

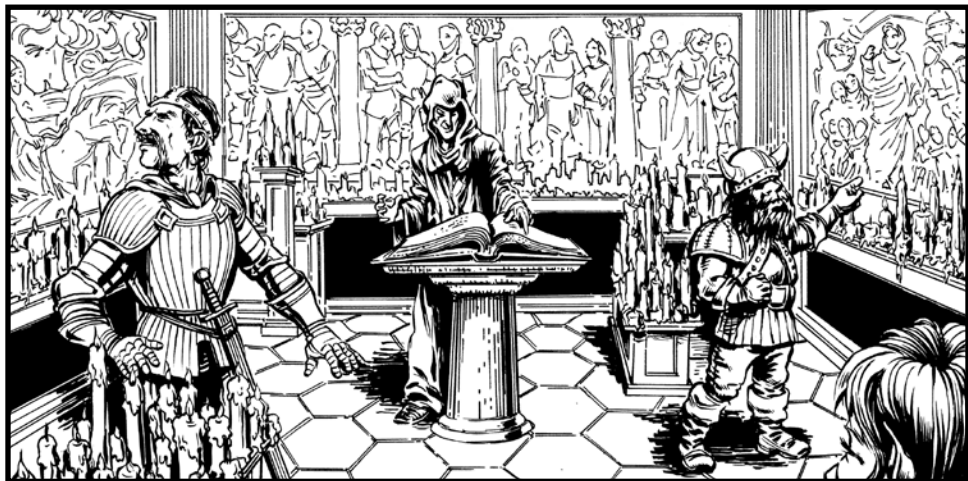
DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS

TOWER OF THE BLACK PEARL

#79.5: A LEVEL 1 ADVENTURE
BY HARLEY STROH



TOWER OF THE BLACK PEARL



A LEVEL 1 ADVENTURE

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INTRODUCTION



The Tower of the Black Pearl is designed for four to six 1st-level characters of any class, although a well-rounded party will have the best chance of success. Thieves will find their talents in high demand during the exploration of the Tower. In lieu of thieves, other character classes will have their creativity and resourcefulness put to the test.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Once every decade, the tides of the Empyrean Ocean recede far enough to reveal the highest eaves of a mysterious undersea tower. Long ago this was an eldritch fastness of Sezrekan the Elder, the most wicked wizard ever to plague the Known World, but now the tower is known simply as the final resting place of the fabled Black Pearl – an artifact rumored to bring doom upon all who dare to possess it.

Tonight the moon nearly fills the sky, and the tides have already begun to recede. The PCs have 8 short hours to explore the tower before the dark waters return. Unfortunately, a ruthless band of motley pirates have already made it to the Tower. The adventurers must outwit and outfight the pirates, dodge ancient traps, and solve arcane puzzles to reach the Tower's inner sanctum. The fabled Black Pearl will be theirs for the taking...if they can survive the Pearl's curse.

Although the adventure assumes the location of many pirates, the judge should feel free to move these encounters if the party is moving particularly quickly or slowly.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Use one the following plot hooks to get the characters directly into the dungeon.

- All of the locals know stories about the fabled Black Pearl, and the underwater tower that can be reached but once a decade. An aging pirate, drowning in his cups, informs the PCs that *this* is such a night, and that a band of hardy souls might make their fortune tonight if they were willing to risk life and limb. He offers directions to the tower and the use of his skiff exchange for 10 gp and 1/10 the haul.
- While relaxing in a seaside inn, the PCs overhear a scuffle taking place outside. Running to the rescue, they discover two of Savage Quenn's rogues mugging a robed magician. The rogues flee the instant they see the PCs, but for the magician it is already too late. Investigating his corpse the PCs discover a map directing them to what seems to be an underwater tower; the back of the map is covered in a complex series of astrological equations. Any appropriate occupation (such as astrologer or navigator) determines the equations to be tidal and lunar patterns. Judging from the equations, the tower is not underwater *tonight*.
- The PCs are approached by a sharp-eyed merchant. He offers the PCs a proposition: he'll pay the PCs 25 gp each to retrieve the Black Pearl from the tower of the same name. He'll provide the map and the skiff, the PCs will provide the wits and brawn, and the PCs are welcome to keep any other loot they happen

to find. There's only problem to the merchant's plan: his arch-nemesis, Savage Quenn, has already left for the tower!

- If one of the PCs has Sezrekan as a patron, he may know of the Old Master's tower from his own research. Who could resist exploring the place where Sezrekan's mortal remains are said to lie? Entering the tower and obtaining the Black Pearl could well be a test of Sezrekan's, with those who fail not being worthy of the great wizard's patronage.

JUDGE'S NOTES

BACKGROUND STORY



The Tower of the Black Pearl is a popular tale in seaside taverns. Nearly everyone has heard of the tower that appears but once every ten years, when the tides are right and the seas at their lowest. Fewer stories recall that Sezrekan built the tower to house his corpse when his spirit form went on to other spheres, but all the stories agree on two points: that an enormous black pearl is hidden in the tower, and that certain doom awaits any thief who dares to steal the Pearl.

SAVAGE QUENN AND THE PIRATES OF THE BLACK MARIAH

The nefarious pirate known as Savage Quenn is feared up and down the coast. Quenn has terrorized the sea lanes for three years now, and the local lord has finally decided to bring the pirate's career to an end. But Quenn has no plans to end his career by stretching a noose. Instead he sold his ship and dismissed his entire crew, save for a few handpicked rogues.

Tonight his band will sack the Tower of the Black Pearl, and if all goes as planned, the savage pirate-lord will be the only one to emerge from the tower, Pearl in hand. Quenn will vanish into retirement, and none will be the wiser.

Quenn is a comely black-haired man who would appear more at home in a royal court than on the deck of warship. The fancy silk doublet and dainty rapier disguise a ruthless, self-absorbed murderer, who has put entire cities to the torch.

Quenn's pirates are a motley band of desperate ruffians and rogues, wanted men who will do everything in their power to avoid capture. All are mongrel humans, sprinkled with the ancestry of half a dozen goblinoid races. Their appearance is a testament to their desperate lives: rude, homespun trousers and vests, bare feet, sun-weathered skin, and colorful, sprawling tattoos that cover their bodies. All sport multiple piercings and brands from time spent as convicts. They fight with fierce cunning; no trick or deception is too low for them.

Pirate: Init +1; Atk short sword +2 melee (1d6) or dagger +3 ranged (1d4); AC 11; HD 1d6; hp 3 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will -1; AL C.

Possessions: Dagger, short sword, 1d10 gp in jewelry.

ENCOUNTER TABLE

Area	Type	Encounter
1-1	C	3 pirates
1-2	T	Hands of Sezrekan trap
1-3	C/T	4 animated fetishes Camouflaged pit trap
1-4	P	Portal puzzle
1-5	C	5 pirates
1-6	C/P	Silent boatman
1-7	C/T	Savage Quenn 6 pirates Wall blade trap
1-8	T	Flooding room trap
1-9	T	Spear trap
1-10	T	Unsafe bridge
1-12	C	25 sea vipers
	P	Shrine of the Black Pearl

PLAYER START

Begin the adventure by reading or paraphrasing the following:

The dark sea rolls, solemn and quiet beneath the bone-white moon. The old Maiden of the Sea, waxing full, seems especially close tonight, its reflection unbroken on the gently rolling waters. Dim lights of town twinkle in the distance, and when the wind is right you can still hear sea chanties being sung in the night.

A cry goes up from the front: your companions have sighted something breaking the water's surface. Could it be the fabled tower? With wide grins and bright eyes, you bend your backs to the oars.

THE TOWER OF THE BLACK PEARL



he tower and adjoining caves were built centuries ago by Sezrekan the Elder, a wizard of great renown who cherished both power and privacy. As the mage grew older, and corrupted with his quest for mastery of the higher spheres, he became obsessed with researching means to extend the span of his life. Eventually, he uncovered the means to his own apotheosis, and became the patron described in the core rulebook. Unknown to all but the most studied, his mortal shell remains in the tower, waiting for discovery.

His tower remains, a testament to Sezrekan's power. The tower is almost one hundred feet tall, encrusted in mollusks, kelp and coral. The inside of the tower is constantly damp, but the sea water is kept out by an ancient arcane ritual powered by the Black Pearl. Removing the Pearl from the shrine permits the water to rush in through a thousand small cracks and holes, but clever PCs may find a way to escape with both the Pearl and their lives (see area 1-12 for more information).

All of the tower and caverns are lit by *torches of continual flame*. These torches provide light without heat, but the enchantments are wearing thin, and the torches provide only meager light. If taken from this tower, the enchantment fails in 1d30 days.

Time is crucial to this adventure. Once they step foot on the tower, the characters have precisely 8 hours to explore the tower and return to the surface. One minute longer, and the sea begins to rise over the top of the tower, pressing the exit closed. PCs will simply be unable to lift up the portal from inside the tower, although it could be chopped open from below. Of course, this sends hundreds of tons of sea water flooding into the tower, sucking PCs along for a deadly ride. Even if they survive the crush of the water, the characters will still have to survive long enough to swim 50 ft. to the surface of the ocean. Any boat moored to the tower will have been sunk by the rising tides, leaving PCs adrift in the open sea.

WANDERING MONSTERS



Check for wandering monsters once every half hour, or whenever the characters make a significant amount of sustained noise. Roll d12; an encounter occurs on a 1. If an encounter is called for, roll 1d4 to determine the encounter.

Roll (d4)	Result
1	1d4 Animated fetishes
2-3	1d2 pirates
4	1d3 crab-rats

Animated Fetishes (1d4): Init +2; Atk slam +1 melee (1d3-1); AC 14; HD 2 hp; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60', damage reduction 8; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will -5; AL N.

Note: These fetishes reduce all damage by 8 points due to their hardness. See area 1-3 for examples of animated fetishes.

Pirates (1d2): Init +1; Atk short sword +2 melee (1d6) or dagger +3 ranged (1d4); AC 11; HD 1d6; hp 3; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will -1; AL C. *Possessions:* Dagger, short sword, 1d10 gp in jewelry.

Crab-Rats (1d3): Init +3; Atk claw +2 melee (1d6) or bite +0 melee (1d3 plus disease); AC 15; HD 1d6; hp 4; MV 30' or climb 20' or swim 30'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60'; SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +3; AL N.

These eight-limbed creatures appear like a two-foot long cross between rat and crab. Their forward limbs terminate in claws, and they are covered in crab-like armor, but mangy black fur tufts out between plates of chitin, and their faces are

rat-like. A crab-rat's bite causes a debilitating disease: After 1d3 days, the victim must make a DC 11 Fort save or lose 1d3 Dex and Con each day that a save is failed. The disease lasts until three successful saves are made.

AREAS OF THE MAP

Area 1-1 – Tower of the Black Pearl: *The tower rises from the sea like something out of a fairy tale. And yet, it must be real, for waves crash against it just as they lap at the planks of your skiff.*

Snarling gargoyles crown the four corners of the tower, peering from coral-encrusted battlements. More worrisome than the eldritch tower or the snarling gargoyles is the worn longboat moored on the far side of the tower. Squinting through the darkness, it seems that the deck of the longboat is empty.

Three pirates are asleep atop the tower beside a keg of rum. Quenn left them with orders to guard the ship, but rum and poor discipline has rendered them senseless. Any loud noise (like the PCs' skiff knocking the side of the tower) wakes the pirates, who fight equally well drunk or sober. Given warning, the pirates make use of the cover afforded by the battlements, firing their bows at the PCs and trying to knock any boarders into the ocean.

The entrance to the tower is an iron trapdoor sealed by magic. Atop the trapdoor, covered in seaweed, is a flat stone inscribed with a large glyph, the mark of Sezrekan. Tracing the glyph causes the lock to open and the door to fall away, revealing an iron ladder; otherwise the door can be picked open (DC 15) or broken (DC 20 Strength check).

Pirates (3): Init +1; Atk short sword +2 melee (1d6) or dagger +3 ranged (1d4); AC 11; HD 1d6; hp 3, 3, 4; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will -1; AL C.

Possessions: Pirates carry short swords, daggers and 1d10 gp in jewelry.

Area 1-2 – Hall of Mysteries: *Hundreds of candles line the walls, their flames swaying and dancing to your every move. Some are tall, as if they were lit just moments ago, while others are burnt down to stubby mounds of wax.*

In the center of the room stands an onyx pedestal supporting a massive tome bound in gold and worn black scales.

The walls are decorated with detailed murals depicting what must be the lives of heroes. You can see warriors rising up from humble beginning to lead armies against forces of darkness; humble apprentices inheriting arcane powers from their masters, casting down kings and emperors with a wave of their wands; meek rogues growing to become daring shadow-lords; and destitute warrior-monks rising to become leaders of holy armies.

Eons ago, long before he succumbed to corruption and madness, Sezrekan watched over the forces of Good, providing lore and subtle clues to stalwart heroes, and aiding worthy adventurers in their time of greatest need. The Old Master watched the heroes from his chamber, using methods of scrying that have since been lost to the ages.

Each candle in this room is keyed to the life of a Lawful hero of the Realm; newer candles represent adventurers beginning at the start of their lives (like the PCs), while older candles represent aged heroes coming to the end of their days. Extinguishing a candle ends a life; lighting it brings the hero back to life, although with the permanent loss of 1 point of both Luck and Stamina. A candle can be re-lit only 1d3 times.

The tome atop the pedestal is a registry of every Lawful hero to ever adventure in the Realm (written in Common). The names of living heroes are noted with the location of their candle. Fallen heroes have their names drawn through in black ink. A DC 15 Intelligence check allows the PCs to determine the location of their own candles; if a Lawful PC dies during the course of the adventure, her candle can be re-lit.

Each candle is protected by a magical trap. Whenever someone tries to extinguish a candle or remove it from its place along the wall, two withered hands of flame reach out toward the character, each hand making one melee attack against the offending character with a +4 bonus to hit (1d4 damage). The candles can be taken from the room, but it is extremely difficult to keep the flames lit (DC 20 Reflex save every 5 minutes).

Choosing to extinguish the flames for the purpose of slaughtering heroes is an *extremely* Chaotic act, sure to anger the gods of Law, and earning any Lawful clerics -10 disapproval until each flame extinguished is atoned for. The judge is encouraged to include other penalties (at the minimum, a reduction of Luck by 1d5 points) to indicate the ire of the gods – even Sezrekan in his madness dared not extinguish these flames! Sudden darkness, chill winds, a crash of thunder, and other omens precede such an action. Note that these penalties occur for *willfully* extinguishing the flames; guilt and diminishing the forces of Law are the only price for accident.

Area 1-3 – False Hopes: *A trickle of sea water runs down the staircase. In places the wooden stairs are rotten and in one case they've fallen through altogether. Passage will require vaulting the gap.*

The walls along the stairs shelter a trio of small alcoves. In each alcove are small figurines: hand-painted fetishes carved from ivory and decorated with hair and small beads. The first nook holds a fierce-looking barbarian, the second a pair of snarling panthers, and the last a somber knight.

The gap in the stairs is 7 ft. across, and with the drop in elevation it is an easy jump (Strength or Agility, DC 5), even for small creatures. The landing is deceptive – the marked area of the



map notes where the rotted steps break away, pitching PCs down onto the next flight of stairs below (1d6 falling damage). Leaping the full distance to safety requires DC 15 check. Coming back up these steps is far harder, requiring a DC 20 Strength or Agility check to bypass the dangerous section. Using a rope to traverse the area to the stairs below is far safer.

The fetishes are actually tiny animated objects. If disturbed, they launch into a coordinated defense, doing their best to force attackers off the stairs.

Animated Fetishes (4): Init +2; Atk slam +1 melee (1d3-1); AC 14; HD 2 hp; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60', damage reduction 8; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will -5; AL N. These fetishes reduce all damage by 8 points due to their hardness.

Area 1-4 – Chamber of Portals: *This chamber is dominated by a trio of arches set against the walls of the room. Each arch resembles a snarling dragon; all are carved from dark mahogany and bound in bronze.*

The arches would be identical were it not for their gemstone eyes. The dragon in the southwest corner of the room has emeralds for eyes; the dragon in the northwest corner, pearls; the dragon in the northeast is missing its gemstones and the eye sockets are empty.

Beneath the arches are flat slabs of blank obsidian.

An enormous eldritch sigil is etched into the stone floor, dividing the room into three distinct vectors. A fight must have taken place here recently; fresh blood is pooled near the pearl archway.

Each archway is a portal. In order to activate a portal, blood must be poured onto the sigil directly before the arch. This doesn't require a great amount of blood – a single drop will do – activating the portal for 5 rounds. Whatever character provides the blood takes 1 point of ability damage, as though it had utilized spellburn, when the portal is activated. During this time the obsidian slab is washed over by a shimmering, rippling pool of absolute blackness.

Puzzling out the portals is made more difficult because presently only the pearl portal can be activated (it leads to area 1-5). The northeast portal can only be activated once the rubies from area 1-11 are placed in the dragon's eye sockets (it leads to area 1-12). The emerald portal can only be activated with the blood from an 8 HD+ creature. Its destination is not specified; the judge should make it lead to some interesting location in his own campaign world where he'd like to take the characters once they're of a higher level.

Players should be encouraged to work out the portal puzzle on their own, but appropriate occupations and Intelligence checks for wizards can provide hints for stumped parties at the judge's discretion. Prying the gems from an arch disables a portal. The emeralds are worth 65 gp each, and the pearls 50 gp.

Area 1-5 – Ambush!: This cave is the bottommost level of the tower. It is located below sea level and is accessible only via the portal in area 1-4. Five pirates wait

in this room, with orders to attack any stepping through the portal. Activating the portal alerts the pirates, setting their plan into motion. They lurk on either side of the portal, lashing out when someone steps through.

Once the pirates have been killed or subdued, read or paraphrase the following:

The regular, masonry walls of the tower give way to natural stone walls. In this roughly rectangular room, you face a series of natural stone stairs to the north, and a closed door to the right. The air is different here, fresh with the tang of salt. From somewhere in the distance comes the thrumming roar of the surf.

The walls are decorated with carvings depicting some sort of evolving dragon. On the floor, before the portal you entered, a sigil is carved into the stone.

Give the players handout A. This antechamber is decorated with a series of carvings depicting a human transforming into a multi-headed dragon, each stage carved in incredible detail. The carvings depict the transformation of Sezrekan's soul into an emblem of power that branches outward into the extra-dimensional spaces of the numinous world, the underworld, and the overworld. A sage or wizard who makes a DC 15 Intelligence check can parse out the iconography linking Sezrekan to the multi-headed dragon.

The floor before the portal has a smaller sigil mirroring the sigil in area 1-4, and is activated by blood, just like the portals in area 1-4.

Pirates (5): Init +1; Atk short sword +2 melee (1d6) or dagger +3 ranged (1d4); AC 11; HD 1d6; hp 3, 3, 3, 4, 4; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will -1; AL C.

Possessions: Pirates carry short swords, daggers and 1d10 gp in jewelry.

Area 1-5A – Ceremonial Chamber: *The air in this room is thick with the scent of mold. Rotting crimson robes hang from hooks on the walls, and several dark vessels rest on a rickety shelf. A seemingly endless series of runes are carved into the floor, walls and ceiling, covering every inch of the room.*

Resting on the floor, in a shallow gold bowl, is a rusty knife with a long, curved blade.

This is where Sezrekan and his apprentices performed the rituals necessary to transfer the soul of the mage in preparation for his journey to the overworld, underworld, and numinous world. The vessels on the shelf contain Sezrekan's organs; though painted black, each is plated in hammered gold. The five vessels and the bowl are each worth 25 gp. Note that a caster with the "sympathetic magic" mercurial result for *patron bond* or *invoke patron* may find the desiccated contents more valuable than the containers!

The secret door hidden in the back of the room cannot be opened from this side. The door is made of a mighty granite slab that cannot be destroyed save by mighty magic.

TOWER OF THE BLACK PEARL

□ = 5'





Area 1-6 – Boatman of the Depths: Read or paraphrase the following:

Roughhewn steps descend to a wooden dock and dark lake that wends its way out of sight. A brazier stands to either side, wreathed in cold flames.

A skiff emerges from the darkness, poled by a cloaked boatman. As the boatman draws nearer, you can see the cloak's hood hides a pale skull with blue flames for eyes. The skiff brushes up against the dock, and the boatman extends a single skeletal hand.

The silent boatman will accept any coin as payment, but will not shove off until every passenger has paid at least one coin. If paid, the boatman will deliver the PCs safely to area 1-7.

PCs can choose to avoid the boatman and swim to area 1-7, but swimming in the unnaturally cold waters is very difficult, (see rules below). The lake is 20 ft. deep here, growing to a depth of 40 ft. near area 1-7.

- Swimming PCs must make a DC 5 Strength check each round to stay afloat. This is modified by armor. A PC can choose to sink but risks drowning.
- Drowning: A submerged PC without an air source can hold his breath for as many rounds as his Stamina score. If he engages in actions while submerged, this duration is halved. Once this time limit expires, the PC begins drowning and must make a DC 10 Fortitude save each round or temporarily lose 1 point of Stamina. The save DC increases by 1 each round after the first. A drowning PC can take no actions and must be rescued by another character. When a PC's Stamina reaches 0, he dies. If the PC is rescued, the lost Stamina is restored immediately.
- Hypothermia: In addition, characters swimming or submerged in the cold water must make a DC 10 Fortitude save each round, or temporarily lose 1 point of Stamina. When a PC's Stamina reaches 0, he dies. If the PC is rescued, the lost Stamina is restored at a rate of 1 per minute spent warm and dry.
- The base speed of all swimming or submerged characters is halved. That rate is further modified by armor.
- Swimming or submerged PCs suffer a -2 modifier to initiative checks.
- Swimming targets gain a +2 bonus to their AC against ranged attacks originating outside the water. Targets completely underwater add +4 to their AC against attacks from outside the water.
- Attacks by submerged characters are less effective. Slashing and bludgeoning weapons such as axes, clubs, and two-handed swords inflict half-normal damage. Piercing weapons such as spears, daggers, and short swords do normal damage. Missile fire attacks are impossible underwater.
- Spells may not be cast while submerged. Spells may be attempted while treading water, but the caster suffers a -2 penalty to his spell check when doing so.

If the PCs choose to attack the silent boatman, it strikes with its pole or claws.

No direct attack (magical or mundane) can harm the silent boatman; they pass through him as though he were a ghost. Attacks against his boat (AC 10), however, harm the boatman, and if 25 hp damage is done to the boat, it sinks and the boatman disappears forever. Despite appearances, the boatman is not un-dead.

The braziers are lit with cold, dim flames that go out if removed.

Treasure: The boatman does not keep any of the fares it collects. Instead it casts the coins over the side of the skiff, where they sink into the mud and muck. PCs willing to brave the frigid waters find a random amount of coins with each successful DC 10 Luck check. Roll 1d4 to determine the search results:

1d4	Search Result
1	1d12 gp, 1d6 sp
2	1d8 sp, 1d4 cp
3	1d6 cp, 1d3-1 pp
4	1d12 sp

Silent Boatman: Init -1; Atk pole +1 melee (1d4) or claw -1 melee (1d3); AC 12; HD None; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60', cannot be harmed directly, boat dependence; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +10; AL L.

Area 1-7 – Gate of Iron: *The lake winds through the darkness like a serpent. High above, nearly hidden in the shadows, hangs a decrepit rope bridge connecting two caves on opposite sides of the lake. Rotting planks dangle loosely from the tattered ropes. Climbing the overhung, algae-covered walls to the caves seems impossible.*

The lake ends at a dock rising to a small, natural cave. A brazier stands to either side, wreathed in cold flames.

The back of the cave is dominated by a pair of mighty iron doors. The doors arch from floor to ceiling, and are inscribed with the heads of dragons, twisted into ferocious masks of anger.

If PCs stop mid-lake and attempt to scale the walls, they find the climb to be extremely difficult (DC 25).

Savage Quenn and six of his pirates are here, trying to determine a way to safely unlock the gates. They will hail the PCs, offering a truce. Given the chance, Quenn will offer the following terms: he and his men will join the PCs and split all treasure evenly, with the PCs getting first pick of magic items.

Of course this is only a ploy. Quenn and his men will lead the party on as long as possible, turning on the party once they've acquired the Black Pearl.

The gate is locked by a series of tumblers concealed inside the maw of one of the dragon heads. The lock can be picked with a DC 15 check, or broken by a DC 20 Strength check.

The gate is trapped with a scythe blade that strikes from a trapdoor in the ceiling; the trap is triggered when someone steps before the door, but then fails to unlock

the door in one round. The trap is triggered at the beginning of the second round. It strikes with a +6 attack bonus, doing 2d4 damage.

PCs examining the *inside* of the gate after it has been opened will notice that the gate seems specifically designed to form a seal of some sort. Three rounds after the gate is opened, powerful water-driven pistons force the gate back closed. Items used to block the gates open will be crushed, and the gate closes after 1 round. This may be delayed – but not stopped – by a PC making a DC 25 Strength check. Breaking the gates defeats the trap in area 1-8.

Treasure: PCs providing proof of Quenn’s demise will be awarded 250 gp and an audience with the local lord. If the PCs comport themselves well, the lord will be quick to see the value of enterprising and discrete PCs, sending them on valorous missions across the Realm.

Savage Quenn: Init +2; Atk rapier +3 melee (1d6+2) or dagger +2 ranged (1d4); AC 16; HD 2d12; hp 14; MV 25’; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will -1; AL C.

Possessions: Chainmail, dagger, rapier +1. Quenn’s rapier is named “Whisker,” the weapon of choice for at least 3 generations of infamous pirate captains. The sword has a pommel cast in the shape of a cat’s head, with black steel blade, and a blood red channel that runs the length of the blade. The blade has a malevolent intelligence that urges its owner to acts of cruelty (Will DC 10 to resist). This Chaotic blade is a bane of men, causing bleeding wounds that deal 1 hp of damage each round after a successful attack, until magical healing is applied. The wielder can automatically speak the thieves’ cant and automatically makes any maritime skill checks using 1d24. When the blade is held unsheathed, it can allow *locate object* to be cast twice each day with a +4 spell check modifier. Anyone openly carrying the blade will attract the notice of authorities who will assume the wielder is a pirate; the blade’s notoriety aids the wielder in intimidating sailors and seaside locals.

A rapier does a base damage of 1d6 and costs 12 gp. If the judge permits, a rapier’s attack roll may be modified by Agility rather than Strength.

Pirates (6): Init +1; Atk short sword +2 melee (1d6) or dagger +3 ranged (1d4); AC 11; HD 1d6; hp 3, 3, 3, 4, 4, 4; MV 30’; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will -1; AL C.

Possessions: Pirates carry short swords, daggers and 1d10 gp in jewelry.

Area 1-8 – Chamber of Doom: *The walls of this room are strangely discolored, as if by high water marks. The bones of many skeletons lie scattered about the room, with little or no sense to their placement. Lining the ceiling and floor are dozens of fist-sized holes.*

Three rounds after the iron gates (the entrance from area 1-7) are opened, massive water-powered pistons force them closed, crushing anything in their way. The tumblers roll back into place, locking the door and sealing the room. The next round water begins to pour into the room, fed from the holes drilled into the ceiling. This trap can be located by a thief with a DC 10 check, but requires a DC 20 check to disable.

During this first round, the iron gate can be easily picked from the inside by quick-thinking thieves (DC 10) but after the first round the pressure from the water holds the portal closed, and the gates cannot be opened without being broken.

The room fills with water, from floor to ceiling, in 6 rounds. The room and stair stay filled with water for 10 rounds, after which the room begins to drain through the holes in the bottom lining the floor. See area 1-6 for rules on drowning.

Unless the PCs manage to escape back to area 1-7, getting through the door at area 1-9 will be their only escape.

Area 1-9 – Escape: *The stairs terminate at a short landing. A rusty iron door stands to the north, but before it rests an armored skeleton, impaled on a long iron spear. As you approach, the spear withdraws into the wall with a hiss, dropping the skeleton to the floor into a clattering pile of bones.*

The door to the north is locked with a simple lock (DC 10), but any attempts to pick the lock or break the door trigger the spear trap (+6 melee, 1d8 damage) Rust has eaten away at the door's hinges; breaking the door is easier than adventurers might assume (Strength DC 10).

Treasure: The last poor soul to fall victim to the spear trap wore +1 *chainmail*, his only possession that has survived the ravages of time. The mail is covered by a film of rust, but with a good cleaning it will shine as brightly as the day it was forged in the Halls of the Dwarf Lord. Dedicated to Daentharr, the Mountain Lord, with thousands of tiny etched runes too small to be seen until the mail is cleaned, this armor grants an additional +1 AC bonus to followers of Daentharr. If worn by a Lawful character, the character gains +1 point per die if a cleric of Daentharr lays on hands to heal hit point damage. Finally, if worn by a Chaotic character, the armor always feels itchy and ill-fitting, increasing the wearer's fumble die one step to a d16.

Area 1-10 – Rope Bridge: *The stairs open onto a balcony of sorts, overlooking the dark lake. A decrepit rope bridge spans the distance between the balcony and the far wall; the planks are pitted with rot, the ropes dark with mold.*

Crossing the rope bridge is hazardous – a board snaps beneath the feet of the PC with the lowest Luck score, who must succeed on a DC 10 Reflex save or fall 30 feet to the water below. This causes only 2d6 damage (or a mere 1d6 with a successful DC 10 Reflex save to dive), but see area 1-6 for rules on drowning.

Area 1-11 – Tomb of Sezrekan: *An immense stone sarcophagus rests in the center of this shallow cave. The cover of the sarcophagus depicts a dragon in repose atop a mound of skeletons. The cool air seems to crackle with energy, setting your hair on end.*

This is the final resting place of Sezrekan's body; though his spirit lives on as a supernatural being of great power (see pages 336-341 of the core rulebook). The heavy stone lid can be removed with a DC 20 Strength check; up to 4 PCs can work together at once. Inside rests a tall skeleton arrayed in moldering robes and a golden crown. The robes are worthless, but the crown is worth 50 gp.



As noted in area 1-5A, parts of the Old Master's body might be of great value to some wizards. However, Sezrekan the Elder still has a nebulous contact with his flesh, and if the actual body is damaged, it will attract his attention.

Unless the despoiler immediately swears fealty to Sezrekan (roll a Patron Bond spell check result on 1d20, adding the character's Personality modifier to the result, and use the When Cast on Other column, pages 148-151 of the core rulebook), the Old Master will strike the offender with a palsy that causes 1d8 points of Agility damage (which heals normally). If the judge desires, any number of characters could come to serve Sezrekan in this manner.

A careful search of the sarcophagus reveals a pair of ruby gemstones – the eyes to the portal dragon in area 1-4. If the rubies are returned to the dragon above the portal, they will allow the portal to be activated permitting access to area 1-12. Otherwise the gems are worth 80 gp each.

Area 1-11A – Secret Tunnel: *The narrow tunnel bores through solid rock ending in a blank wall of finished stone. To the left, an iron lever protrudes from the floor.*

If the lever is pulled, the blank wall rises, permitting access to area 1-5A. The wall descends back into place after 3 rounds, inflicting 3d10 points of crushing damage to anything caught beneath it (DC 14 Reflex save to avoid).

Area 1-12 – Shrine of the Black Pearl: *The portal opens onto a wide platform flanked by a pair of burning braziers. Steep stone steps descend into the water-filled room below. At the far end of the room you can see the statue of a snarling dragon, rearing back as if to strike. Clutched in the serpent's mouth is the goal of your quest: an enormous black pearl. Even though the statue is set lower than the stairs before you, the waters are held back from the statue, as if by sorcery.*

Squinting you are able to make out slithering shapes ahead: hundreds of black snakes writhe and squirm in the waters before you, causing the dark pool to boil and roll.

Show the players handout B. The water vipers, though small, represent one of the greatest dangers of the tower. A character falling into the water will be attacked by snakes from all sides, likely killing the poor soul. Characters will have to be cautious and careful about how they go about reaching the Black Pearl.

The snakes, unprovoked, will not attack anyone outside of the water. The water level, though, may rise unpredictably – see below.

The Black Pearl is roughly the size of a human fist. Removing the Pearl is easy – a DC 10 Strength check is sufficient to wrench it from the maw of the dragon statue. Doing so destroys the spell that keeps the ocean from flooding the tower.

If PCs remove the Pearl, the tower floods in 13 rounds. The flooding begins with the bottom levels – area 1-12 – and quickly proceeds to the rest of the tower, as the bottom levels of the tower are filled with rushing sea water. As the spell fails, the flooding becomes increasingly faster. The effects of the flooding will be immediately obvious: the waters in area 1-12, held away from the statue, come rushing in, crushing the unfortunate thief against the statue. Anyone standing before the statue, and failing a DC 15 Reflex save, is struck for 1d6 points of crushing damage.

Area 1-12 is flooded in the first five rounds; areas 1-5 through 1-11 on round 6; area 1-4 on round 11; area 1-3 on round 12; and area 1-2 on round 13. (The candles in area 1-2 are protected by powerful magics; if left undisturbed, they have the ability to burn underwater, but the registry is ruined.)

Clever PCs, anticipating the flood, might be able to flee the rising waters, or avoid their path by mundane or magical means. Remember that characters moving through the water do so at only half speed!

The floor before the portal has a smaller sigil mirroring the sigil in area 1-4, and is activated by blood, just like the portals in area 1-4.

Treasure: If sold in a major metropolis, the Black Pearl easily worth over 500 gp. Contrary to most rumors, the Curse of the Pearl is not *entirely* malevolent. The possessor of the Black Pearl receives a +1 bonus to all saving throws, AC, and attack rolls, and casts spells as if her Caster Level were +1.

Unfortunately, the Pearl also *triples* the likelihood of wandering monster encounters, and draws the attention of any intelligent, evil 5+ HD creatures within a 5 mile radius. The creatures won't understand why they are drawn to the PCs, but they will be possessed by a strange, gnawing hunger that is only sated when they are stalking the owner of the Pearl.

There was a reason, after all, why Sezrekan chose to build his tower 5 miles from the shore.

In addition, others will seek the power of the Black Pearl should they discover that the PCs possess it.

Sea Snake, Tiny (25): Init +3; Atk bite +2 melee (1 plus poison); AC 17; HD 1 hp; MV 15' or climb 15' or swim 15'; Act 1d20; SP poison (Fort DC 10, 1d6 Stamina on failure, 1 Stamina on success; this damage heals normally), scent; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +1; AL N.

FURTHER ADVENTURES



There are a number of adventures that can stem from an adventure in the Tower of the Black Pearl. The second (and more dangerous) half of the tower remains to be explored – after all, the PCs only adventured through the top four levels before they took the portal to the caverns; there are several remaining levels in between. Characters can expect to encounter deadly monsters and the guardians of Sezrekan’s secrets. Whether or not some vestige of the Old Master still haunts the tower depends entirely on the judge’s whim and the respective level of PCs.

Even selling the Pearl can become a challenging adventure, especially if the PCs allowed any pirates to live. The road to the nearest city is surely fraught with brigands, and thieves’ guilds will surely be awaiting the character’s arrival. Confronted by vengeful pirates, greedy brigands, ruthless guild thieves, power-seeking wizards, and double-dealing merchants, heroes may come to rue the day they sacked the Tower of the Black Pearl.

OPTIONAL ENDING: DARK AGE OF HEROES



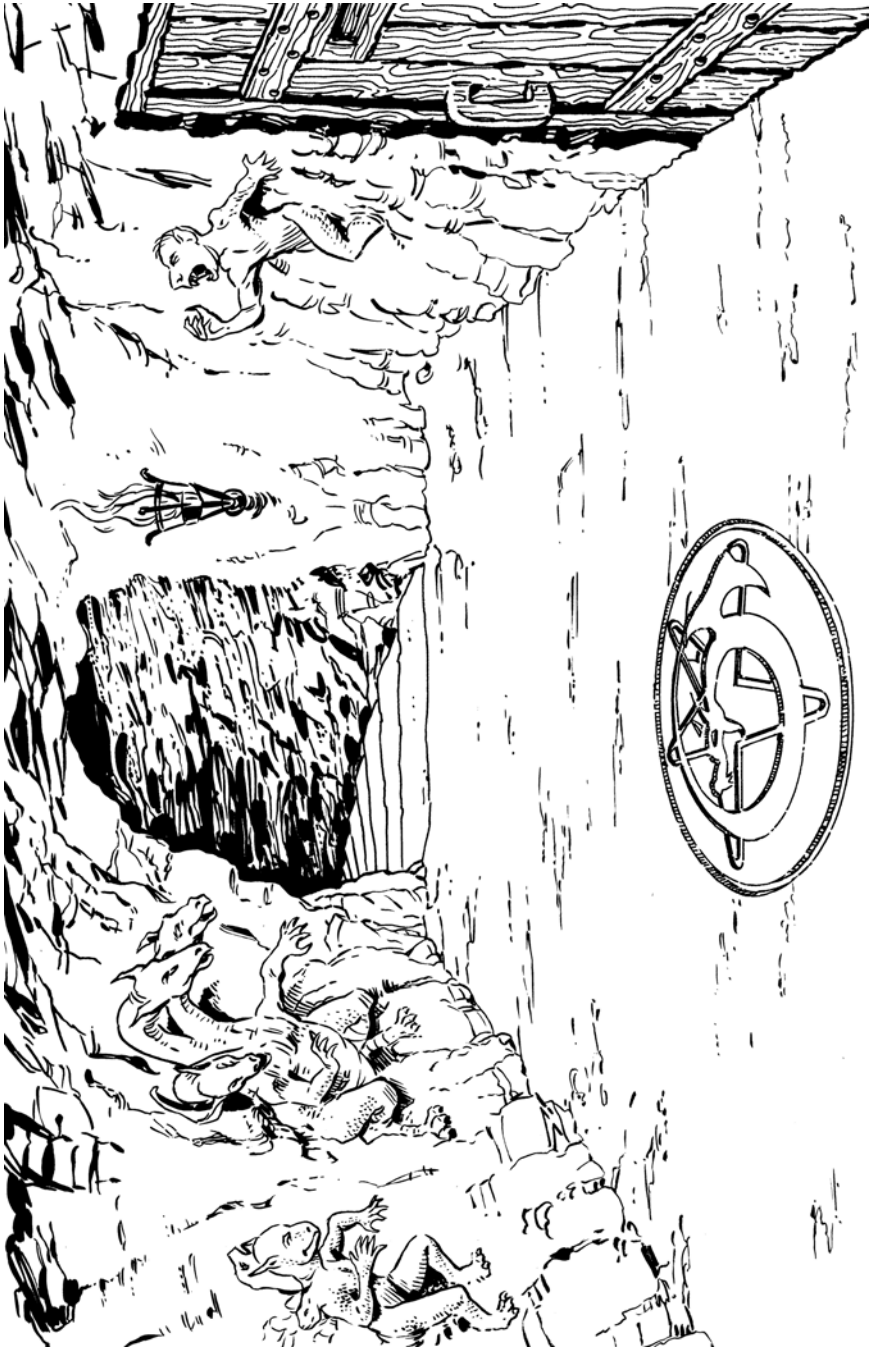
Judges can use this adventure to set the stage for an epic campaign set in a grim, dark age world. Judges interested in this sort of long-term story arc need only allow the rising waters to extinguish the hero candles burning in area 1-2.

This *immediately* slays every Lawful NPC hero (e.g., above level 5) in the world. The PCs are spared the effects because of their proximity to the tower and the failing of the magic that binds their lives to the candles. Instead, the wave of radiating power *bestows* one additional, permanent hit die to each PC. Adventurers might rejoice at first, but as they learn what has happened to the rest of the world, they may come to rue the day they ever set foot in Sezrekan’s accursed tower.

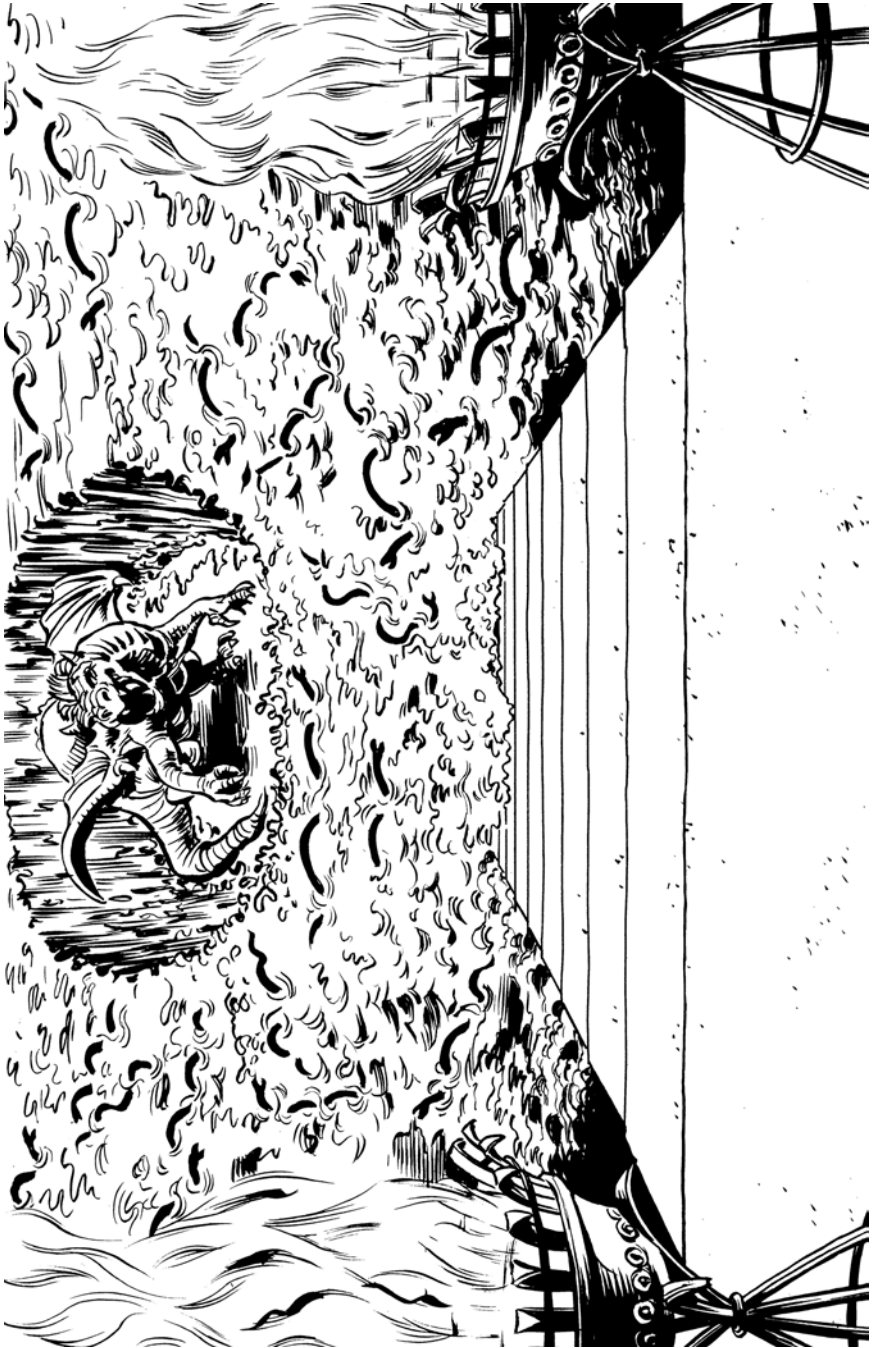
With all the champions of Law gone, the civilized nations quickly collapse into feuding city-states. It is a full year before the great powers of Chaos begin to war on the fractured nations, but lesser challenges (humanoid tribes, unintelligent evil monsters, wandering undead) almost immediately become a threat to formerly protected communities. Towns and cities turn to the PCs to lead armies in their defense.

Quickly the PCs will find themselves in the spotlight. Other heroes will slowly rise through the ranks, but all will look to the PCs to set an example of goodness and righteousness in the enduring dark age.

HANDOUT A



HANDOUT B



DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS

TOWER OF THE BLACK PEARL

#79.5: A LEVEL 1 ADVENTURE
BY HARLEY STROH

Once every decade, the tides of the Empyrean Ocean recede far enough to reveal the highest eaves of a mysterious undersea tower. Long ago this was an eldritch fastness of Sezrekan the Elder, the most wicked wizard ever to plague the Known World, but now the tower is known simply as the final resting place of the fabled Black Pearl – an artifact rumored to bring doom upon all who dare to possess it.

Tonight the moon nearly fills the sky, and the tides have already begun to recede. Adventurers have eight short hours to explore the tower before the dark waters return. The fabled Black Pearl will be theirs for the taking...if they can survive the Pearl's curse.

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