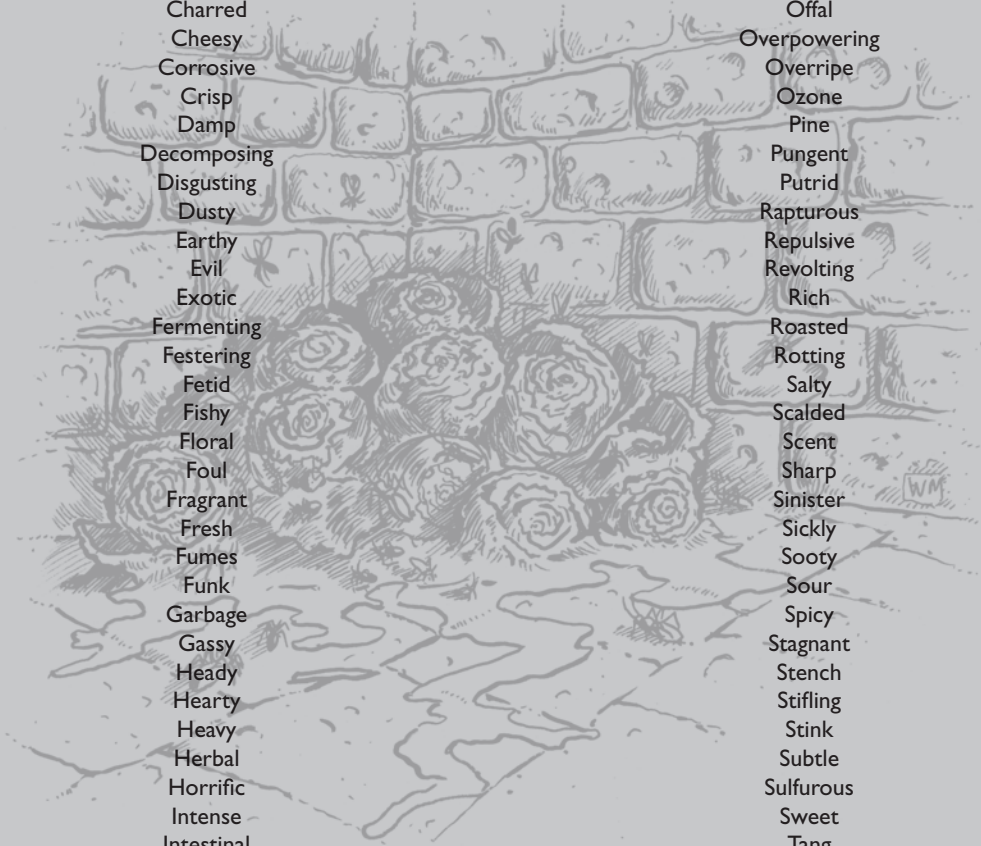
EVOKING SMELLS

Smells can be difficult to describe to the party. The words we use to describe smells are not terribly precise, and comparing a smell to another smell can be difficult. Do you warn adventurers that there is a ghoul ahead by telling them they smell putrid flesh, or do they detect a heavy stench, like an animal carcass left in the open sun for days? Does an azer smell like fire, or do the adventurers feel a gust of warm, sulfurous air? The list of words in the sidebar may help you come up with your descriptions.

Many dungeon masters make a habit of giving the party drawings or physical props to represent some of the items they come across. They may also imitate the sounds the adventurers hear. Why not add one more level of sensorial depth and simulate the smells encountered during the adventure? Use scented candles or air fresheners to set the mood for a temple encounter. Dig out an old chemistry set and burn a little sulfur. Duct tape an old fish to the bottom of the table. Get creative, but be sure you are in a well-ventilated room so you can get rid of the smell when your characters move on. ♦

DESCRIBING SMELLS

Here are some words to help describe the smells in your dungeons.



Acrid
Aged
Alcoholic
Ammonia
Aromatic
Ashy
Bitter
Baked
Bouquet
Burning
Caustic
Chalky
Charred
Cheesy
Corrosive
Crisp
Damp
Decomposing
Disgusting
Dusty
Earthy
Evil
Exotic
Fermenting
Festering
Fetid
Fishy
Floral
Foul
Fragrant
Fresh
Fumes
Funk
Garbage
Gassy
Heady
Hearty
Heavy
Herbal
Horrific
Intense
Intestinal
Intolerable
Ionic
Irritating
Jasmined
Lemony
Lingering
Lovely
Malodorous
Mellow
Metallic
Meaty
Minty
Moldy
Mottled
Musky
Nauseating
Necrotic
Noxious
Odor
Offal
Overpowering
Overripe
Ozone
Pine
Pungent
Putrid
Rapturous
Repulsive
Revolting
Rich
Roasted
Rotting
Salty
Scalded
Scent
Sharp
Sinister
Sickly
Sooty
Sour
Spicy
Stagnant
Stench
Stifling
Stink
Subtle
Sulfurous
Sweet
Tang
Tangy
Thick
Tinge
Unsettling
Uplifting
Visceral
Viscous
Waft
Warm
Waste
Whiff
Woody

NOXIOUS SUBSTANCES

So the adventurers think they've seen disgusting, eh? Our revolting poisons and concoctions, harvested from the most dangerous monsters and locations, are sure to widen eyes and turn stomachs.

ASSASSIN VINE PHLOEM

Scraped from the innermost layer of the bark of a well-boiled assassin vine, left to dry then mashed into a dangerous contact poison paste, this greenish gunk causes the throat to swell closed temporarily, denying oxygen to the victim (Fort DC 15, drowning 4d4 rounds). It is extremely dangerous to handle and finds use on the sharp tips of piercing weapons with long shafts to ensure a safe distance for the wielder.

ABOLETH'S DARK HUMOR

As an aboleth ages and its hormonal composition shifts, the organ that passes for their body wide lung, responsible for exuding the runny mucus that coats them, may undergo a weakness, causing blood, spittle, and pus to leak out through said mucus. Those aboleths afflicted by this degradation develop an enlarged membrane in one of their many ventral orifices, and collected within this membrane is a toxic distillate of all the rank fluids and semisolids that have passed through. This foul substance also acts a potent contact poison, inducing temporary paralysis (Fort save DC 27, Duration 10 rounds).

Additionally, paralyzed victims gain temporary empathic and telepathic abilities; specifically, for the duration of the paralysis, victims will share only in those emotions and thoughts others direct at them. As a result, victims afflicted by aboleth's dark humor will hear their approaching enemies decide to eat them; feel their foes drooling anticipation for hero flesh; share the relished memories of tearing adventurer meat from a living leg with thousands of weensy serrated teeth.

Typically, a poisoner or torturer harvests the dark humor by digging a pointy, long handled spoon into the side of an aged aboleth's inflamed ventral orifice, post mortem, puncturing the sac membrane within and scooping out the cavity contents. On a living aboleth, more bold collectors will insert a spoon and with a practiced jab and flick manage to puncture the sacs and scoop out the humor in one smooth motion.

What would our favorite fantasy RPG games be like if we could utilize the modern-day wonder of scratch 'n sniff? Hmm...

** GM passes out a sheet of stiff paper to the players.**
GM: "As you approach the dank cavern, an unpleasant odor greets you. Scratch block #3, please."

Players scratching.

Players sniffing.

Player 1: "Ewww! It smells like otyugh ass."
GM: "Right you are! Roll for initiative."

BASILISK JELLY

The liquid feces of a gut sick basilisk, if kept moist and warm for several days, will eventually produce a congealed, viscous jelly suitable for collection and storage. Placing this jelly into one's mouth to mix with saliva allows one to deliver sprayed spittle, as a ranged touch attack, into the eyes of another (Ref save DC 14 to avoid, paralysis 1d4 rounds). It is vile to the tongue and usage requires a strong will and hateful determination (Will save DC 12).

DEVIL'S INK

Distilled from the ink of a rare and highly poisonous stinging cuttlefish, when devil's ink dries, it forms a mind-numbing contact poison (DC 16, Unconsciousness, 2d6 Wis) oft used to sabotage letters, suicide notes, paintings, and scrolls. Unlike many contact poisons, it is inert when in liquid form and can be safely handled and applied. It becomes toxic when dry, about 10 minutes after coming in contact with air.

DIRE BOAR CHITTERLINGS

A favorite dish among hill giants, few can stomach the presence of dire boar chitterlings, especially since hill giants are so unhygienic and their food preparation even more so. Worse, these brutes eat the viscera raw, as they believe it gives them sexual potency. A putrid strain of tapeworm often riddles this intestinal delicacy, which though easily passed by hill giants is deadly to smaller humanoids. Humanoids exposed to dire boar chitterlings must make a DC 13 Fortitude save or become infested with the worms, taking 1d2 points of Constitution damage each day until *cure disease* is cast.

FERMENTED ATHACH SCAT

These giants have perfected a sensible use for their own dung. Rolling it into grapefruit-sized balls, they bake them in the sun until they acquire a hard outer crust, and then using a hollow reed, they pour soured beer into the core, seal the ball, and then let it sit in a dark hole for a few months. When finished, the balls can be hurled as grenade weapons that release a slimy goop, reeking so foully that any creature (including the target) within 10 feet of the smashed scat orb becomes nauseated (Fort DC 18) for 1d4 rounds. If a ranged attack strikes a target, the stuff sticks to them and they drag its horrifying pungency around until they can rid themselves of it, usually by burning their clothes and bathing in vinegar.

FRIGHTFLUSH

Mandrake gathered under a hunting moon and harvested with a bloodstained sickle is altered in peculiar and dangerous ways. The root turns inky purple, and the leaves a spectacular shade of crimson. When this mandrake is boiled down a syrup forms, which begins to glow in jaundiced hues. Applied to a bladed weapon, frightflush infects the wounded, causing their veins to glow the same sickly yellow. Frightflush is toxic and victims complain of a bitter, nutty flavor on their tongues and intense bone pain as the poison courses through them. Death by frightflush is one of agony, the body contorting in uncontrollable spasms (DC 15 Fortitude save; increase by +1 for every hour that an antidote is not taken; failure indicates

the victim is nauseated. Three consecutive failed hourly checks results in death). The buttery luminance emanates long after the flesh rots away, leaving bones that glow. Only burning the bones, or grinding them to dust, removes the eerie alchemical effect.

GHOU-GRUB MASH

Ghoul-grub mash is a pasty substance made, primarily, from the ground grubs that burrow in the skin of ghouls and other undead prone to skin conditions. The paste, once ingested (no save), weakens its victim's ability to resist diseases for 3d12 days. During the duration, all the victim's saves versus disease are made at -10, and any disease contracted has its secondary affect onset time shifted down a time unit (weeks become days, days become hours, hours become minutes), while the strength of its injury doubles (1d6 Con damage becomes 2d6 Con damage). Finally, it induces a 25% failure chance to the casting of cure disease. A caster who fails to cure disease cannot succeed on a second attempt.

To manufacture the ghou-grub mash, grind living grubs with mortar and pestle until thoroughly gooey. Add 2 spoons of funerary salts, 1 spoon of dried blood scrapings from a plague victim, 1 oz of crushed unicorn horn, 2 oz of urine from a fevered child, and a 2,500-gp ruby. The stench of the resulting paste is hard to disguise. The Poisoner Guild suggests adding the paste only to the spiciest of southern dishes—1000-year-old yak stew for instance, or any other dish spiced with Ouram chilies.

GROUND ONYX CORAL

Native pearl divers have long used onyx coral as a toxic weapon against those who come to rob the reefs of their treasures. After carefully harvesting the toxic coral, it is left to dry for several days before it is ground into powder and forced into an eggshell, becoming a grenade weapon with a 10-foot-radius burst. The dried powder is harmless to the touch, but inhaled it lodges into the lungs causing them to rot (Fort DC 20; 1d6 Con/ 2d6 Con). If the individual dies from exposure, their lungs collapse and spew out another cloud of toxin.

HALFING'S PALSY

An elastic, vinegar-tanged fungus grows atop the toe rot that plagues long-unwashed halflings. Harvested, then boiled with either onion or egg molds (recipes vary), the resulting salty gray goo induces crippling arthritis in any who ingest it (DC 30 Fort save). There is no known cure for Halfling's Palsy, but most humanoids purge the palsy in 1d4 weeks. Until then, excruciating joint pain and incessant diarrhea limits victims to a mincing hop-step (speed 5 feet) and renders them incapable of gripping anything in their hands.

HEMAMORTIS-THALIX

This vile substance, resembling clotted blood, requires a multistage process to create, and must be allowed to brew within the body of a vampire. The first stage requires thalix, a suspension of flaked silver and garlic oil in quicksilver that triggers a state of stupor within vampires. The mere smell of it is enough to daze them, but ingesting or damaging vampires with thalix also neutralizes their prodigious physical strength.

The vampire is subdued with thalix, bound with silver chains, and then kept comatose until bordering on starvation. Then the vampire must feed on the blood of a living host. The thalix reacts with the fresh, warm blood and the alchemical reaction paralyzes the vampire. The alchemist is free to kill the creature at this point and extract the hemamortis-thalix from the stomach.

Fresh hemamortis-thalix can keep up to a week before it starts to lose potency. Often added to drinks and soups, the taste of dead blood is the last thing the victims experience before they fall into a deep coma-like sleep. The length of this coma varies depending on the freshness of this substance, but upon awakening, the victim has a near-insatiable bloodlust, which can take days or even weeks to fade. The benefits of hemamortis-thalix are great enough to warrant the side effects, as it makes the imbiber immune to mental domination or attacks, as well as poisoning creatures that bite them. Repeated uses of hemamortis-thalix are certain to cause madness.

INVERTED GOBLIN

To create this foul item one must stuff a goblin's stomach with its own fleshy remains and innards, then hangs the stuffed pouch to bloat and fester in the sun for several weeks until decomposition gases cause it to swell to the size of a humanoid head. When bashed over an opponent, the stomach ruptures spilling the inverted goblin all over the target, nauseating it and possibly infecting it with filth fever. Some swing inverted goblins on a rope, while others hurl them as a splash weapon with a 10-foot range, or use them in traps.

MALFURTHRAXXIA

The unholy waters of the darkest planes and the purest waters of the planes of light form this greasy blue-black liquid, made solely by devils. When immortal outsiders sign a binding contract with devils, both parties often agree to the custom of sipping at the slimy substance. Malfurthraxxia puts both parties under a *geas* effect to fulfill their end of the bargain, but may condemn the drinker to a terrible fate, that of mortality. Malfurthraxxia becomes inert once the terms of the contract have been met, but if either party fails to meet the agreed terms, malfurthraxxia slowly and painfully strips away an outsider's abilities until, after fully disempowered, the process is complete, and no antidote will reverse it. Outsiders so affected gain the native subtype. Devils are immune to malfurthraxxia's crippling effects, though not to the binding magic of the *geas*, and it has no effects on mortals other than as a forceful emetic. ♦

MOURN ICE

In ancient times, a twisted alchemist discovered a method to trap the sorrowful cries of dammed souls and mold them into tiny tear-shaped beads of black crystals he called mourn ice. When mourn ice touches the flesh of a warm-blooded creature, the crystal melts, releasing insurmountable and debilitating waves of sorrow. Unless the victim succeeds a DC 18 Fortitude save, he becomes lost in intense sorrow and cannot attack, cast spells, concentrate on spells, or perform any act requiring attention (treat conditions effects as nauseated). The effect ends after 1d4 rounds.

MUMMIFICATION OINTMENT

Most cultures that mummify their revered dead use a preservative of herbs and spices that help keep the body intact as it passes on to the afterlife. Some unscrupulous clerics realize the power that undead mummies wield and help hasten the process of their creation with this special necromantic ointment. Proper application of this ointment requires a helpless humanoid victim to absorb it into their skin for one full minute before death, usually via a coupe de grace coupled with an elaborate sacrificial ceremony. The victim then makes a DC 25 Fortitude save or becomes an undead mummy in 24 hours. A successful save indicates the victim just dies. If raised from the dead, the victim must make another DC 25 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 24 hours from the residual effect of the ointment.

SPIRIT NAGA VENOM

Transmuter alchemists sometimes milk spirit naga for their venom, and brew it into a gooey paste that they imbue with spoonfuls of partially congealed chaos beast ichor. If the victim fails to save against the toxin's effect (DC 13 Fort save), he begins a transformation into a deformed, snake-like beast with stubby, vestigial legs (use statistics for a monitor lizard). In this new form, the individual possesses no recollection of his former life. The effect is permanent; however, a *remove curse* spell reverses the process.

STIRGE CURD

A sadistic farm boy discovered this recipe after he caught a stirge in his uncle's barn and force-fed it by jabbing its proboscis into a sheep's udder. The swollen udder forced the milk into the nasty creature at such a fast rate that it expanded like a balloon and was soon to fat to fly. It waddled around for a few days until it dropped dead and the farm boy forgot about it. Weeks later, its belly burst, revealing sickly purplish-yellow cheese curds within. Eating the curds causes extreme vomiting followed by wild hallucinations (Fort DC 15) that deal 2d8 temporary points of Wisdom damage. The effect lasts 4 hours, and while most find it disagreeable, a few deliberately indulge in the consumption of stirge curd.





TANNER'S BRINE

After use, the brine that leather tanners employ to brine-cure hides is a particularly vile fluid. Sometimes processing the hides of magical creatures or outsiders imbues the brine with woeful toxicity. The brine itself then becomes a valuable resource, sold to thieves' guilds and adventurers by enterprising leather workers. Most frequently used as a splash weapon, this special brine may also fill a pit trap exposing a victim to its special properties. Below are listed the effects of tanner's brine infused with the dangerous essences of special creatures:

- Cockatrice Brine—DC 12 Fortitude save or be dazed for 1d4 rounds. This brine derives from the process of soaking cockatrice feathers in cheap red wine and vinegar as a precursor to an alchemical mixture that quickly hardens mortar used by stonemasons when building hasty defenses or patching damaged castle walls.
- Demonbrine—DC 12 Fortitude save or receive a -1 on attack rolls and -1 on saves for 1d4 rounds.
- Dragonbrine—DC 12 Fortitude save or receive -2 on Reflex saves for 1d4 rounds.
- Feybrine—DC 12 Fortitude save or be confused (as the spell) for 1d4 rounds. This brine often derives from curing the kidskin legs of a satyr.

VAPORS OF DROWNED SAHUAGIN

Sahuagin can survive out of water for several hours before they begin to "drown." The distress of drowning causes the sahuagin's internal organs to become toxic and these toxins leech from the organs into the ventral cavity, to be later expelled once the creature returns to water. Incising the soft tissue behind the sahuagin's gills while they are "drowning" will cause a gelatinous toxin-laced excretion to leak from the ventral cavity. Boiling or burning the thick discharge in a brazier will release a noxious vapor that causes rapid nasal discharge and debilitating eye weep (Fort DC 17, blind and sickened 2d4 rounds). The vapors are extremely effective when burned to support the attack of creatures immune to poison, such as undead.

VITIATING DUST

Vials of this choking dust sell on the Black Market, but also appear in some adventuring gear shops. To make it, one must feed captive oozes, preferably black puddings, on a constant diet of night soil and other sewage wastes until they become grossly huge. After reaching this overstuffed and moribund state, one incinerates the ooze with alchemist's fire until only a superfine black powder remains. When used as a thrown weapon, inhaled vitiating dust causes choking and sneezing (DC 15 Fort save to resist choking, failure indicates that the target is unable to take any actions for one round), and open wounds become more difficult to heal through non-magical means (-2 on Heal checks for wounds that have been infected with vitiating dust). The dust, when sprinkled on foodstuffs, causes a rapid decay and desiccation. A single ounce vial of this dust is enough to destroy several days' worth of food and water.

WATCHWEED OIL

This highly pungent weed has special properties if an alchemist extracts its oils and distills it in small vials. Often sold to city watch guards to help them overpower belligerent brawlers or to thieves who use its properties to distract foes, watchweed oil vials can turn the tide of battle quickly. The common practice is to either throw them or attach them to missile weapons, accomplished with a DC 10 Craft (weaponsmith) or Craft (bowyer) check. Watchweed oil exposure (DC 14) causes blindness for 1-2 rounds, after which the target is dazzled for 1d6 more rounds as the highly pungent oils cause tearing and mucous buildup. Watchweed oil only affects living creatures.

SHORT ENCOUNTERS FOR SHORT ATTENTION SPANS

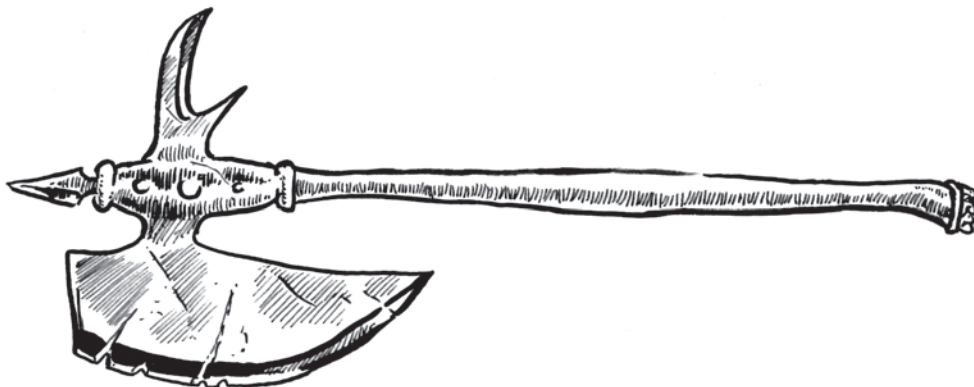
Your players stare back at you with glassy-eyed stares. One of them stifles a yawn as you describe the next empty dungeon room that is identical to the last dozen. Another mumbles something about searching for traps while listlessly rolling dice. If this sounds familiar, the following events and encounters may be just what you need to liven up your game. Roll d% for a random event or simply choose one that you like or fits the circumstances best.

d% Result

- 01 A character's backpack bursts, revealing a few new items.
- 02 A stray dog follows the party. Several other dogs join in until an entire craven pack seeks the party's leadership.
- 03 Something unseen rips a chunk of hair from the back of an adventurer's head.
- 04 A hero gains the temporary ability to understand what animals are saying, though he cannot communicate with them, and they have nothing interesting to say.
- 05 A vandal paints insulting things about the party on a nearby wall.
- 06 An adventurer sees a multitude of gnashing fangs and goggling eyes when she closes her eyes.
- 07 A bard sings, "The devil Gizhiroth murders any who dare talk in this place, but singing will not alert him."
- 08 Fish entrails douse the adventurers as they loiter beneath a scullery window.
- 09 The specter of a felled ally explains that death really hurts.
- 10 A quill-waving playwright demands that the adventurers recount their heroic adventures.
- 11 A goblin war band riding worgs charge up to the party and ask for directions to a nearby village.
- 12 A rowdy protester hands a hero a sign as he darts by. Seconds later, a crowd pelts the hero with rotten tomatoes.
- 13 Finishing a particularly gas-inducing ale, a character begins burping uncontrollably, attracting an ooze mephit that challenges him to a belching contest.
- 14 Musicians tag along to provide theme music for the adventurers.
- 15 Chewing sounds emanate from a character's backpack.
- 16 A humiliated thief hangs upside down in a tangled cocoon of his own climbing rope.
- 17 A stubborn innkeeper demands that the adventurers dance for their supper.
- 18 An ashen-faced witchdoctor throws powder at the party and vanishes.
- 19 One of the adventurers is on a **MISSING** poster.
- 20 A goblin runs up to a male character jabbering, "Daddy! Daddy!"
- 21 A mob of young commoners rushes the heroes demanding autographs.
- 22 A melon-sized eyeball rolls across the floor.
- 23 The ground gets hotter and hotter beneath the party.
- 24 An adventurer gains an acute sense of *true seeing*, though colors appear painfully bright.
- 25 A nearby corpse won't stop twitching.
- 26 Stars in the nighttime sky seem to extinguish, one after the other.
- 27 Trekking lost through the wilderness, the party discovers their own footprints.
- 28 Dust trickles from the ceiling, followed by ominous creaking.
- 29 A courier delivers a letter stating, "One of you is a doppelganger."
- 30 After a tickling sensation, beetles pour out from under an adventurer's armor.
- 31 An obese kobold staggers into the area and vomits up a brightly painted egg.
- 32 The party finds an enormous tome written in Draconic with the title "*Indigestion: What Creatures to Avoid.*"
- 33 A blood-drenched man warns aloofly, "We're all going to die here."
- 34 A character the adventurers chat with produces a pillow, lies down, and falls asleep.
- 35 It starts to rain actual cats and dogs.
- 36 A disembodied voice whispers, "Run!"
- 37 A hero's tattoos animate bawdily for two rounds.
- 38 A smiling troglodyte runs toward the party, but explodes before reaching them.
- 39 A treant develops an obsessive crush with whichever hero has the highest Charisma.
- 40 A casket maker begins taking measurements of each adventurer.
- 41 A despondent mouse does its best to get stepped on.
- 42 A hideous baroness persistently leers at, and speaks lewdly to the party.
- 43 A character's reflection in a puddle appears elderly.
- 44 Food spoils and flowers wither wherever one of the heroes treads.
- 45 A facedown drunkard slides into an alley, carried away by insects.
- 46 The party enters a town where clothing is banned.
- 47 Ogres demand a loan with which to buy candy.
- 48 A smiling girl hands a hero a ring and flees as its troll owner arrives and notices it.
- 49 A local youth demands payment for a job the party never asked him to do.
- 50 A blubbing giant begs for emergency splinter removal.

d% Result

- 51 Angry guardsmen arrest the party for not cleaning up after their mounts.
- 52 A wizard appears from out of nowhere, looks around in confusion, then teleports away.
- 53 A gypsy's singing causes everyone's teeth to ache.
- 54 A message etched into the floor warns, "Wrong way!"
- 55 A rain shower falls upward from lake to sky.
- 56 Mounts and beasts of burden suddenly panic, requiring a DC 20 Handle Animal check to calm them.
- 57 Green ichor oozes up from between the flagstones.
- 58 Flaming footprints lead up to a wall and disappear.
- 59 Illusory rust spots appear on armor and weapons (DC 16 Will save to disbelieve).
- 60 A shaman informs an adventurer that one day she will marry a bear.
- 61 A character hears sounds of slobbering and drooling, but is unable to locate its source.
- 62 Upon opening a door, a copious torrent of blood blasts the party back.
- 63 Passersby point at the heroes and then laugh over some unexplained joke.
- 64 A small child mutely follows the party around.
- 65 A maudlin mime cries drunkenly on one of the adventurers' shoulders.
- 66 The party's skin becomes painfully and acutely sensitive.
- 67 The heroes find a dolly stuffed with wriggling maggots.
- 68 An impressive warrior strides up to the party and challenges them to a game of slap hands.
- 69 The grip of a hero's weapon turns ice cold.
- 70 A tiny imp hangs lifeless in the tousled beard of a revered sorcerer.
No one is brave enough to tell him.
- 71 An adventurer has an overwhelming shrinking sensation.
- 72 The characters suddenly smell brimstone and rotten meat.
- 73 Bells ringing in the distance get progressively louder regardless of the direction traveled.
- 74 Hissing voices debate over which adventurer would be tastiest.
- 75 A hero's footsteps elicit pain-filled exclamations from his shoes.
- 76 A sleepwalker passes by, backwards.
- 77 Torch flames suddenly turn blue.
- 78 The party hears muffled screams from behind a wall.
- 79 Everything a hero touches turns to pork.
- 80 A mysterious fog bank wafts toward the adventurers.
- 81 A rope leading into a cave ends in bloody severance.
- 82 A naked vagrant is convinced the party cannot see him.
- 83 A partially eaten gingerbread man flees a group of ravenous children.
- 84 A rainbow solidifies, forming a colossal bridge.
- 85 A were-skunk sprays the party and runs.
- 86 Images of a death god flicker in an ally's pupils.
- 87 An adventurer's stomach churns as if something inside just kicked.
- 88 Upon swatting a pesky fly, a buzzing voice sends greetings from Baalzebul.
- 89 Orc-toberfest has begun!
- 90 A black rose hovers before an adventurer, chastising her for missing a loved one's funeral.
- 91 A scent stirs repressed memories important to the current situation.
- 92 A frigid gust of wind whispers, "It comes!"
- 93 A hero's bad joke affects everyone with *hideous laughter*.
- 94 The party's possessions animate and attempt to escape.
- 95 A tavern brawl spills out onto the street and the owner claims the adventurers started it.
- 96 A figure stumbles out of an alleyway, coughing up blood, and collapses at the party's feet.
- 97 A shifty-eyed butcher offers his goods for a steal, but the heroes must buy them all.
- 98 A passing farmer has a cart full of gigantic vegetables.
- 99 An innkeeper wakes the heroes at midnight, urging them to leave.
- 00 A street urchin throws a head of cabbage at the adventurers.



100 UNIQUE TREASURES

Aside from mighty weapons and daring points of view, the great heroes and villains of fantasy literature are oft remembered for their thoughtful inventory, from humble, lovely objects d'art to absurd originalities. Make characters more interesting by giving them a chance to acquire a unique conversation piece. Add one to every trove!

Roll d% for a randomly determined treasure or choose the ones you like.

d% Result

- 01 Garnet-tipped thieves' tools.
 - 02 Beaded seashell net full of sacks, each containing exotic incense from foreign lands.
 - 03 Set of chess pieces carved to look like gnomes and kobolds.
 - 04 Petite, silvered hand mirror that makes all seen within appear slightly more attractive.
 - 05 Dog whistle that also attracts gnolls.
 - 06 A gaudy peacock feather duster with bloodstone buttons.
 - 07 Decorative, intelligent and animated clockwork lock.
 - 08 Supply of color-coded, scented tinder twigs.
 - 09 Fine ink pen inlaid with lapis lazuli, gold leaf, and a royal seal.
 - 10 Leather-bound notebook embossed with magical symbols.
 - 11 Courtier's outfit made to resemble stylized peasant garb.
 - 12 Glockenspiel music box with mechanized dancing princesses and suitors.
 - 13 Smooth river stone bearing flecks of gold and a dwarven glyph.
 - 14 Bejeweled desk set including a white gold letter opener, blotter, and signet ring.
 - 15 Black dragon's tooth scrimshaw.
 - 16 Fine wooden case that folds out into a diminutive personal shrine complete with holy symbols, bowls for holy water, and a candelabrum.
 - 17 Wind up statuette of a reclining bronze dragon whose retractable paper-webbed wings beat like a fan.
 - 18 Divination sticks made of crystal and bound with copper bands.
 - 19 Single six-sided bone die bearing a crown, snake, rose, flame, four-leaf clover, and skull on its sides.
 - 20 Dust covered jar etched with merfolk funeral tableaux, filled with pickled baby octopi.
 - 21 Spoon fashioned from azurite.
 - 22 Electrum tiara with chain-hung orbs, each holding ground wildflower potpourri.
 - 23 Blue glass bottle full of elfin nail clippings.
 - 24 Cuttlefish cast mold of a famous queen's ring from a revered silversmith foundry.
 - 25 Set of four rock crystal goblets, two of which have minute chips in them.
 - 26 Gilt tortoise shell sink basin.
 - 27 Several bottles of fine fairy wine, along with magically fresh bread, cheese, and spiced meats.
 - 28 Deck of cards inlaid with gold leafing, featuring baroque artwork.
 - 29 Mother of pearl hair comb shaped like a conch.
 - 30 Mahogany wand with a single casting of *cure minor wounds* left in it.
 - 31 Headband with spiral shaped soapstone medallion.
 - 32 Mug carved from a chimera's horn with etchings along the side that tell the tale of its taking.
 - 33 The only copy of a hilarious yet completely unknown farcical play called *Operation: Ostentation*.
 - 34 Belt made of interconnecting adamantine plates.
 - 35 Confectionary truffles, which are actually curled spiders drowned in fungus brandy and then enrobed in chocolate—a svirfneblin delicacy.
 - 36 Flute fashioned from a petrified eyestalk of a giant lobster.
 - 37 Miniature marble coffin filled with lilac-scented whale blubber.
 - 38 Otherworldly powdered wig.
 - 39 Scented candle made from assassin vine flowers.
 - 40 Ribbon-corset that magically cinches and releases according to its wearer's desire.
 - 41 Oaken box with a variety of foreign coins.
 - 42 Hammered platinum hair plait encrusted with obsidian eyes.
 - 43 Glass display case filled with different species of exotic beetles, moths, and butterflies.
 - 44 Silver shuriken camouflaged to appear as a lawman's badge.
 - 45 Stick with a tiny illusory flame on its tip.
 - 46 Lockable wooden lap-desk, with jars of pigments, ink vials, and a collection of vellums and parchments in a rainbow of colors.
- ## d% Result
- 47 Amber smoking pipe, which entombs an ancient dragonfly and magically ignites any tobacco placed within its bowl.
 - 48 Goblin dollhouse cave replete with sinister little dolls and decor.
 - 49 Red-lacquered box, with live silkworms and a bonsai mulberry bush.
 - 50 Kaleidoscope, with tiny inlaid mirrors on its exterior.
 - 51 Hand-painted portrait in a carnelian frame with intaglio carvings of ivy.
 - 52 Weathered map, with a detailed path through a dangerous pass.
 - 53 Ornate helmet made from a sea cat's head.
 - 54 Copper coin that magically performs the knuckle roll trick.

- 55 Fancy wedding dress, embroidered with many small seed pearls, crystals, and diamonds, carefully preserved in a cedar chest.
- 56 Empty journal with a hand-carved wooden cover depicting a wooded glade.
- 57 Delicate, blown glass vase, complete with glass flowers.
- 58 Four candles painted with seasonal imagery, wrapped and bound in an intricate braid.
- 59 Amethyst paperweight.
- 60 Intricately welded mithral leg brace consisting of a stirrup, sidebars, and master wheelwork.
- 61 Pair of basalt gargoyle bookends.
- 62 Snuff box carved from opal, with a few crumbs of fetid-smelling mushroom snuff.
- 63 Wine stained ivory chalice.
- 64 Heart-shaped silver box with a lock of hair in it.
- 65 Plaque with the inscription: "Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one's courage."
- 66 Lustrous scarf woven of fire giant's beard.
- 67 Pair of crystal phials containing the ashes and tears of a local saint.
- 68 Pearl-handled straight razor.
- 69 Tiny gypsy maiden crafted of baked clay and rags, enchanted to pirouette when bathed in full moonlight.
- 70 Lucky goblin toe strung on a fine brass chain.
- 71 Piece of sandstone worked to reveal the fossilized remains of a mysterious little creature.
- 72 Palm-size abacus with smooth green peridot counting stones.
- 73 Magicked flowerpot that allows any flora within to survive without light or water.
- 74 Jar containing a tiny portion of a gelatinous cube.
- 75 Sitka spruce tray filled with sand, small stones and a tiny rake beside it.
- 76 Rattle made from a dried snapping turtle, with the handle formed from its distended neck.
- 77 Porcelain water whistle that sounds like a wood thrush.
- 78 Iron chastity belt filigreed with roses.
- 79 Golden scorpion brooch with ruby eyes.
- 80 Giant nephrite and brass hookah cast in the shape of a nalfeshnee.
- 81 Lace doily woven from spider silks.
- 82 Ebony scroll case with starry moonstone inlays.
- 83 Necklace suspending a tiny brass hourglass.
- 84 Collection of sword pommels cast to resemble a pantheon of gods.
- 85 Buckskin hip flask full of viscous blade oil, which once applied, roars demonically when swung through the air.
- 86 Mahogany box containing a collection of minerals, each one carefully labeled and classified.
- 87 Badger skull made into a container, filled with a pasty red dye.
- 88 Recipe book featuring twenty ways to spit a pig.
- 89 Prosthetic hand carved from white alabaster and engraved with fine runes.
- 90 Jar filled with hundreds of unmatched buttons.
- 91 Rolled up weretiger fur tied with silk ribbon.
- 92 Leather satchel holding a rubber ball and two-dozen caltrops.
- 93 Model ship in a bottle attacked by a magically animated stuffed squid.
- 94 Blood-stained wooden box filled with rusted dissecting tools.
- 95 A mummified pixie.
- 96 Pen knife with a petrified wood handle.
- 97 Small bag of perfectly shaped skipping stones.
- 98 An offensively pungent wad of fur stuffed into a neck pouch that supposedly wards off lycanthropes.
- 99 Set of nested dolls depicting various magical beasts.
- 00 Cloisonné cage containing an *awakened* cricket.



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