

Tales of the Terrible

Button Dragon



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TALES OF THE TERRIBLE BUTTON DRAGON

(Or, Toys Gone Wild!)

GagMen Episode 40, June 2015

A Basic Fantasy Adventure

Written by the GagMen on the GagMen RPG Podcast

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Introduction

This adventure was created with the Basic Fantasy Rules (by Chris Gonnerman) but could be used for most retro-clone versions of Dungeons & Dragons, or any version of Dungeons & Dragons with which you may be more familiar. The adventure is designed for beginning level characters, preferably between level 1 - 3, and was written with lots of silly little things meant to keep your gaming experience fun.

Brattleburg is the central city of the GagMen's in house fantasy world, and serves a starting place for most of our fantasy adventures. While definitely tailored to our needs, Brattleburg is adaptable with most other fantasy settings. The main philosophy behind the World of Brattleburg is that not all members of the "monster" species are thoughtless killers to be used by the game master; rather, every race has a diversity of personalities and culture that makes them worthwhile. Parties exploring Brattleburg and the surrounding region may find themselves helping ogres, traveling with goblins, or rationalizing with a Minotaur. The GagMen love to add comedic twists and plenty of fun to every adventure, and we encourage you to be a creative and enthusiastic GM; create new content, throw in your own twist or flair, and polish up any parts of the game where you think we took a wrong step. As the GM, YOU are a co-writer, so make it your own!

Summary

When a series of grisly murders rocks the village of Markle on the eve of a momentous Gala, the Party finds themselves drafted into the roles of detectives! Charged with finding the culprit at all cost, their only suspect has a few holes in his Alibi... and his upholstery! Buttons the Dragon, former plaything of the Lady Markle and current town mascot has apparently gone rouge; and it's up to the party to stop him! Despite the obvious clues, things just don't add up. Could an enchanted stuffed animal really be the culprit? Exactly what is happening in the Tower of the old keep? And just why do all the witnesses keep acting so weird? With time running out, the Party must unravel the Tale of the Terrible Button Dragon, before it's too late!



Theme

We here at The GagMen Podcast usually gloss over the theme, focusing instead on the adventure itself. With this story, we wanted to try something a little different: an adventure-mystery, with very few fights and lots of detective work. While there's a villain, a red herring, and a kingdom to explore, the heart of our story is Myrtle and the tragedy of her growing up and apart from her childhood companion, while the toy dragon itself never changes. The two main NPSs, Myrtle and Buttons, should be diametrically opposed. While the players will likely feel sympathetic toward the discarded toy, they should also be concerned that this once loved toy and is now a suspected killer.

If you are playing with younger children you may want to tone down some of the more murderous elements. The victims could be found tied up, with no knowledge of anything after the shape-changer took their place.

Setting

Markle Keep was built ages ago as a defensive outpost at the edge of the Underberg Kingdom. While The Keep was added onto and updated for many years, the expanding borders of the kingdom caused the Keep to eventually fall into disrepair and obscurity.

Over the years the small keep transformed from a border outpost to a castle with two outer walls defending the surrounding village. Most of the battlements of the keep are unmanned now; the castle lies far inside Underberg Kingdom that there is little chance of an attack, and the keep's security has been undermined for over two decades.

The village of Markle, both inside and outside the walls, has grown into an established stop along a main trade route, with little trinket shops and souvenirs on every corner. The villagers are known as some of the finest seamstresses in the kingdom, making beautiful dresses and fitting clothes for all occasions.





The tall watch towers of the keep loom over the town like the fingers of a fallen and decaying giant's hand; occasional bricks and other debris often rains onto the village below. The disrepair of the keep has become more obvious with the growth of the town. Many parts of the keep have been repurposed: the former barracks that once housed a small army is now used as a sheep and cattle barn, the armory is now a bakery (Lady Myrtle loves her cakes), and many of the walls around the great hall have been knocked out to make it larger.

The former Lord Markle was charged with defending the borders half a century ago, but after he passed away, his daughter Lady Myrtle has taken it upon herself to transform the castle into a beautiful palace. Myrtle fancies herself a courtesan and has been trying to turn her father's dusty old keep into a platform to launch her way into the royal courts. While the Markle name still holds respect in the royal courts, Lady Myrtle is known as the selfish daughter that dragged that name down.

Plot

The Ever Winding road

While traveling along a trade route on the way back to Brattleburg, the party finds themselves in the village of Markle, known for it's historic (if aging) keep and world renowned seamstresses and tailors. Happily, the party discovers that the town is hurriedly preparing for a Grand Gala for the Lady Markle, the current head of the family that the town and Keep was named for.



The Inns are crowded and the streets bustle with energy, excitement, and the faintest tinge of resentment, though the villagers will be hesitant to explain. Queries to the villagers will receive muttered responses of “spoiled Brat”, “Big for her britches” and other less than flattering retorts about the Lady Markle.

As the party tries to find out just what exactly is going on, a villager will eventually point the party to a puppet show in the town square, where groups of children are sitting and pointing excitedly.

Anything for My Little Girl

When the party arrives, the story will begin. In elaborate fashion, the curtain will rise, music will begin to play, and a narrator will begin to tell a story...

“Lord Godfrey Markle, noble hero of the kingdom, had a daughter for whom he would do anything. The child Myrtle, as she





was known, desperately wanted a pet; but alas, she was allergic to any animal brought before her!

Eventually Lord Godfrey turned to his trusted alchemist for a solution. The alchemist pondered long and hard, when finally an idea struck him! The Alchemist toiled long and hard in his laboratory, and through means that we mortal may never understand, brought life to stuffed dragon with button eyes. (If the party asks, the alchemist used a unique version of the animated servant spell in the creation of a stuffed golem.) The King was astonished by the creation, and when he presented it to his child she deemed it an acceptable gift."

We Can Make Him Faster, Stronger...

The scenes of the puppet show will change, and the speaker will continue:

"The alchemist knew that the child would not be able to play with the toy all day, so in his genius he gave it another task: to capture mice. The Button Dragon was enchanted with special skills and senses to capture mice, and store them in a metal cage in its stomach. Each morning the dragon would always return to the alchemist's lab to deposit the nightly capture. Soon the Keep was free of mice, and the button dragon began to roam the town, bringing joy to the children and ridding our homes and lives of filthy vermin."

The children will cheer at this point, and some will even throw stuffed rats toward the stage.

That is Why We can't have nice Things

The play will end, and many of the children will clap and wander away. The puppeteer will begin setting up for another



show, and some adults will begin gossiping about the Town, and Lady Myrtle. Any party member paying attention may notice a strange shadow out of the corner of his eye, sitting atop of the puppet cart.

If the party listens in on the gossip, or asks any of the villagers what happened to the

Button dragon, they will get the following story:

"Like many of her toys, Myrtle quickly grew tired of Buttons; as she got older she even began to resent the little creature. Everyone could see the Myrtle was a spoiled child; everyone but her Father, that is. Her attitude, combined with the town's affection for Buttons quickly made Myrtle unpopular. When Myrtle first appeared around town with Buttons, the townsfolk called her "the Princess and her Dragon." Over time, however, "Princess" became a sign of spite. When Lord Markle passed away and Myrtle took over, many things started changing; she made unfair demands of her subjects, and while she was never cruel, she was not kind in her requests.

As far as anyone could tell, Myrtle forgot buttons completely. These days he still





travels around the keep and the surrounding town catching mice. Occasionally, a child in the town will play with the button dragon, but they too soon grow up, leaving him alone again. The people of Markle love the little dragon, and many think of it as a kind of mascot. It wanders in and out of houses, scurrying along rooftops, hopping across the ramparts, and skirting along the edges of the walls, always sniffing and looking for mice.

If the party does not hear this information, they will have another opportunity in “The Crowd Reaction.”

Chasing the fluffy Dragon

As the villagers finish filling in the party, one randomly selected PC will suddenly be knocked to the ground. The other members will see what appears to be a stuffed Dragon, roughly the size of a small dog, sitting on the PC’s back. It will wag its tail, grab something from the player’s belt, and run off into the crowd.

If they party waits, they will notice that the Button dragon will stop and wait, still wagging its tail, as if waiting for the group to follow. When they do follow him, he will move quickly, and the party will have to move fast to keep up. The dragon will dart up crates, occasionally run across roofs and storm drains, and jump across alleys, seemingly leading the party to something.



Eventually the dragon will stop in a small alley near the well of the keep, drop the stolen PC item, and scamper away. Under the item is the body of a scullery maid, covered in scratches and poorly hidden under a pile of hay. As the Party begins to investigate, they will hear loud shuffling and the clanging of metal behind them.

When the party turns to look, they will find none other but the Lady Myrtle and her private guards, staring in shock at the body. The Lady will look at the group and order” Guards, seize them!”

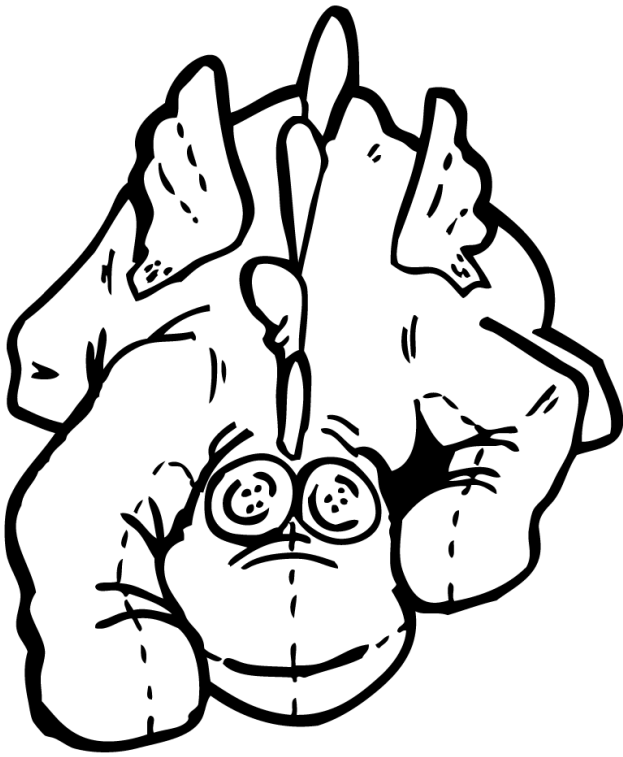
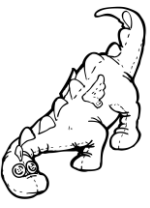
Buttons on the Attack

The guards will attack, and the party will have to choose whether to fight or surrender. Regardless, as the fight begins to become serious, the lady myrtle will step into the the brawl and command everyone to stop. If the party refuses, she will gesture to a regiment of crossbow men lined on the rooves around the alley.

When the Party surrenders, she will demand to know what happened, and why they killed one of her servants.

After the party fills her in, she will nod, and explain that in the last week, the button dragon has started attacking people around the keep, first a scullery maid and then the butcher's apprentice. Each attack was described as vicious, like an animal that hasn’t been fed. The dragon is little more than a stuffed toy, so few people were concerned for their safety. But





some aspect of the gala. During the course of the adventure, the party should run into people delivering supplies for the party, running in and out of the keep all day. This should help to add any needed confusion during the game, for perhaps a chase scene or perhaps Buttons needs to make a quick getaway. Myrtle will demand that the party find and destroy the dragon before the Gala. If they succeed, they will be handsomely rewarded.

Conflict

The Crowd Reaction

Lady Myrtle will return to what she was doing before corning the Party, namely double checking the decorations on the Keep, leaving the captain of the guard to clean up the body and direct the group.

The Captain will suggest that party visit the Butcher and his apprentice and the site of the attacks. He will suggest the Alchemists Tower, as the button dragon is seen coming and going from the tower often, but he will warn that the tower is considered haunted, and has been abandoned for years.

The captain will also suggest asking around town for common hunting places for the Button Dragon, and for any sightings of the Dragon acting strange.

Once back in town and Asking around, most of the commoners will seem surprised by the idea that Buttons would attack anyone, he has been kind and friendly for decades (If the party did not hear the story from *“That’s why we can’t have nice things,”* this would be an appropriate time to read it for them). Buttons still finds time to play with the children of the village and keep the area mouse free.

now with the death of that same scullery maid, Myrtle will explain that “it’s obvious that the Button Dragon has become a threat and embarrassment to the Keep. You must find it, and destroy it.”

Off With His Head

With the death of the scullery maid, Lady Markle seems all too happy to order the creature be exterminated. She will order the group to hunt down and destroy her toy before it ruins her gala. Myrtle has been planning a large royal gala, to entice the royals of Underberg to come to Markle Keep. She wants everything to go just right for her party, and the last thing she needs is a silly childhood toy to ruin her return to the royal courts.

It’s Party Time!

Myrtle is planning a splendid gala to cement her entrance into courtly society. She realizes that many of the courtesans consider her spoiled, and is determined to prove that she is a model of refinement and elegance. Over half the town’s population is busy working on





The scullery maid that was attacked was a young woman, named Katy, and liked Buttons just as much as anyone. "When Katy was attacked the first time," her fellow kitchen staff would say, "the beast must have shaken her up really good. She just didn't seem the same afterward. It was a shame what happened to her."

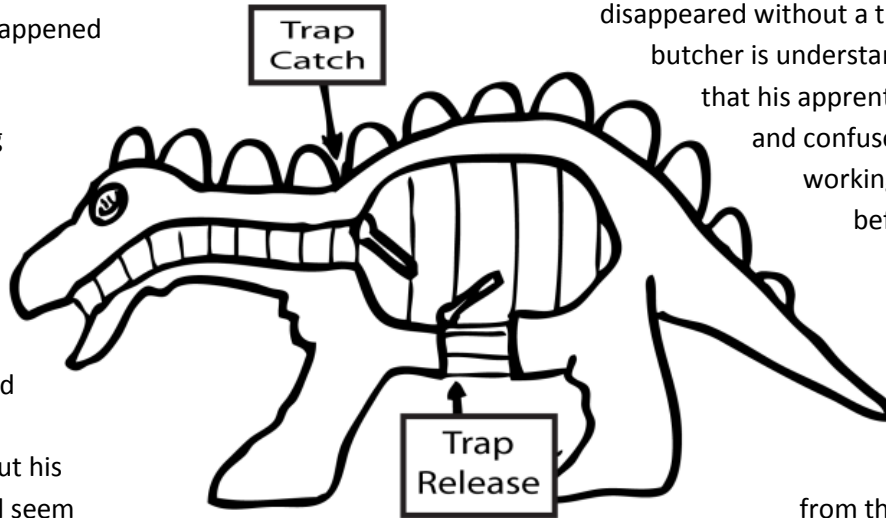
Asking around at the butcher's shop, the young apprentice Erik will be glad to answer questions about his attack. He will seem nervous and constantly look over his shoulder, as if he was about to get attacked again. "I was just taking a tray of meat out to be dried when the little beast jumped on me and clawed and bit and scratched at me! It was like it wanted to eat me!" He gives the party a needful look, "You will kill it? Won't you?" His information is otherwise spotty at best and most of his conversation focuses on the hope that the group will kill the creature as soon as possible.

What is that Horrible Smell?

After interviewing the butcher, the party may go and investigate the areas of the attacks to look for any clues that may help them. Near the drying racks, the smell of drying meat fills the air, but a hint of death is leaking out of a large kettle sitting nearby. The kettle holds the remains of Erik the butcher's apprentice. The body is covered in scratches, as was found on the body of the scullery maid,

however this body has been dead for several days and shows signs of bloating.... Despite the fact that the party spoke to him only a few hours before the body was found.

Presuming the party returns to the butchers shop, they will find that Erik has disappeared without a trace. The butcher is understandably shocked that his apprentice was dead, and confused since he was working only minutes before. A commotion coming from the stables should draw the party away from the grieving butcher.



In the courtyard a stable hand will come running out of the stables with Buttons scrambling about his head and shoulders. The two appear to be struggling, in the way that a child would struggle with an aggressive toy. Within a few seconds of struggling between the two, the stable hand throws the stuffed dragon into a second floor window and it scurries away into the darkness. Ingolf, the stable hand, is visibly shaken by the attack though he bears no scars like the ones on the other victims' bodies.

All Mice go to Heaven

When the Town leads have gone dry, a guard may arrive from the captain offering to lead the party to the tower. An old, dilapidated building, the doors of the tower should be locked or blocked, making entry difficult. There are some ways in, and the party may have to be





inventive. A hole in the roof, the open balcony, or a secret entrance or passage is all possible. After all, the Alchemist liked a good secret.

Upon inspection, the party may find a worn path through the tower and small, padded footprints in the dust. One thing should be obvious, the Button Dragon is a frequent visitor.

When the party does finally gain entry they will find themselves shocked, and held at miniature cannon point. Spread before them will be a miniature city, complete with streets, bridges, guard tower, two of which have their loaded cannons pointed directly at the party!

A small trumpet will sound, and on one of the towers a solemn looking mouse will approach the edge, raise a strange cone to his mouth, and begin speaking to the party in a amplified, though slightly squeaky, voice.

The mouse will introduce himself as Pawtheusela, the lead philosopher and administrator of Squektopolis, the sprawling city before them. Kindly but firmly, Pawtheusela will demand to know what the party wants.

If the Party refuses, a trapdoor will open, and they will find themselves sliding

quickly to the bottom of the tower, with no choice but to find a new way into the tower.

If the party does decide to talk, Pawtheusela will become slightly upset by their story. The Mouse leader will draw himself up and begin to explain.

The tower is indeed the old alchemist's lab. With the man himself long dead, his laboratory has gone untouched for years, with only the button dragon dropping off its captured mice every morning. The alchemist wanted the mice for his experiments, and through his magical elixirs they became more intelligent than expected. They have been running the lab for over a decade, carrying on the alchemist's work, maintaining the button dragon, and trying to remain unnoticed.

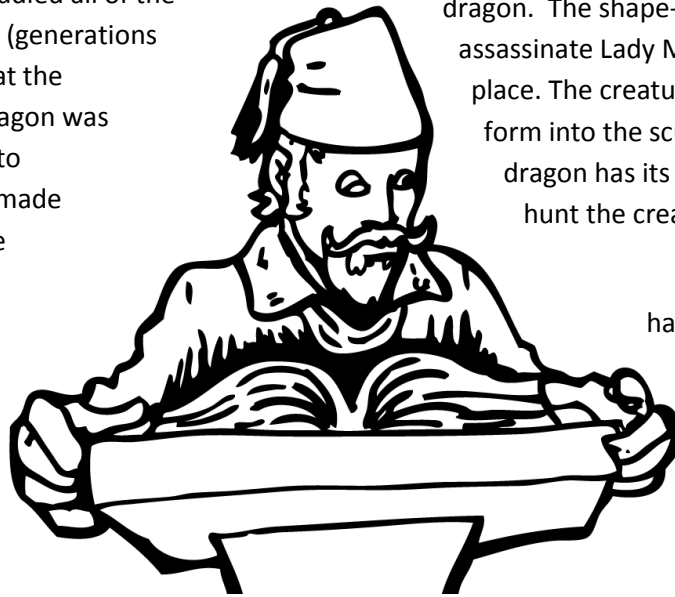
The mice of the lab know that mice are not tolerated in the human society, let alone a group of intelligent mice. They have taken the option of anonymity, knowing that no other people would come to the tower they have





begun building a small community inside the tower.

The mice have studied all of the alchemists notes for year (generations to them), and learned that the creation of the button dragon was only a taste of what was to come. The formula that made the mice self-aware came from the same studies. They have learned to revere and respect the button dragon and have even been repairing it over the years.



Pawtheusela will then ask the adventurers to follow him, and using an elaborate set of tracks and bridges, will lead the party to a temple like structure on the edge of the mouse city. Inside the strange structure the party will find a few pillows, what appears to be some chew toys, and a small bronze ball with runes etched in the side. Pawtheusela will explain that ever the researcher, the Alchemist needed a way to collect data from the Button dragon itself. And so, the ball collects the memories of the dragon for future review. The mouse will then ask one of the Party to pick up the ball to learn the truth for themselves.

A Mouse in the House

After the PC has picked up the ball, they will find themselves caught away in a vision: A week ago while hunting for mice, Buttons caught the scent of an unusual mouse and sought it out. The button dragon has the senses of a bloodhound and the hunting instincts of a wildcat. What no one could have foreseen is a

shape-changing creature has snuck into the keep disguised as a mouse, but was being unknowingly hunted by the button dragon. The shape-changer has plans to assassinate Lady Markle and take her place. The creature quickly changed form into the scullery maid, but the dragon has its scent and continues to hunt the creature.

The button dragon has no claws or actual ability to bite, but it knows that it must capture its prey. It did attack the scullery maid, the butcher's

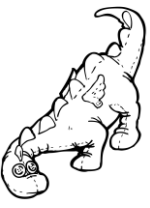
apprentice, and the stable hand, because they were actually the shape-changer in disguise.

After the vision, the party should realize that the toy is innocent and can help them locate the creature with its keen senses. The party now has a choice, to approach the Lady Markle, or find the Button dragon and try to stop the shapeshifting assassin.

The Gala

If the party has managed to find the dragon by the time of the gala (something that should be much easier with the Memory Orb), then Myrtle will thank the adventurers and insist they destroy it before the party. The only way she will be interested in keeping it alive is if her assassination is a possibility. If there is anyone that Myrtle cares about it is herself. She will allow the creature to live but their investigation must not cause any disruption with the party.





As the evening progresses the great hall is filled with royals from all over the land, wonderful music, and amazing smelling food. In the center of the hall a large group of dancers have been displaying their talents to the crowd, while onlookers gossip about different tidbits from around the kingdom. All the while the event is going on the group should be following every turn that Buttons makes, hoping that it will lead them to the shape-changer.

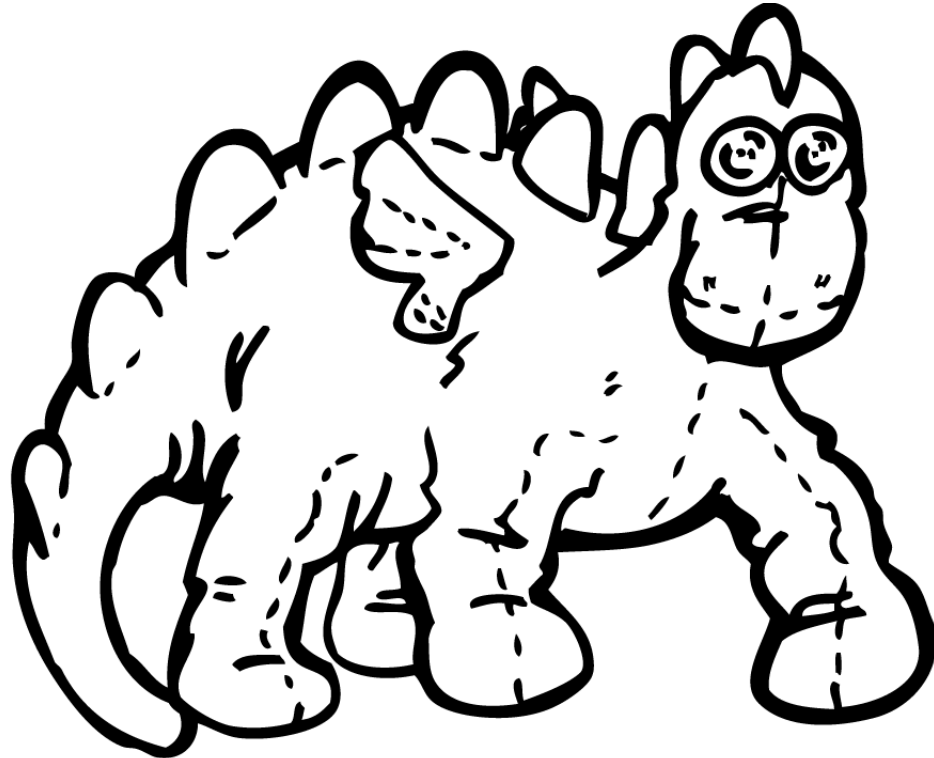
Super Happy Fun Ending

Catching the shape-changer and exonerating the button dragon would be the priority for the adventure to end successfully. Myrtle realizing that she has been acting selfishly and accepting Buttons back as her personal pet would be ideal, though Myrtle

may not come to that realization so easily. Slightly more tragic, Myrtle could be saved by Buttons at the loss of its own life and then come to the realization that she has been selfish.

In exonerating the Dragon, the Party might offer the Memory orb to Myrtle. During her vision, she will see and feel the affection the Dragon has for her, and the genuine sadness her disdain for the creature has caused. When her vision ends, a now soft hearted and humbled Lady Markle may be prepared to patch things up with her old friend.

If the mice create a second dragon for Buttons to be friends with would be just adorable. If Buttons dies protecting Myrtle then the mice could magically bring him back to life and Myrtle could grant them sanctuary in the keep.

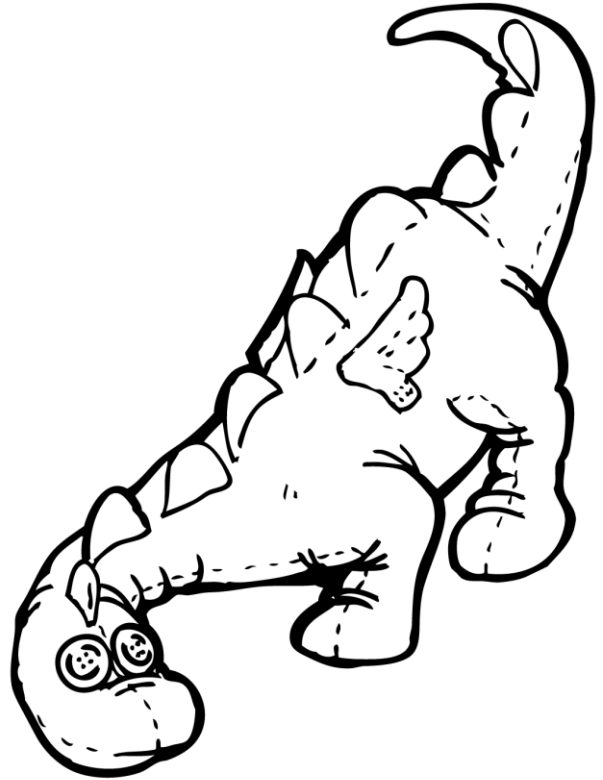




Characters

Buttons, The Button Dragon

Armor Class:	14
Hit Dice:	1
No. of Attacks:	1 bite or capture (mouse size only)
Damage:	1 damage
Movement:	50'
No. Appearing:	1
Save As:	Fighter: 1
Morale:	9
Treasure Type:	None
XP:	25



Originally created for young Myrtle Markle as an allergy free pet, the toy was sewn and stuffed by a local toy maker but brought to life through alchemy and complex magic. The alchemist knew that the child would not play with the toy forever, so he designed a mouse retrieval system into the toy and enchanted the golem with special tracking abilities. Buttons would hunt at night and deliver mice to the alchemist's laboratory in the morning, giving the alchemist a continuous supply of mice to conduct experiments.

Myrtle grew older and played with Buttons less and soon even began to resent the constant playfulness of the toy. With time Buttons would stop approaching Myrtle for any playtime and turn its attention to playing with the children of the town and capturing mice.



Lady Myrtle Markle

(AC 12; hp 3; #AT: 1; save as Fighter 1; DMG dagger (hair pin) 1d4)

A spoiled girl, who grew up to be a spoiled lady and wants nothing to do with some silly toy. Myrtle is in her early twenties and recently lost her father, her mother died in childbirth. Myrtle never knew her mother, but was extremely close to her father. When her father died she was devastated, but she quickly turned her interests to becoming part of the royal courts. She has become obsessed in her social status and little else. She is referred to as "princess" by most of the villagers, as they still perceive of her a spoiled little girl.





The Shape-Changer

Armor Class:	14
Hit Dice:	3
No. of Attacks:	1 weapon
Damage:	1d6 or by weapon
Movement:	30'
No. Appearing:	1d4
Save As:	Fighter: 3
Morale:	10
Treasure Type:	E
XP:	135



The shape-changer is a weaker version of the Doppelganger (see pg. 73 Basic Fantasy), not having ESP to know more about its target usually exposes them before they can fully take on their plans. The creature can change shape form and even mass, allowing the change into something as small as a mouse and as large as a person. This particular changer wandered into the town and had no target in mind, but has quickly decided on Myrtle but every opportunity to take her has fallen apart because of the attacks from Buttons. The shape-changer will always be nervous and complaining about the dangerous "terrible button dragon" to anyone that will listen.

Kitchen Staff (AC 11; hp 4; #AT: 1; save as Fighter 1; DMG knife 1d4)

Guardsmen (AC 16; hp 8; #AT: 1; save as Fighter 1; DMG spear 1d8)

Markle Townsfolk (AC 12; hp 3; #AT: 1; save as Fighter 1; DMG dagger 1d4)





When a series of grisly murders rocks the village of Markle on the eve of a momentous Gala, the Party finds themselves drafted into the roles of detectives! Charged with finding the culprit at all cost, their only suspect has a few holes in his Alibi... and his upholstery! Buttons the Dragon, former plaything of the Lady Markle and current town mascot has apparently gone rouge; and it's up to the party to stop him! Despite the obvious clues, things just don't add up. Could an enchanted stuffed animal really be the culprit? Exactly what is happening in the Tower of the old keep? And just why do all the witnesses keep acting so weird? With time running out, the Party must unravel the Tale of the Terrible Button Dragon, before it's too late!

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GagMen Episode 40, June 2015

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*Written by the GagMen on the
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*Illustrations by Gaghouse
Productions*

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