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NASHKA'S LAIR

by Erin Bisson

A Classic Edition Compatible Adventure for a Party of 3 to 5, Levels 1–2



Another day, another adventure, another swarm of orcs breaking off to start a rival tribe. Nashka's swarm, though admittedly small, has found an abandoned dwarven redoubt to hole up in while they prepare to recruit—and a useful source of slave labour. Now he's been raiding other dungeons and preparing to make inroads against the local thorps . . .

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by Erin Bisson

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compiled, edited, and further embellished
by Matthew W. Schmeer

A Classic Edition Compatible Adventure
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originally developed on Erin Bisson's blog:
A Hamsterish Hoard of Dungeons and Dragons
<http://hamsterhoard.blogspot.com>

DM's Background

Orc tribes fission off smaller swarms and splinter tribes with almost predictable regularity; some old wags even claim that one can predict the harshness of an upcoming winter by how many sub-tribes begin to sprout like misborn, tusked weeds.

Nashka's band, however, is not the usual dissenting swarm. Nashka himself—an orc of demonic breeding and surprising intelligence—has every intention of returning to the tribe that spawned him, to throw down the ruling shaman and warlord and raise the bloody banner of an orcish horde across the countryside. But first he needs to fortify his own position and gather power, and unlike his duller kin Nashka's plans involve the pillaging of ancient ruins and magical redoubts.

Luck has been on the sorcerer-orc's side so far. His first potential stronghold was indefensible, but riddled with a colony of the strange sapient fungus known as **Cepes**; once enough of the fungus-men were put to the sword, one of the corpses finally began the transmutation into a mother growth. Nashka removed the growth-to-be and transferred it to the abandoned dwarven waypost that now serves as his base of operations; dull cepes may be, but there are no better willing slaves and the mother growth will produce them as fast as they might need replacing.

For the moment Nashka is sending messengers to other orc swarms, and has even made overtures to a small hobgoblin tribe (fully expecting to enslave them all when the chance presents itself). Once he feels he is ready, the true reason for his choosing the isolated waypost will make itself clear as he breaches the bindings on the **Khanabit** he has discovered bound within. Willful and proud, Nashka has no doubt that he can get the better of the Iron Judge

Random Encounter Table (1d12)

1–2: 1–3 Giant Rats

[AC7; HD 1/2; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1 (bite); Dmg 1d3 + disease; Save NM; ML 8; XPV 5]

3: 1 Elite Orc

[AC4; HD 1+2; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1 (sword or spear); Dmg 1d8 or 1d6; Save F1; ML 8; XPV 15]

4–5: 1–3 Cepes

[AC6; HD 1-1; MV 90' (30'); #AT 2 claws; Dmg 1d3/1d3; Save F1; ML 6; XPV 5]

6–7: 2–4 Orcs

[AC5; HD 1; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1 (spear); Dmg 1d6; Save F1; ML 8; XPV 10]

8–9: 2–5 Cepes

[AC6; HD 1-1; MV 90' (30'); #AT 2 (claws); Dmg 1d3/1d3; Save F1; ML 6; XPV 5]

10: 1–2 Fire Beetles

[AC4; HD 1+2; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1(bite); Dmg 2d8; Save F1; ML 7; XPV 15]

11: 1–2 Hobgoblins

[AC6; HD 1+1; MV 90' (30'); #AT 1 (spear or shortbow); Dmg 1d6; Save F1; ML 8; XPV 15]

12: 1 Elite Orc

[AC4; HD 1+2; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1 (sword or spear); Dmg 1d8 or 1d6; Save F1; ML 8; XPV 15]

Nashka's Lair

1. Entrance Hall

After navigating the brief corridor leading to this room and passing the door (locked with a still-functioning dwarven mechanism), the chamber widens out into a 30' x 30' chamber littered with crumbled pillars and loose stone. To the north lies an open archway, and the southwest corner is marked with a door.

In this chamber are two **Orc** guards. Four **Cepes**, currently clearing the stone for their masters. The Cepes are ordered to attack, joined by one Orc while the second attempts to head for the main hall to stir the swarm.

2 Orc Guards: AC5; HD 1; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1 (spear); Dmg 1d6; Save F1; ML 8; XPV 10

HP
 8
 6

Treas.: 12 cp; 14 cp, and a copper-mounted whetsone

4 Cepes: AC6; HD 1-1; MV 90' (30'); #AT: 2 claws; Dmg 1-3/1-3; Save F1; ML 6; XPV 5

HP
 7
 5
 4
 3

2. Main Hall and Living Area

Pungent with unwashed orc and fouler things, this chamber has been roughly converted over into a barracks. Twelve **Orcs** (including the two guards) live in this chamber, four of whom are present—and the remaining six could return at any time. The Orcs will immediately attack, assuming they are surprised; if warned by the guard they will prepare an onslaught of four burning oil flasks and

then order eight **Cepes** slaves into combat before joining two rounds later.

In the northern wall lies a secret door, and a bronze-bound door leading to Nashka's own chamber. To the east, a locked door enters into a corridor to the slave chamber; immediately after the bend in the corridor lies a hidden bolt trap (1-8 hp damage) in the eastern wall, triggered by a pressure plate in the floor. If the room's contents are searched a total of 234 sp, 62 gp, and a cache of six bottles of elven wine (20 gp each) will be unearthed.

4 Orc Guards: AC5; HD 1; MV 120' (40'); #AT: 1 (spear); Dmg 1d6; Save F1; ML 8; XPV 10;}]

HP
 8
 7
 6
 5

Treas.: 12 cp; 8 cp and a jelly rat; 16 cp; 11 cp and a thin silver ring (1 gp)

8 Cepes: AC6; HD 1-1; MV 90' (30'); #AT: 2 claws; Dmg 1d3/1d3; Save F1; ML 6; XPV 5

HP
 7
 6
 5
 4
 4
 4
 4
 3

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3. Slave Chamber

Six **Cepes** are found within this dry, brush-filled chamber. They will initially attack to defend themselves—expecting they have been bartered away—but may be persuaded otherwise. The western end of the chamber is filled with a brackish pool of some unidentified fluid, viscous and dark, but the southwestern wall may still be seen to bear suspicious scratchings (near the secret door).

6 Cepes: AC6; HD 1-1; MV 90' (30'); #AT: 2 claws; Dmg 1d3/1d3; Save F1; ML 6; XPV 5

HP

5

5

4

4

3

3

4. Binding Chamber

This 20'x20' chamber cannot be accessed until both doors have been triggered; each door will click and shift slightly but will not release until both have been discovered and released.

The floor is almost entirely encircled with an elaborate binding diagram in silvery-white runes. At the centre of the circle is an iron statue; in actuality a **Khanabit** (see *New Monsters*); the Iron Judge will reanimate as soon as the circle is breached. Chaotic individuals are attacked immediately if possible, those of neutral alignment are pledged, and those of lawful alignment (or neutrals, if they happen to be good bargainers) are offered a pledge of reward if the warding circle is destroyed. Should the circle actually be destroyed, the khanabit draws heavy bangle-like black iron bracers (+1 AC, -1 damage per die of fire damage) out of the sleeves of its robes—one pair for each party member that agreed to free it—and then fades from sight.

Khanabit: AC0; HD 5***; MV 120' (40'); #AT: 2; Dmg 1d8/1d8; Save C6; ML 12; Specials: binding, *fate's terror*, *black iron pledge*; immune to normal weapons; XPV 550

HP

37

5. Nashka's Chamber

Piled with stolen goods—including a decidedly eccentric “bed” crafted out of the main hall's carved High Table and bundles of plundered grave velvets—this is the actual lair of Nashka and his two **She-Orc** bodyguards.

Nashka himself is a hulking orc of demonic countenance, right down to the forked double tusks, blood-red eyes and patches of black scales on his bestial features, and he attempts to flee through the secrets doors leading through areas 6 and 7 if his cause looks lost. He will not, however, forget the party.

In three heavy, steel-bound oaken chests Nashka has squirreled away the swarm's major treasures. The first chest contains 1,734 sp, 160 silver trade bars worth 2 gp each, and four wolf pelts (15 gp each). The second chest contains 1,275 gp. The third chest holds a smaller rosewood coffer bound in ivory, which contains three massive matching golden torcs, cast as twisted cables with their looped terminals mounting red coral claws (1,400 gp each)—as well as a crumpled grey velvet cloak (40 gp) and two blood-red *potions of healing*. The third chest is trapped; lifting the lid instead of sliding it off causes a spring-loaded dagger coated with paralytic poison to launch at the disturbance (Save vs. Poison or receive 1d6 damage).

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2 She-Orc Bodyguards: AC4; HD 1+2; MV 120' (40'); #AT: 1 (sword); Dmg 1d8; Save F1; ML 8; XPV 15

HP

10

8

Treas.: 8 gp; 6 gp and a golden nose-ring (1gp)

Nashka: AC4; HD 2; MV 120' (40'); #AT: 1 (*sword +1*); Dmg 1d8 +3; Save F3; ML 10; Special: MU spells: *magic missile, protection from evil*; XPV 30

HP

16

Treas.: 32 gp and a gold and ruby ring with glyphs (500 gp)

6. The Mother Growth

Nearly this entire tiny, hidden chamber is taken up with a hollow-riddled, woody mass of overgrowing white-and-rust fungus, still showing signs of chunks broken off when it was squeezed inside and pressed against the eastern wall. This is the **Mother Growth** that spawns the orc swarms' cepes slaves—and within five minutes of discovery by the party, the mother growth disgorges a new cepes . . .

Cepes Mother Growth: AC4; HD 1-1; MV 0' (0'); #AT: 0; Dmg 1d3/1d3; Save C3; ML 6; XPV 15

HP

21

7. Stores and "Pantry"

Rustled oxen and the odd elf hang here from rusty meat-hooks driven roughly into the wall. Scattered about are coarse sacks filled with meal, tuns of water and harsh ale and bales of hay for bedding as well as scraps of fine wood, somewhat mangy deer hides and other miscellaneous objects. Five **Cepes** are here, maintaining the stock.

5 Cepes: AC6; HD 1-1; MV 90' (30'); #AT: 2 claws; Dmg 1d3/1d3; Save F1; ML 6; XPV 5

HP

7

6

5

5

3

New Monsters

Cepes

Armour Class: 6
Hit Dice: 1-1
Move: 90' (30')
Attacks: 2
Damage: 1d3/1d3
No. Appearing: 1-4 (2-16)
Save As: F1
Morale: 6
Treasure Type: U
Alignment: Neutral
XPV Value: 5

Quiet and yet relentlessly invasive creatures, cepes are sapient fungus-men. The typical cepes stands between two and three feet tall, with a chunky, squat build and relatively short legs; their long arms have hands that terminate in woody claws which function as two fingers and a thumb. Cepes have broad heads—much like a mushroom cap—mottled in reds and rusts, with this colouration extending down their backs while the remainder of their flesh is an off-white or dull tan. Their eyes are large, lidless, and either dead white or jet black.

Cepes attack in combat with their claws, inflicting 1-3 hit points of damage per strike.

A colony of cepes has no formal hierarchy; all living members spawning from the same source; a single “mother growth” which was once a cepes but developed into a spawning mass of fungal material after “death”.

Mother Growths develop to withstand attack, so receive an enhancement to armour class to AC4, and increased HD to three times the maximum of a normal cepes. However, Mother Growths have no inherent defense mechanisms and cannot attack directly. Instead, a Mother Growth “births” one cepe per turn until it is destroyed.

Khanabit (Iron Judge)

Armour Class: 0
Hit Dice: 5***
Move: 120' (40')
Attacks: 2
Damage: 1d8/1d8
No. Appearing: 1
Save As: C6
Morale: 12
Treasure Type: Nil
Alignment: Lawful
XPV Value: 550

Grim and forbidding creatures, the khanabit (or Iron Judges) appear without warning as if drawn from the very aether. Despite rumours of a land—or other plane of existence—where the khanabit are said to live as any civilized race, the Iron Judges are known only as solitary entities of binding fate. Imposingly tall humanoids, khanabit appear like humans chiseled from shining black metal of unnatural suppleness, despite their sharp planes; all lean limbs and high hollow cheeks, they look almost as if their metallic flesh was drawn tightly over sharp bone. Their eyes are featureless slits of blue-black energies, and their hair resembles infinitely fine spun wire or liquid metal. Khanabit dress in heavy robes of icy white or purest black.

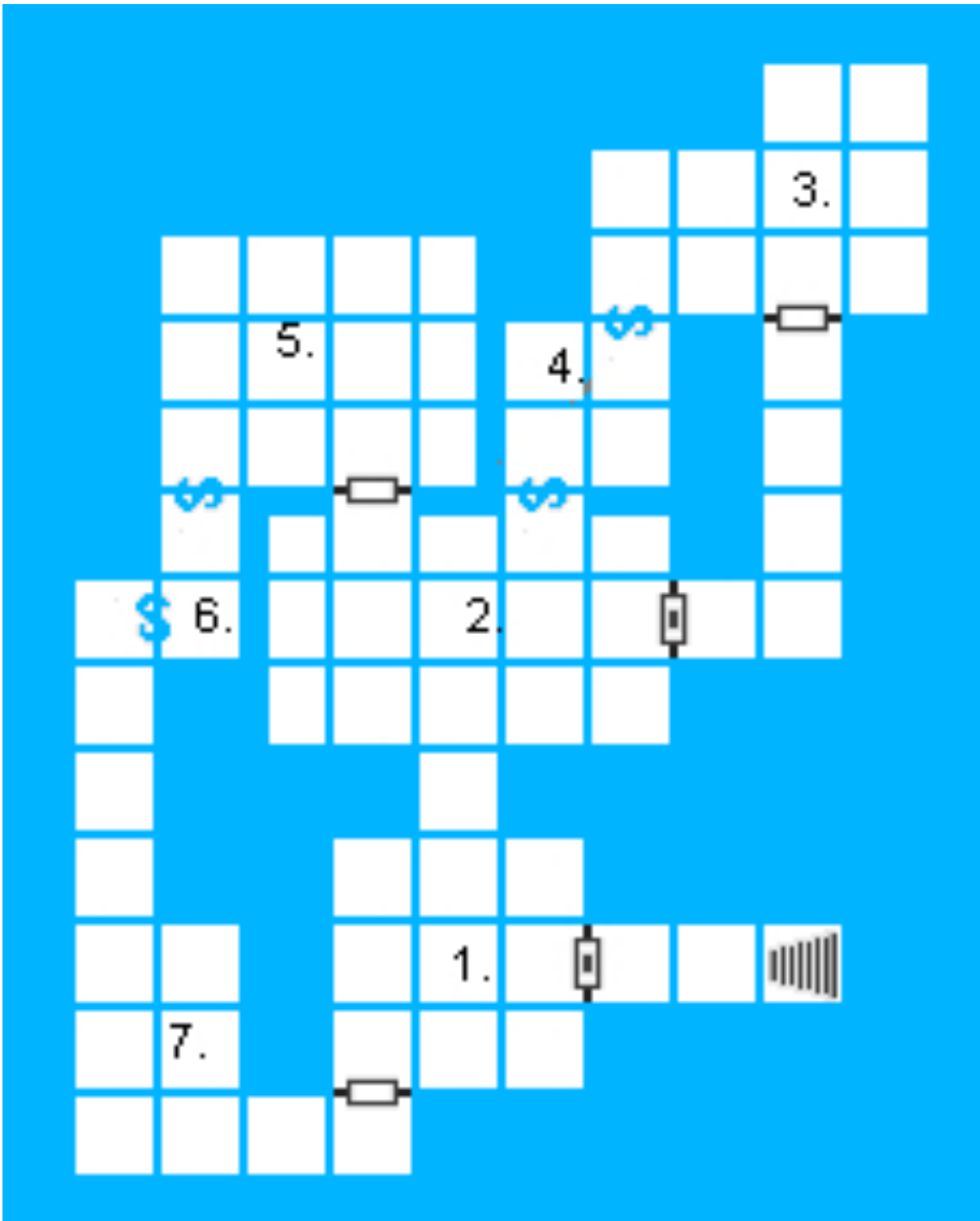
If actual combat is required, a khanabit lengthens its fingers into long metal talons and attacks, inflicting 1-8 hit points of damage with each claw. It may also bind with myriad hair-fine wires, pinning a victim in place—though still able to act—if a save vs. spell is failed. The victim is granted another save each subsequent round. When first encountered, a khanabit may elect to invoke *fate's terror*: those who fail a Save vs. Charm must flee the creature. A successful save still results in a -1 penalty to all actions for four rounds.

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The khanabit's preferred method of dealing with others is the *black iron pledge*. When invoked, a blackened iron brand appears on the subject's body (Save vs. Spell negates, at a -2 penalty) and the khanabit may set the recipient to any one task, behaviour or similar restriction. Failing to uphold the pledge results in the individual being struck with the iron sickness, having a -6 penalty to all die rolls until the pledge is made good once again.

Khanabit are immune to non-magical weapons as well as to fire and fire-based magic.

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Nashka's Lair

Scale of map: 1 square = 10'. All walls, ceiling, etc., are of rough-polished but painstakingly fitted masonry, now well overgrown with mosses and small dry fungi.

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Compatible with many original edition fantasy role-playing games and their simulacrum.

