

THE CAVERNS OF CHAOS

A NEW D&D ADVENTURE FULL OF
TRAPS, TRICKS, AND PUZZLES



INCLUDES ADVENTURE HOOKS,
CUSTOMIZATION OPTIONS, AND OVER
A DOZEN READY-TO-PLAY PUZZLES,
RIDDLES, TRAPS, AND TRICKS

Created and Playtested by The Goblin Leg Gang

THE CAVERNS OF CHAOS

A NEW ADVENTURE MODULE
FOR DUNGEONS & DRAGONS 5E



CREATED AND PLAYTESTED BY:
THE GOBLIN LEG GANG @GOBLINDM



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INTRODUCTION

Centuries ago, a powerful Dwarven Wizard became the king of his clan and used his abilities and intellect to expand his people's kingdom. He crafted himself powerful magic items and his influence grew along with his kingdoms borders. But over time, the ravages of war drove him mad and as his power surged, his mind faded. Eventually, he went mad, abandoning his throne and his people and retreating into the mountains. Terrified of his past, he enchanted the path behind him with tricks and traps and riddles and puzzles to prevent his enemies from finding him. His story became a legend and then a myth. What became of the mad Dwarf King and his powerful relics? What stands between today's adventures and those epic and ancient treasures? There's only one way to find out...

RUNNING THIS ADVENTURE

The Caverns of Chaos is an adventure module for the fifth edition of your favourite roleplaying game. The puzzles and riddles and traps and tricks contained here can be included in any existing campaign or adventure. You can pick and choose where and when to use them based on how they fit into your existing story. Or you can use them one at a time when you feel the need to include new challenges for the players to face.

However, you can also run this as a modified dungeon crawl with consecutive rooms of traps, tricks, and riddles all leading to the glorious conclusion and the deserved reward of magic items and treasure. That's how it was originally designed and how it was play-tested prior to release.

If you want to run **The Caverns of Chaos** in this way you can use the **Optional Backstory** and **Adventure Hooks** on **Page Five** to point your characters in the right direction. To

prepare the characters for what's ahead the **Campaign Hook** section on **Page 6** includes an introductory puzzle and a riddle leading the players to the caverns.

Additional riddles are included on **Page 19** and a random encounter table of traps and tricks can also be found on **Page 19**.

Earlier versions of this module were lovingly and hilariously play-tested by Jamie, Drew, Wendy, Rob, Travis, Nick, Sarah, Brad, Camille, and Brett. If you don't like it, blame them. (Just kidding.)

CUSTOMIZATION

Suggestions for modifying this one-shot to suit your players, campaign, or game session are included throughout. Look for the **Make it Yours** text for additional customization suggestions. If you don't like a riddle or trap or treasure item, go ahead and change it. You know better than I what your players enjoy so feel free to alter this adventure as needed!

This adventure can easily be worked into existing Wizards of the Coast adventure modules such as *Tyranny of Dragons*, *Elemental Evil*, *Rage of Demons*, or *Storm King's Thunder*.

TIME AND LENGTH

In play-testing, groups played through **The Caverns of Chaos** from beginning to end over **two 3-hour sessions** (including a full hour to roleplay the amazing finale). That doesn't include the time it took to solve the map puzzle that is in the **Campaign Hooks** section on **Page 6**. Prepare accordingly.

THANKS

A number of the puzzles and riddles included here were modified or amended from posts on the internet over the past decade—message boards, reddit threats, and random websites. Many thanks to tall the other DMs and players and fans (and everyone in between) who have shared their favourite riddles, tricks, and traps on the internet for others to use.

TIPS AND SUGGESTIONS

ENCOURAGE ROLEPLAYING

Some groups may not need the reminder, but it may be beneficial for the DM to encourage players to avoid metagaming as much as possible. Players will enjoy the struggle and the tension—the full effect of being in a locked room with the ceiling slowly descending—a lot more if they roleplay as their characters; they'll also end up making funnier mistakes, coming up with hilarious and absurd solutions, and having a better time if they commit to the roleplaying.

SPECIFIC SKILLS

Some of the puzzles require certain skills, abilities, or components. For example, **Area 11: The Dragon** requires the characters have (or be able to produce on their own) the same effects of the breath weapons of the five chromatic dragons (ice, fire, poison, acid, lightning). If your characters spells, abilities, and magic items don't cover all five, include the missing piece (e.g., a potion of fire breath) as the reward in an earlier room.

PUZZLE FATIGUE

This can be a lot of puzzles for groups that aren't into problem-solving and/or roleplaying. Don't force 12 consecutive puzzle rooms on your players if that's not their style of game. Take your favourite 4 or 5 and turn them into a smaller puzzle dungeon (perhaps the lair of a crazy old mage) or sprinkle the puzzles through your existing campaign.

UNEXPECTED SOLUTIONS

Puzzles are always harder for the players than you think they are. A solution that seems obvious to you will not seem as clear to your players. The first time I ran my players through **Area 5: The Flame**, I thought they would put it together in no time. However, they interpreted the clues in a completely different way and it took them 45 minutes to solve. Have extra hints at the ready in case your players get stuck. And

if they come up with an unexpected solution, congratulate them and allow them to progress.

HOURLASS

Buy a cheap hourglass from your local game store (or dollar store) for **Area 6: The Hourglass**. The tension builds so much more if your players have to physically get up and flip a real, physical hourglass as they try to figure out the solution.

MAKE IT YOURS

Use the *Make it yours* prompts to add your own spin or style to the puzzles in this adventure. If a puzzle needs to be changed so your group will enjoy it more—change it! You know best what your players like and (what you like as a DM). The point is for you to have fun. So change whatever you want or need to in order to make that happen.

OPTIONAL BACKSTORY



Hundreds of years ago a powerful dwarven wizard became king of his clan and used his great power to expand his dwarven kingdom. He crafted for himself a powerful magical weapon: a Warhammer named Red Thunder. This weapon, combined with his intelligence and magical powers rendered even the largest, toughest foes useless. But as his kingdom grew, his mind faded, and he was tormented by flashbacks of war. Eventually, he went mad.

His people suffered his rantings and ravings and he grew more and more reclusive. In his old age, he relinquished his throne and ran off in a manic attempt to escape the atrocities he committed during his years of battle. He fled into a crevasse in a far-away mountain and he enchanted the caves as he passed through them creating a series of trapped rooms and riddles and puzzles to prevent his past (or his enemies) from following him into the deep.

The king's story became a legend, and then a myth, and then finally a fairy tale parents told their children before bed. Only a few generations ago, did a few foolish men search out the truth behind the story. Hints and riddles and stories spread and a handful of brash treasure hunters sought it out. But none ever returned.

RED THUNDER

Red Thunder is a +2 Warhammer made of rust-coloured metal and has dwarven runes carved on all sides. It has a red leather loop wrist strap. On a hit, a magical shockwave erupts from the point of contact knocking prone any other hostile creatures within 10 feet.

***Make it yours:** The dwarven hammer can be replaced with any magical weapon or item that suits your characters and/or campaign. If you want to be a dick, you can have the stories of the great weapon be a red herring and give your players nothing but resentment at the end of the quest. The choice is yours!*

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Your players may not need a strong hook to seek out a cavern full of death traps. If they do need some motivation (or if you want to make this adventure a simple side-quest), use one of the following adventure hooks. If you want to weave the story of **The Caverns of Chaos** into your existing campaign, use the more elaborate **Campaign Hook** section on **Page 6** (which includes additional riddles and puzzles).

***Make it yours:** If these adventure hooks don't work for your group, go ahead and make up your own! Maybe one of your players is a descendent of the mad Dwarf king; maybe one of the players grew up in the mountains around the caverns and always wanted to find out if the rumours of treasure were true...*

A) A LANDSLIDE BROUGHT IT DOWN

Word spreads of a landslide in the mountains that revealed a long-lost cave of wonders. The Caverns of Chaos used to be a fable, a tale parents would tell their children. But apparently, they're real. And now you know where they are.

B) A PRINCELY FAVOUR

A Dwarven Prince comes to your town seeking able-bodied men. His great-grandfather was a Wizard king driven mad by war who fled his kingdom to entomb himself beneath a mountain. Unfortunately, he took much of his people's treasure with him. The Prince has located an entrance to the legendary tomb but needs seasoned heroes to get in and out alive.

C) THE LURE OF TREASURE

A mercenary arrives in town with a magical shield that hovers without the use of hands. He claims to have pilfered it from a tomb beneath a mountain. He nearly died exploring the caverns but he says that even more treasure can be found if someone else is brave (or stupid) enough to try.

CAMPAIGN HOOK

If you want to work **The Caverns of Chaos** into your existing campaign as an awesome/terrifying adventure, you can have a LOT more fun with your characters. In our campaign, the hook for this quest was a two-parter that included riddles and puzzles and a strange pyramid key required to enter the mines.

STEP 1: THE PYRAMID

Have the characters find, purchase, inherit, or win the object that kicks everything off: a 10-inch tall, **Jade Pyramid** (with the proportions of a classic metronome). Around the four bottom edges of the pyramid is a four-part phrase written in dwarvish:

*Blind the eyes / Burn the knees
Find the tree / With golden leaves*

If the characters ask around, a few people might have heard of a tree with golden leaves deep in the mountains somewhere.

STEP 2: THE MAP

If any of the players make a DC 20 Investigation check, they notice a seam near the bottom and can slide the base of the pyramid to the side. This reveals a hollow space inside where a piece of rolled-up parchment is hidden. The parchment is covered in lines and shapes that somewhat resemble a map as well as symbols and a few riddles. The solution to this puzzle is to fold the paper over itself in just the right way so the two riddles merge. Doing so reveals the true, hidden message which reveals how to get into the mines. See the *Making the Map* section below for instructions.

STEP 3: THE TUNNEL

With directions from some NPCs and a bit of searching/tracking, the characters can find a golden tree at the base of a mountain not far from a cold, still lake reflecting the peaks around it. Saying the secret word/phrase (see the *Making the Map* section below) opens a passage through the trees giant roots. They must crawl

through a narrow, descending tunnel. Not even magical light can illuminate the tunnel as they crawl. Make it seem longer than necessary, dark, cramped, and claustrophobic.

STEP 4: THE ENTRANCE.

Eventually, the characters get to a small chamber with a solid granite door. In the middle of the door is a strange square hole—a space in which to insert the pyramid. Once they insert the jade pyramid, the door opens and the true chaos finally begins...

OPTIONAL HINT A

The stone wall next to the door could have a series of random phrases carved into it. In our campaign, the words were in thieves cant, written by past adventurers who dared brave the caverns. Hidden amongst a series of nonsensical phrases was a list of twelve items: a mirror, a book, a spear, a crown, a flame, an hourglass, a lock, a bear, a cloud, a coin, a dragon, a skull. This list foreshadowed the twelve puzzles, traps, and tricks that made up the dungeon beyond giving the players a way to gauge progress and subtle hints about what to expect.

OPTIONAL HINT B

If you're feeling generous (and/or if your characters seem overly worried) you can include additional tips or hints from past adventurers. Maybe one says: "Don't open the chest." Or something like: "Be careful with the braziers."

MAKING THE MAP

The map is a physical puzzle you can make and give to your players. You can use the riddle below or create your own. Either way, this is how to make the infuriatingly clever folding map puzzle. You can view a finished version of this riddle map here: <https://twitter.com/GoblinDM/status/701198267070046208>

STEP 1: RHYME TIME

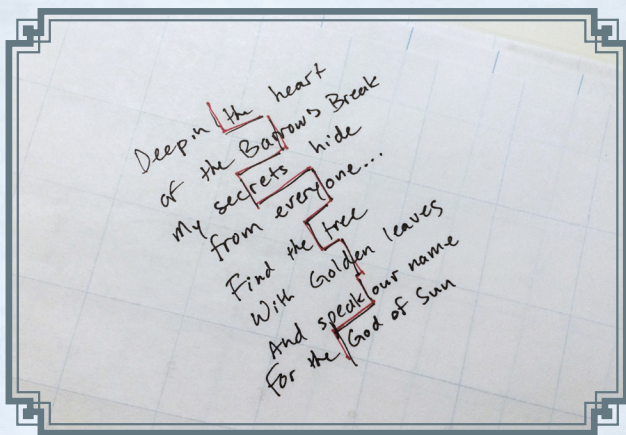
Write a riddle or rhyme that leads the characters to the secret phrase required to find the tunnel beneath the golden tree. Feel free to use the rhyme provided below. It references the god Pelor and a made-up mountain range (The Barrow's Break) but you can adjust it to suit your campaign's pantheon and geography.

*Deep in the heart of the Barrow's Break
My secrets hide from everyone
Find the tree with golden leaves
And speak our name for the God of Sun*

STEP 2: HALF & HALF

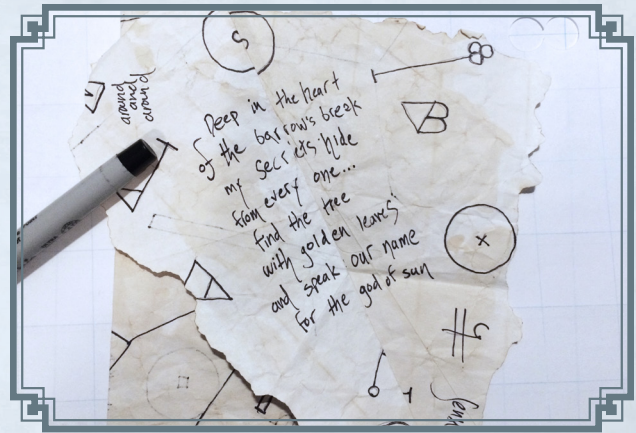
Draw a line down the middle of the rhyming riddle splitting it in two. (Using the spaces between words is easiest.) Re-write the left half and add a few words **at the end** of each line to make a new, misleading riddle. Take the right half and add a few words **at the beginning** of each line to make a second misleading riddle.

STEP 3: FOLD AND UNFOLD



Take a new piece of paper and fold it twice—once over on itself and then once back the other way (see image below). Write the original riddle along the seam with the two halves separated by the edge of the fold. Then, unfold the paper and add in the extra words you came up with for each to make the two misleading riddles.

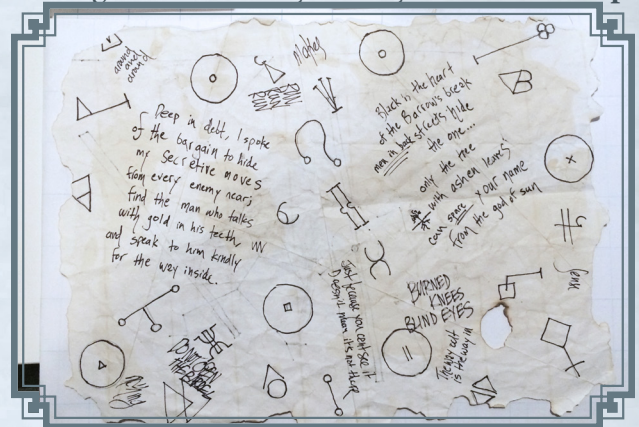
STEP 4: MISDIRECTION



Add random lines and symbols all over. Include random phrases and extra riddles. Burn the edges. Spill tea on it to make it look aged. Do whatever you want to make it look cool! Then, fold it over and over a bunch more to disguise the correct folding pattern. You should end up with something like the image below. When folded correctly, it will reveal the secret riddle.

OPTIONAL HINT

Among the lines and symbols you added in **Step**



Four, you can also feel free to add shapes or symbols that line up perfectly when the map is folded correctly. They may not realize they need to line up the two riddles, but they may notice two identical symbols that can be aligned. In the image above you will see circles above each of the two misleading riddles that lines up perfectly when the map is folded correctly. (All the other symbols and shapes only appear once.)

THE CAVERNS OF CHAOS

Each puzzle, trap, or trick is set up as a room or a hallway to make it easy to incorporate them into existing dungeons in your campaign.

Each entry includes read-aloud text to describe the encounter as well as objectives, solutions, and/or hints to help you understand each puzzle and resolve the outcome for each. Remember, you want the players to struggle but you also want them to succeed. If they come up with a clever solution not included below, call it a win and let them progress.

AREA 1: THE MIRROR

This is a simple warm-up puzzle to get the characters into problem-solving mode. If it takes them longer than five minutes to figure this out, start offering hints.

You walk into a circular room with stone walls and a bare, flat stone ceiling. The room is dark and completely empty. The door closes behind you.

Once the characters light a torch or a lantern (or use magical light), they can see that the back of the door they just passed through is a single, solid mirror.

The way out of the room is magically hidden. An exit passage opposite the door is enchanted. It can only be seen and used by looking at its reflection in the mirror on the opposite side of the room. When standing directly in front of the mirror, players can see an open, dimly lit passage immediately behind them on the opposite wall. If any player turns to face the passage (or ignores the mirror and just looks around), all they see is a stone wall.

OBJECTIVE

Figure out how to get to the next chamber.

SOLUTION

In order to exit through the passage, the party must walk backward one at a time through the enchantment while looking at the mirror ahead of them.

ALTERNATE SOLUTION

If someone casts dispel magic on the area where the enchanted passage is magically hidden, they can make an Arcana (Intelligence) check or an ability check using their spellcasting ability. The DC is 13. On a success, the enchantment ends and the passage can be seen and used normally.

AREA 2: THE BOOK

This is just a riddle, nothing more than that. If your players are smarter than the average bear, add unnecessary details when you describe the room to serve as red herrings—jewels for the statue's eyes or sections of the floor that look worn or discoloured.

The passage leads into a small square room (20 feet x 20 feet) with smooth carved stone walls. Its shape is nearly a perfect cube. On the far wall, a passageway leading deeper into the dungeon is blocked by a heavy iron portcullis. An intricate 5 foot tall stone statue of a Dwarf stands in the middle of the room. It holds a stone carving of an open book.

The stone book the statue is holding has words carved into it in dwarvish. Anyone who can read dwarvish sees a four-line riddle.

*I can run but never walk
I have a mouth but never talk
I have a head but never weep
I have a bed but never sleep*

SOLUTION

The answer is the word: river. Once someone speaks that word in dwarvish, the portcullis grinds and lifts. If no players speak dwarvish... oh well.

OPTIONAL HINT

If the group are clever or cast a useful spell, you can have a hint appear on the dragon's stone book. Have the hint reference the name of a river in your campaign world. For example, in our campaign, a major city sits on the banks of the Red River, so the hint that appeared was: "IT IS RED."

Make it yours: Feel free to choose a more difficult riddle (or an easier one) depending on your group. You can find additional riddles to choose from on Page 19.



AREA 3: THE SPEAR

This is another classic D&D trap. It consists of an open pit that looks like it can be jumped... except it can't.

Beyond the portcullis is a long, dark hallway about 10 feet wide and 10 feet high. About 100 feet down the hallway you see a gap in the stone floor—a vicious looking pit trap that extends from wall to wall.

Once they get closer and look, the players can see gleaming metal spikes covering the bottom of the pit which is about 30 feet deep. The distance to jump across is about 15 feet—you want a few to be players able to jump it but not all of them. Check the players' Strength stats beforehand and adjust the pit size accordingly.

There's lot's of room to get a running start for those players who are able to jump it. Unfortunately, the beginning of the hallway on the far side of the pit is blocked by a floor-to-ceiling slab of magical glass. Only a DC 25 Perception check can spot the subtle shimmering refraction of the glass.

DEVELOPMENT

Anyone who attempts the jump hits the glass and falls onto the spikes taking 2d10 piercing damage and 2d6 falling damage. If you're feeling mean, you can make the spikes at the bottom poisoned requiring a DC 15 Constitution saving throw (taking 2d6 poison damage on a fail or half as much on a success).

SOLUTION

If (or once) they see the glass, it can be broken or destroyed fairly easily. The glass has AC 12 and HP 25 and is resistant to non-magical damage. Players who succeed on a DC 25 Athletics (Strength) check can find purchase on the rough stone walls and climb across spiderman-style.

AREA 4: THE CROWN

This is an old logic problem known as the eight queens problem. It can be easy enough to solve by trial and error so we need to dissuade that process (with damage) and push the players towards critical thinking.

The hallway eventually leads to a massive square room—at least three times bigger than the one with the dragon statue. The walls are probably 60 feet apart and the middle of the room is occupied by a massive grid carved into the floor—eight squares by eight squares, each about 5 feet wide. Each of the four corners of the room has two stone plinths, the tops of which are jagged and peaked—stylized to look like crowns.

The eight stone crowns statues are about 2 feet tall. They are heavy but can be lifted and carried with a DC 10 Athletics (Strength) check. Each is inscribed with an identical rhyming riddle along its base:

*Eight jealous queens
ruled over an ancient isle.
Strife and war spread,
battles stretched for miles.
A wise man came to guide them
and caused their wars to cease.
Divided out eight kingdoms,
where each could rule in peace.*

OBJECTIVE

This puzzle is based on the game of chess, specifically the movement of the queens—a straight line vertically, horizontally, or diagonally as far as they like (or until it reaches another piece). You can have the characters roll Intelligence (History) checks to recall the rules of this game. The goal is to arrange the eight stone crowns (the eight “queens”) in a pattern so that no two queens can attack the other with their movement.

OPTIONAL HINT

If you like, you can give your players a piece of paper to draw out a grid and eight tokens, miniatures, or cookies to represent the queens. Have them take turns placing queens on squares one at a time.

TRAP

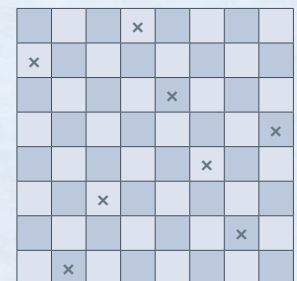
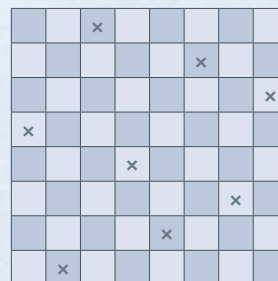
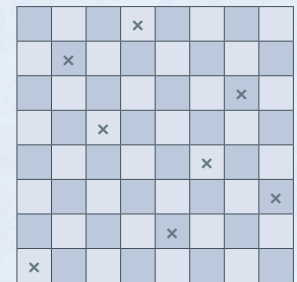
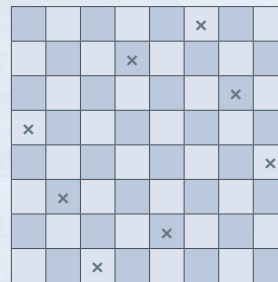
If a player places a queen in the path of another, a magical shock wave from the earlier-placed piece is aimed at the character knocking them (and the incorrectly-placed piece) off the board. Have the player roll a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw taking 4d6 force damage on a fail or half as much on a success.

If you're feeling cruel, you can have the players take additional damage for moving an already-placed piece. Four potential solutions are included below.

SOLUTION

There are various ways to correctly arrange the pieces and solve the riddle. You can search “eight queens puzzle” on the internet or just watch and double-check each player's placement one by one.

SAMPLE SOLUTIONS



AREA 5: THE FLAME

This room is a puzzle that can be solved either by trial and error (which may result in some damage from magical traps) or by making sense of the symbols and piecing together clues.

You enter a medium-sized rectangular room with four braziers lined up in a row. Torches hang on the opposite wall but there seems to be no other exit. There are burn marks on the wall and loose bits of rock and rubble strewn across the floor. And as you step in and start looking around, the door you came through slams shut and locks with a loud clanking sound followed by an eerie whoosh of air from behind the door. Below the torches, carved into the wall opposite you, is a dwarven phrase: ‘To go forward, you must return. To go back, the air must burn.’

On either side of the door the group came through are two round alabaster stones set into the wall—four in total. Each has a different symbol carved into it.

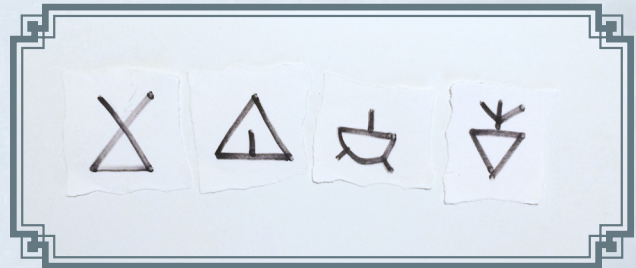
Investigating the braziers reveals that each has a symbol embossed on the iron bottom beneath coals and half-burned dry wood. The symbols on the braziers are the same as the symbols on the four round stones but they don’t line up and aren’t in the same order.

If a player succeeds on a DC 20 History check (DC 10 if they are a Druid, Ranger, or Dwarf), they can recognize the symbols as those representing the four elemental planes: fire, air, earth, water. You can hand out pieces of paper with the symbols on them (to stand in for the four stones on the wall).

The stones have AC 10 and HP 5. Crushing or cracking or destroying them releases a hint of the element associated with the symbol (e.g., a puff of wind, a spark of fire).

SOLUTION

The goal is to (a) figure out which symbol represents air and then (b) light the brazier with the air symbol (thus making the “air” burn as the riddle suggests). Doing so causes the door they came through to re-open but to a different looking hallway leading them further into the dungeon. The symbols below represent (from left to right) water, earth, fire, and air.



OPTIONAL HINT

If the players need a hint (or succeed on a DC 20 Investigation check) inform them that the four round stones set in the wall are alabaster—a notoriously soft, breakable type of stone—and are also faintly magical (School of Evocation).

TRAP

If the players light either of the other three braziers (water, earth, fire) by mistake or by trying to solve the puzzle through a process of elimination, the following effects happen:

Fire brazier: A fireball erupts from the brazier. Players must make a DC 15 Dexterity Saving Throw taking 4d6 fire damage on a fail or half as much on a success.

Earth brazier: The room shakes and dozens of stone bricks fall out of the ceiling. Make a DC 15 Dexterity Saving Throw. On a fail, players take 4d6 bludgeoning damage and are knocked prone. On a success, they take half damage.

Water brazier: Water floods out of the brazier and slowly fills the room. The players have two minutes to plan ways to breathe underwater. The room stays full of water for 1d6 minutes and then slowly empties dousing any remaining torches on the wall. See Page 183 of the Players Handbook for rules on suffocating.

AREA 6: THE HOURGLASS

Variations on this puzzle have been used in many different RPGs and video games. It's a cruel, simple classic that is best put in the middle of other puzzles and riddles—once the players are sufficiently paranoid.

You enter a large dimly-lit room. You can barely make out the size and shape. In the middle is a dark figure—a stone statue of a dragon reared up on its hind feet and holding a wooden hourglass placed upon its outstretched hands. Above the statue, built into the ceiling is a circular opening with an iron-barred grate. Beyond the statue are three open passageways leading into darkness.

As soon as the players are in the room and head towards one of the doors, all three portcullis' on the far wall slam shut and the sand in the hourglass starts running. As it runs out, a hissing sound coming from the grate above the statue grows louder and louder and louder...

OPTIONAL HINT

If the players investigate the statue or the hourglass a DC 10 Investigation or Perception check notices that the hourglass is separate from the statue—it's chained to the statue but it can be grabbed and flipped over. The players can keep flipping it over while they try to figure out what's going on.

OPTIONAL HINT

The hissing noise corresponds to the amount of sand remaining. (As the hourglass runs out, the sound gets louder; when they flip the hourglass, it gets softer to correspond with the amount of sand flowing down.) If you can, get a real hourglass from your local game store so your players are in charge of resetting the clock as they try to figure out a solution.

SOLUTION

The three portcullis gate doors only open when they let the hourglass run out. One of the doors leads to a hallway that goes further into the mountain. The other two open to small dark rooms with treasure chests containing uncommon magic items (which may help them in **Area 11**). Other than panicked shouting and searching, nothing bad happens to them here.

AREA 7: THE LOCK

This room provides an opportunity for the group's Rogue to stand out (or fail miserably). If the group doesn't have a rogue, you can have the group find some old, used lock picks by the door for the characters to use.

The hall widens into a large round room 60 feet in diameter. Unlike the other rooms, the walls are intricately carved into an ancient battle scene of dwarves fighting off a horde of skeletons. The frieze wraps around the entire room except for the only exit: a massive and elaborate door made of iron and thick wooden beams.

The door looks as complex as it is ornate. Running across it horizontally are three thick bands made of strange jet-black metal. Each has a detailed and ornamental lock in the centre. The way they are lined up means that they can only be picked one at a time (the person picking one lock is in the way of anyone trying to pick a different lock).

As soon as a PC starts picking the locks, a blast of magic energy shoots through the black metal bands and into the walls encircling the room. It ricochets around a few times, slowly fading as a loud rumbling sound grows and grows. Slowly, the skeletons in the walls come alive. Have the players roll initiative. 2d4 skeletons come alive per turn and attack the



party trying to prevent the door from being opened. The other players have to defend the lock-picker in order to escape.

If your players are smart and investigate the locks first, a DC 15 Arcana check reveals a magical ward that can be dispelled. Casting *Dispel Magic* (DC 15) can remove the magical ward and prevent the skeletons from animating as the locks are picked.

Make it yours: You can make this encounter harder or easier depending on the size of your group and/or the character's levels. You could also change skeletons to gargoyles or stone golems if you are feeling especially cruel.

OBJECTIVE

The skeletons try to attack or pull away the player picking the locks and the others have to defend whoever is trying to open the door.

SOLUTION

You can give the locks whatever DC you feel is fair. I had three locks of varying difficulty (DC 10, DC 15, DC 20). When the final lock is picked, another blast of magic emanates from the metal bands in the door—this time disintegrating any remaining skeletons.

AREA 8: THE BEAR

Another tried and true trap that some players will expect—but it's a classic that's still really cool so it doesn't really matter if one or two players have seen it before.

You walk down a long narrow hallway about 5 feet wide. After about 50 feet you see shining in the distance a haphazard collection of dozens of bear traps set with their sharp metal teeth shining.

There's a large patch of dozens of traps covering the width of the hallway for about 25 feet—big enough that trying to long jump across them should seem risky. They all look like normal bear traps (they are, for the most part).

However, triggering one of the traps triggers them all. When this happens, they all snap shut at once and trigger a trap door in the ceiling 30 feet back in the hallway (behind the players). Out of the trap door falls a very angry and very hungry giant polar bear. (You can find Polar Bear stats on Page 334 of the *Monster Manual*.)

SOLUTION

Once defeated, the bear turns into an Ivory Bear figurine. (See Page 169 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for details.)

AREA 9: THE CLOUD

This one doesn't really have anything to do with clouds. It's more of an airlock. This is another trap that is more about causing terror than inflicting damage.

The hallway continues and winds further and deeper into the mountain. After a quarter-mile, it eventually leads to a door that seems to be airtight and made of thick, dark iron—it looks nearly indestructible. But it's unlocked and opens with a hissing sound of released air.

Inside is a square, barren room. There are bloody splatters and scrapes and gouges on the walls. There is also a small square depression in the middle of the floor—four feet on each side and only about a foot deep.

On the far wall, there is an identical door to the one they came in. The party cannot open the other door in any way. Most spells seem to fail and any Arcana checks reveal an old, lingering anti-magic field covering the entire room.

OPTIONAL HINT

This trap doesn't begin until the door they came through is closed. If the players seem confused as to why nothing is happening, remind them that the door behind them is open.

When they close the first door (most likely to see if the second door opens), it locks with an audible ka-chunk. A faint hissing sound can be heard above the metal ceiling—a ceiling which slowly begins to descend!

The ceiling keeps moving down slowly until it gets to a foot off the ground. It smashes through any objects used to prevent its descent (or sends them flying across the room as they give out beneath the force of the wall). If the players are clever, they can stall or slow the ceiling temporarily to buy them some time. But like

other traps in this module, the goal isn't to kill the players—it's to confuse and terrorize them.

OBJECTIVE

Survive... And try not to turn on each other while deciding who gets to hide in the depression in the floor.

SOLUTION

The ceiling keeps descending until it's a foot off the ground—most likely forcing everyone to lie down flat or cower in the depression in the floor. At that point, it stops with a clunk and then slowly goes back up. When it reaches the top, the second door opens with a hissing sound of released air.



AREA 10: THE COIN

This is, perhaps, the most hilariously cruel trap of the bunch. It's also the most likely to escalate and overwhelm the party. If they get this wrong or are unlucky with their rolls, there is a legitimate risk of character death. For that reason, I left a hint (from a survivor of the caves) scratched into the stone at the start of the dungeon: "Don't open the chest."

An odd, winding, and narrow passage eventually leads to a small, square room about 15 feet by 15 feet. There is an open passageway set into the far wall and a large ornate, and finely crafted chest placed in the centre of the room.

The chest has no lock. If the players open the chest, portcullises slam shut blocking the entrance and exit. This traps players either inside or outside of the room.

As soon as the lid swings open, waves of hostile monkeys begin pouring out of the chest and attacking the players. Each round the number of monkeys emerging increases. Turning the chest over does nothing. The room should eventually fill with enchanted monkeys after 4 or 5 rounds of combat.

Make it yours: *You can have fewer monkeys that are harder to destroy (higher AC and/or HP) or you can have many monkeys that are easy to destroy (low AC and/or HP). I prefer the latter—very few things make me happier than the mental image of a group of heroes drowning in a sea of magical monkeys as a result of greed, curiosity, and/or foolishness. Feel free to balance the encounter according to the size and level of your party (or don't and just see what happens).*

OPTIONAL HINT

If the players are struggling or panicking, let them roll some kind of check to realize that putting the lid back on is in their best interest.

SOLUTION A

Closing the lid stops the flow of enchanted monkeys. A DC 25 Athletics (Strength) check will let them slam the lid back onto it. The player closing the lid can roll with advantage if another player is helping to close the chest.

SOLUTION B

Alternately, the whole trap can simply be avoided or ignored. Detecting magic in the room reveals overwhelming conjuration magic on the chest and its contents.

SOLUTION C

The chest can also be destroyed. It has AC 15 and HP 50. It's vulnerable to fire and resistant to non-magical damage.

DEVELOPMENT

Once the chest is either closed or destroyed, the two portcullis' open on either side of the room allowing any surviving characters to continue to the next terrifying area.

AREA 11: THE DRAGON

As mentioned in the introduction, this puzzle requires the players to have access to (or the ability to conjure or create) the five types of damage associated with chromatic dragons.

The tunnel begins to ascend and eventually turns into stairs. At the top is a long finely carved hall that ends at a stone door with a dragon carved into it. The dragon's mouth is open and a great tongue reaches out as if to take a bite of its prey.

The dragon's tongue is a lever that opens the door when it is pressed down. The door only remains open for a moment and then closes itself with a thud.

The room beyond is a large hexagon. The interior of the door has no handle or way of re-opening it. Each of the five walls (other than the one with the door) is dominated by a huge stone carving of a dragon with an open mouth. Each carving is eerily lifelike and painted to resemble one of the five chromatic dragons. The paint is old and flaking off but you can make out the intended colours: all five are represented.

An Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that the dragons were carved to appear mid-breath attack. Additionally, there is a tiny hole in the stone at the very back of each one's mouth.

It might seem like the dragon heads are parts of a trap that will attack the party. However, they are actually part of a complicated puzzle.

SOLUTION

The players have to put the responding element/energy (acid or fire or ice) in the correct dragon's mouth through the use of magic or potions or ingenuity. Once they correctly 'feed' a dragon, the eyes of that statue glow bright yellow.

Red Dragon:	FIRE
Blue Dragon:	LIGHTNING
Black Dragon:	ACID
White Dragon:	COLD/ICE
Green Dragon:	POISON

TRAP

If they use the wrong element for any of the dragon heads, the eyes unleash a wave of necromantic energy, casting the spell *Blight* on the nearest player (see Page 219 of the *Players Handbook*).

DEVELOPMENT

Once the fifth and final dragon statue has been fed the correct type of energy, the floor beneath the players gives out and they begin falling through darkness toward the grand finale...

AREA 12: THE SKULL

The players fall through darkness and pass, unaware, through a portal leading to a pocket dimension conjured by the mad dwarf king himself. This is his final and most cruel puzzle. You will need to prepare five note cards to hand to the players (see *The Cards* section below). Players can only escape from the pocket dimension by dying or being killed within it. The more real (or intense) their surroundings seem, the more engaging this encounter will be—so ramp up the tension as you set the stage.

You fall through darkness for what seems like an impossibly long time. It takes a moment to realize, but there's no rush of wind. In fact, you can't feel anything except the eerie sensation of falling, falling, falling. You lose your bearings and lose sight of your companions. In the distance, you see faint shapes—faraway clouds shifting in odd directions. Finally, for just a split second, there is a blinding flash of light and seconds later you land with a thud on what feels like hard stone. You feel intense, pulsing heat all around you as your vision slowly returns.

Have the players roll Wisdom Saving Throws. Give the cards out in the following order from the lowest Wisdom Saving Throw to the highest.

If you want to add an extra level of confusion, have them also roll Dexterity Saving Throws and make it seem like the cards are being given out based on those rolls (rather than the Wisdom rolls). The more confusion the better!

THE CARDS

Each card contains information that pits one player's objective against that of another. Encourage your players to stay in character as much as possible and roleplay the entire encounter. Then give out the cards and continue describing the scene.

You can omit Card E if your group only has four players. If you have more than five players, make duplicates of Card E.

Card A: As the flash of light fades, you see a vision of yourself that you completely trust. It says: "You are trapped by a demon in an alternate dimension. The only way out is death. In order to survive in the real world, you and your friends must die in this one."

Card B: As the flash of light fades, you see a vision of yourself that you completely trust. It says: "There is a shadow among you. An imposter is in your midst. It will try to kill you and your friends. It has lured you here to your deaths. If there is to be any hope of escape, you must kill it before it kills you."

Card C: As the flash of light fades, you see a vision of yourself that you completely trust. It says: "The figure of a demon sits on the other side of the bridge. But do not be fooled by this illusion. It is no demon. It is the god Pelor, trapped here by a powerful wizard gone mad. Only Pelor can free you from this fiery cavern, but you must free him first."

Card D: As the flash of light fades, you see a vision of yourself that you completely trust. It says: "A demon sits chained to a throne on the other side of this bridge. He is an evil king from the Abyss imprisoned in this fiery plane by a powerful dwarven wizard. Do not let anyone free the demon—even if it costs you your life. He will unleash hell on the world you love after killing you and your friends."

Card E: You are unconscious. Count to 30, then you can join the others. Act as your character normally would after waking up in a strange and terrifying magical cavern completely surrounded by boiling lava.

You are all lying dazed and confused in the middle of a mostly-round platform about 50 feet in diameter. It's surrounded on all sides by bubbling, belching lava. The heat is oppressive, almost painful. From one side of the platform, a rickety rope bridge with old wooden slats leads into the distance. Whatever waits on the other side is obscured by smoke and shimmering waves of painfully intense heat.

Visibility is only about 60 feet so the players can't see any walls or ceiling, just the lava, the platform, and the beginning of the rope bridge.

The rope bridge is 200 feet long. At the far side is another platform of about the same size as the first. But this one has a massive Balor demon chained to an equally massive iron throne.

Make it yours: *Feel free to pick another kind of monster that ties in with the theme or story of your campaign. Since the only way out is for players to start dying, the stronger the monster, the more terrifying this will seem.*

The chains have AC 20 and 10 HP. The chains can also be pulled apart and broken with a DC 25 Strength check.

The bridge has AC 10 and four supporting ropes. The wooden slats are old and weak. Each time the bridge takes damage from any kind of weapon (intentional or accidental) one of the four ropes snaps and gives out. As the ropes snap, traversing the bridge becomes challenging and requires increasingly difficult Athletics (Strength) or Acrobatics (Dexterity) checks.

Traversing the rope bridge:

Four ropes:	DC 10
Three ropes:	DC 15
Two ropes:	DC 20
One rope:	DC 25

At this point, you can run the encounter as you would any other. Let the players roleplay and talk and argue amongst themselves. If a fight or a chase breaks out, have them all roll initiative.

If the demon is freed, have it attack them. If the bridge is destroyed (or if you need to force an end to the encounter), have the platforms start breaking apart and/or floating away and/or sinking into the lava.

I have run variations of this encounter with three different D&D groups. Each time it was completely different from the others. Make sure all the players have an equal chance to talk and act (and shout and panic). Embrace and encourage the unexpected.

SOLUTION

Dying or getting killed in the pocket dimension.

DEVELOPMENT

Whoever dies in the pocket dimension awakens on cold, wet stone in a dark cavern near a subterranean lake. Keep track of who dies/escapes first. Once everyone has died in the pocket dimension, let the players awaken one by one in the dark cavern. The first characters to have died are the first to explore.

THE MAD KING

Sitting on a simple throne 50 feet away is a dwarf holding a hammer and wearing a simple silver crown. He is calm, tired, and speaks with a whispery, deep voice. He's been alone in these caverns so long that he's forgotten his own name.

He tells the players he is dying and has no qualms about giving up his treasure—no one else has ever made it this far. “You have earned these,” he tells the players. He then hands them a rust-coloured Warhammer and gestures to a small wooden chest next to his throne.

TREASURE

The Warhammer is Red Thunder (see **Page Five** of this booklet for stats). The chest contains 3500 GP, 7000 SP, three *Potions of Greater Healing*, and three emeralds each worth 250 GP.

***Make it yours:** You can replace the Warhammer with any magic item(s) from the *Dungeons Master's Guide*. Or you can create your own magic item or make the treasure simply gold and gems and valuable art objects. Or you can give them an enchanted chest full of monkeys!!*

EXITING THE CAVERNS

When the players are done, the Mad King conjures a whirlpool in the underground lake. He tells the players to jump in (or he magically hurls them in if they refuse or act belligerent).

The players are sucked underwater and swept through a long tunnel by the current of rushing water. If you're feeling mean, have them get battered against the side of the stone tunnels.

Eventually, they are thrust upwards. The water starts to fade to a lighter blue before they finally surface in the middle of a lake. On its edge, about a hundred feet away, they can see a beautiful and familiar tree with golden leaves.



BONUS CONTENT

But wait! There's more! Below you will find a custom Random Trap Table (similar to a random encounter table). If you don't want to run *The Caverns of Chaos* as a self-contained dungeon crawl, you can use the table below to randomly add the twelve trapped rooms and puzzles from this module to any other dungeon or side quest in your campaign.

Also included is a list of additional riddles which you can use either in your home games or to replace riddles used in this module. Excelsior!

RANDOM TRAP TABLE

Roll a d20 and consult the table below. Entries with an asterisk can be found on Pages 122–123 of the Dungeon Master's Guide.

d20	Trap, Trick, Puzzle, or Riddle
1	The Mirror (see Page 8)
2	The Book (see Page 8)
3	The Spear (see Page 9)
4	The Crown (see Page 10)
5	The Flame (see Page 11)
6	The Hourglass (see Page 12)
7	The Lock (see Page 12)
8	The Bear (see Page 13)
9	The Cloud (see Page 14)
10	The Coin (see Page 15)
11	The Dragon (see Page 15)
12	The Skull (see Page 16)
13	Fire-Breathing Statue*
14	Falling Net*
15	Collapsing Roof*
16	Hidden Pit*
17	Locking Pit*
18	Spiked Pit*
19	Poison Darts*
20	Poison Needle*

EXTRA RIDDLES

Where I come from, riddles are more than convoluted little word puzzles. The memorable ones have structure, they rhyme (or almost rhyme) and the solutions are simple and straightforward concepts or objects.

*I have tongues but cannot taste
When I'm fed I grow with haste
Like you I need air to survive
But give me water and I'll die*
(Fire)

*The more you take
The more you leave behind
Almost all the same
But not at the same time*
(Footsteps)

*You can know me, You can share me
You can keep me, But not wear me*
(Secret)

*I'm with you in the day
I leave you in the night
I hide from skies of grey
I linger near the light*
(Shadow)

*The one who bought it doesn't need it
The one who needs it doesn't see it
The one who sees it stands beside
And walks with others matching stride*
(Coffin)

*I touch the earth, I touch the sky
If we touch, you might just die*
(Lightning)

*I can fall from the highest heights
And land without a scratch
But I hate to touch the water
And fear a burning match*
(Paper)