

LEGENDS & LAIRS

INSTANT ADVENTURE



The Punishing Passage

by Brian Patterson

Requires the use of the
Dungeons & Dragons® Player's Handbook,
Third Edition, published by
Wizards of the Coast®



How to Use This Product

This adventure is specifically designed to be easily incorporated into any existing D&D campaign. Feel free to alter the names of places and characters and customize the details of the adventure to fit your own world.

You should be able to run this adventure in a single game session. You should read it through at least once and study those sections you will need to know well. In particular, you should familiarize yourself with the features and capabilities of any new monsters, spells, and magic items introduced in the adventure.

You can get the adventure started quickly and easily by reading the intro on the back cover to your players. You may also wish to photocopy the map on pages 8 and 9, both for your own reference and to show to the players, if appropriate.

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THE PUNISHING PASSAGE

By Brian Patterson

DM BACKGROUND

Tinneas is a simple man. He and his wife, Alona, moved to this region to start a new life away from the war-torn lands he once called home. His instincts told him that moving during the winter would be dangerous but ultimately profitable. With the little money they had, Tinneas hoped he would be able to buy a small patch of farmland just a few miles east of the farming village named Hallows End and wait for the planting season to begin a new life.

Finally, after what seemed an eternity, the cold winter passed and the bitter snow gave way to the lush greenery of the planting fields. Tinneas wasted no time in preparing for the planting season. But on a beautiful spring day, Tinneas's plow dug deeply into the soil and caught on what appeared to be a large stone. After a few moments of digging to remove it, Tinneas discovered that the stone was part of a large circular slab covering some sort of well . . . or so he thought.

After several long days of digging, Tinneas unearthed the mysterious stone cover. When he dragged it away from the opening, the farmer inadvertently triggered a poisoned dart trap, and two of his draft horses were killed.

When the stone slab was pulled away, a dark stone passage that smelled of mildew and stale air was revealed. The passage was clearly ancient, and it was certainly no well. Tinneas, who now imagined the worst, elected not to venture down into the darkness alone. Instead, he decided to make the trip into town and try to enlist the services of one of the adventuring companies that frequently pass through Hallows End.

Tinneas's future and that of his family depends on the safety and prosperity of his farm. If this ancient, dark passage is half as dangerous as his imagination suggests, it could ruin him. Tinneas is somewhat superstitious and believes that while he could simply close the passage, he would never feel safe again on his own land.

The opening is actually a portal leading to one of the subterranean holdfasts left behind by the mad trapsmith Perivax. Though his origins and final fate are a mystery, it is known to many sages that Perivax was one of the most cunning and sadistic trapsmiths and architects in the realms. This small complex has been deserted for decades, though its defenses are still operating and could easily be the death of anyone brave (or foolish) enough to explore it.

GETTING THE PCS INVOLVED

The easiest way to begin the adventure and get the PCs involved is to place them in the only tavern in the village of Hallows End. While the characters are relaxing in the tavern, they encounter Tinneas and Alona and learn of their plight.

A PHYSICAL DISAGREEMENT

Tinneas and Alona have traveled the three miles from their home to the small tavern in Hallows End called the Staggering Giant. The tavern is a modest place with good ale and a typically friendly atmosphere.

The couple arrives in the late evening, just when things get a little lively in the tavern. They are looking for an individual or a group of adventurers to go into the mysterious passage on their land and make sure that no dangers lurk there. Tinneas and Alona do not go to the PCs first, but rather to a second group of individuals who are also in the tavern and looking for work.

The group the couple approaches are mercenaries who have deserted from the militia of a nearby city to work as hired thugs. The group is led by a tall, dark-skinned man named Fillian Treebane (Rng4) who is accompanied by four other men all wearing similar attire. After a few minutes, Tinneas and Alona will attempt to leave Fillian's table in a bit of a hurry, as they refuse to simply hand over the location of their land and the entry to the passage. The young couple will be forcibly detained as Fillian and his men will not take no for an answer (as described in the back-cover introduction).

With any luck, this will be enough to get the PCs curious as to what is going on (as well as everyone else in the tavern). Otherwise, Fillian and his men begin to rough up Tinneas while Alona frantically pleads for someone to help them. If that still does not work, have the brawl break out anyway (there are about 25 people in the tavern, just enough to make things rowdy), thus forcing the PCs to involve themselves in the situation.

If the PCs get involved, Fillian and his men will only fight for a few rounds or until the combat turns against them. To escape, one of the mercenaries will use a flask of exploding oil to ignite one of the tavern walls, thus creating a distraction and allowing the mercenaries to escape. Tinneas and Alona will most likely hide under a table or behind the bar.

Do not allow Fillian or his men to be slain or captured in this scenario as it greatly affects dramatic situations later in this adventure. You are not robbing the PCs of a victory, but merely delaying the final encounter with the mercenaries for a more intense (and more memorable) moment.

AN OFFER IS MADE

With the tense moments coming to a close, the barkeeps will go about calming the crowd down and getting the festivities back into full swing as Tinneas and Alona nervously approach the PCs. The young couple will approach carefully, if not timidly, and ask the PCs to join them for a drink. If the PCs allow it, they will share their story and all but beg the characters to investigate the mysterious passage for them so that they might get on with their simple

lives.

If the PCs will not do it out of the kindness of their hearts, Tinneas will offer to pay them what he can afford (which is 100 gp) and let them keep anything of value that they might find in the passage. The couple is not concerned with the contents of the passage, just the peace of mind that goes along with knowing that their farmland is safe.

If the PCs accept, Tinneas and Alona will offer to lead them to their farmland and put them up for the evening so that they will be fully rested the next day. If the PCs wish to remain in town, Tinneas will offer to ride back to town to meet the PCs and lead them to the passage in the morning.

THE PUNISHING PASSAGE

1. THE ENTRANCE

After a night's rest and possibly a good meal, the PCs should make their way to the opening of the passage (led there by Tinneas). The opening is a 10-foot wide, circular stone shaft that drops down 10 feet into a 20-foot-wide chamber.

There was once a poison-needle trap in place on the passage cover, but Tinneas triggered it. When they lower themselves into the passage, read the following aloud to the PCs:

The stench of mildew and old air assaults your senses. With the early morning sun shining down into the shaft, you notice the intricate stonework of an ancient passage that leads off into the darkness. On the floor a few feet in front of you a five-foot-wide, ornate standard that resembles a skeletal hand grasping an arrow dripping poison is engraved into the stone floor. Strange runes surround the outer edges of the engraving.

The runes are a combination of magical text and a warning scribed in an ancient language. A rogue or bard who makes a successful Decipher Script check (DC 25) is able to read the ancient warning:

"Doom shall fall upon all who dare to tread upon the sanctity of my hallowed passage. Respect my privacy and be forewarned."

The engraving is a magical trap that will be triggered if anyone crosses over it to enter the passage. The spell cast by the trap is *bestow curse*, and it inflicts a -4 penalty on all of a character's attack rolls, saving throws, ability checks, and skill checks.

Perivax's Engraving of Misfortune Trap: CR 3; no attack roll necessary (no damage, *bestow curse* spell effect as cast by 20th-level caster); Will save negates (DC 20); Search (DC 26); Disable Device (DC 26). *For full details see PHB 177.*

2. THE TWO-STEP DEADFALL

The 45-foot passage begins just beyond the threshold of the small entrance room. The expertly crafted, red-cobblestone passageway measures roughly 10 feet wide and 10 feet high. Placed 10 feet beyond the threshold is the second of several traps that fill the punishing passage. This is a two-step trap designed to either crush slow-footed victims or punish those lulled into a false sense of security once they avoid the deadfall.

Perivax's Two-Trap Turmoil: CR 4; +8 melee (deadfall, 2d6 points of damage), +10 melee (1d4 spikes at bottom of pit, 1d6 points of damage for each successful hit); Ref save (DC 20) avoids deadfall and Ref save (DC 22) avoids pit trap; Search (DC 22); Disable Device (DC 25).

If a PC manages to avoid the 7-foot-wide deadfall trap by moving forward, he must immediately make a successful Reflex save (DC 22) or fall into the spiked pit trap that is placed only five feet beyond the deadfall trap. Rogues who make successful Search checks (DC 22) will notice the deadfall hidden within the dusty passage ceiling or the offset floor trigger beneath it. A second successful Search check (DC 22) will also reveal the faint outline of the trapdoor in the floor a few feet ahead.

3. HAIL OF POISONED NEEDLES

The passage leads to a descending flight of stairs that turns to the right around a blind corner, where the 45-foot passage continues. The characters may notice the change of stonework in this section of the passage, as it is crafted of blackened marble rather than red cobblestone. This material makes identifying visual clues difficult, and characters receive a -2 penalty on all Search checks.

A character who makes a successful Craft (stonemasonry) check (DC 20) will be able to recognize this difficulty and adapt, avoiding the -2 penalty. The DM should apply a dwarf's stonemasonry racial bonus to this check.

At the bottom of the stairs is a floor trigger that activates a hail of poisoned needles trap that is located in the ceiling directly above the trigger plate. The poison used is giant wasp poison, found on DMG 80.

Hail of Poisoned Needles Trap: CR 3; +20 ranged (2d4, plus giant wasp poison); Search (DC 22); Disable Device (DC 22).

4. THE SPIKES IN THE STAIRS

As before, this section of passage leads to a set of stone stairs that descend to a small landing and round a corner. The only difference is that this corner turns to the left rather than to the right.

The third step from the last is actually a trigger-plate mechanism that activates a nine-spike trap that releases from a series of small holes in the marble wall alongside the stairwell.

Side Stair Spikes Trap: CR 3; +10 melee (2d6); Search (DC 22); Disable Device (DC 22).

5. CHEMICAL CHAOS

Just before the top of another descending stairwell is a simple tripwire trap designed to drop several pounds of an alchemical dust from the passage ceiling. The dust is a dark-brown color and has no discernable odor. It is non-lethal (unless it is mixed with another chemical agent). A character who makes a successful Alchemy check (DC 25) knows that the powder isn't lethal but is also aware of its potential danger. Characters who fail the Alchemy check may assume that this is an old trap, that the powder is the dried remains of a once-lethal chemical trap.

The trap is not malfunctioning; it is working perfectly. Toward the end of this section of the passage there is another tripwire. This tripwire activates a pressure spray of the chemical agent's second ingredient. A character who was caught in the powder and also sprayed with the chemical agent falls victim to the completed trap as the two chemicals combust upon contact with the same effect as a *fireball* spell cast by a 5th-level caster.

Perivax's Chemical Chaos: CR 4; no attack roll necessary for falling powder, no damage; +10 ranged for chemical spray (creating an explosion that causes 5d6 points of damage); all characters within 10 feet of target make a Reflex save (DC 20) for half damage; Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 26).

6. DROWNING CORRIDOR

The stonework of this 45-foot passage is constructed of deep blue granite. There is a gold-inlaid circle measuring seven feet across set into the marble floor. A character who passes the circle without stepping into it triggers a magical water trap.

Water Trap: CR 4; no attack roll necessary, no damage roll; Fortitude save (DC 30) allows for full Con score vs. drowning; Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 26).

The trap summons enough water to instantly fill the passage completely, from the entrance to the sealed brass doors of the main hall (*see location #7*). Characters who make successful Fortitude saves (DC 30) can make use of their full Constitution scores when determining the time they can remain underwater before drowning. If a character fails the save, he receives only half of his Constitution score, as he was not able to fill his lungs with air when the trap was triggered.

The water remains in the passage until all of the characters (or any other living things in the corridor) have stepped (or swam) into the circle. Once all of the characters enter the circle, the water vanishes and will not be triggered again. This is a one-time activation trap. For full details on the drowning rules see DMG 85.

7. THE MAIN HALL

The PCs now finally stand at the large double doors leading into Perivax's main hall. The doors stand nine feet tall and are made of heavy brass that is reinforced with two thick iron bands. The doors are locked (Open Lock DC 25).

If a character fails to pick the lock successfully or simply attempts to open the doors, a trap is triggered. The iron bands supporting the doors are detachable and connected to the doors by hinges at the center. When the trap is triggered, spring mechanisms release and the iron bands swing together, crushing any unfortunate standing between them. The upper bands are mounted about two feet above the lower set. If a character is kneeling when the trap is triggered, he will not be struck by the upper bands.

Perivax's Crushing Iron Trap: CR 4; +15 melee (4d6); Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 26).

When the doors are opened, read the following to the PCs:

The doors slowly open to a larger chamber illuminated by the glow of magical light and filled with the sweet smell of a fine perfume. The beautiful white-marble floors appear to be freshly polished and reveal no signs of aging or neglect. A brass well stands four feet high and rests in the center of the room. An uncountable amount of coinage litters the floor of the hall, shining with new-polished brilliance.

The brass well is the holding area for the main hall's guardian (see New Monster section). Any character coming within 10 feet of the well awakens the guardian, which immediately attacks the characters. The guardian will not stop until the characters leave or all in the room are slain.

All of the coinage scattered across the floor of the main hall is fake and covered in a deadly poison (carrion crawler brain juice poison, DMG 80). The acid elemental will also be released if anyone touches one or more of the coins. The sweet perfume is used to mask the heavy acidic and poison smells that permeate the room.

8. THE BRASS DOOR

A smaller brass door is set in the right wall of the main hall. This brass door is different from the others in that it does not have a doorknob or keyhole, but rather an ornate plate mounted onto it.

Engraved into the surface of the plate are four symbols—a sun, a leaf, a snowflake, and a flower. Each of the symbols is set in a circle, and each of these circles is in turn encompassed by a larger circle. Ancient runes are inscribed along the circumference of the outermost ring.

The runes are a combination of magical text and a warning scribed in an ancient language. A rogue or bard who makes a successful Decipher Script check (DC 25) is able to read the ancient warning:

Within life there is a cycle, understanding the cycle is the key. Failing to recognize the cycle will lead to your own undoing.

This plate functions as a lock mechanism as well as a trap. Each of the symbols represents one of the four seasons and there is a proper order in which the symbols must be touched. Touching one of the symbols out of the proper sequence triggers a harmful magical effect. The proper order and effects if triggered incorrectly are as follows.

Spring (the flower): Symbolizes the start of a new year and rebirth. *Wall of thorns* as cast by a 10th-level cleric.

Summer (the sun): Symbolizes times of celebration and warm weather. *Flame strike* as cast by a 10th-level cleric.

Fall (the leaf): Symbolizes the slow death of vegetation and the colder times to come. *Circle of doom* as cast by a 10th-level cleric.

Winter (the snowflake): Symbolizes the time of death and cold. *Ice storm* as cast by a 10th-level cleric.

By touching the symbols in the correct order, the entire wall—including the false door—lowers into the floor, allowing the PCs to enter Perivax's haven. The reason for this unorthodox entry will be revealed when Perivax's fiendish guardian makes its appearance.

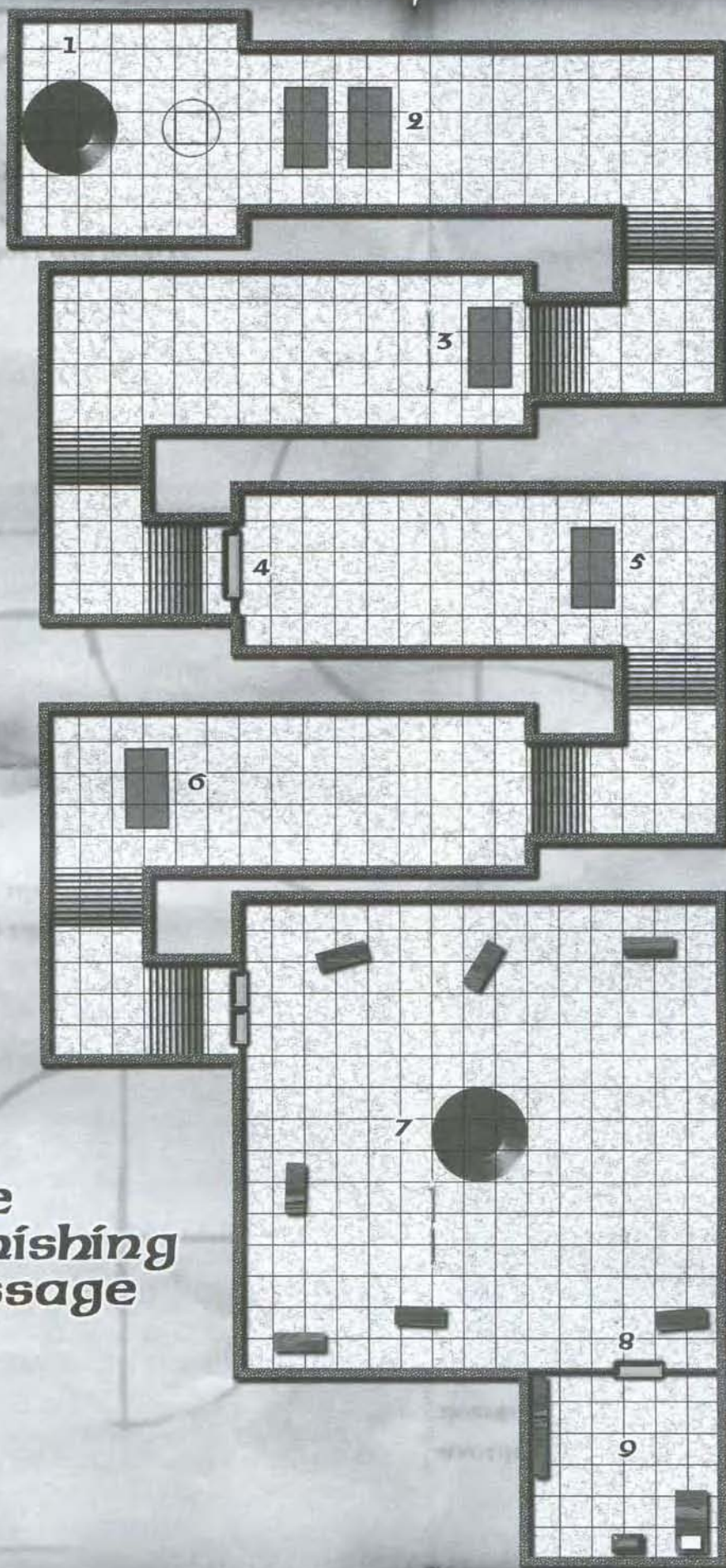
Perivax's Plate of the Sinister Seasons: CR 6; *the flower*—no attack roll necessary; *the sun*—no attack roll necessary, Reflex save (DC 20) for half damage (10d6); *the leaf*—no attack roll necessary, Fortitude save (DC 20) for half damage (1d8+10); *the snowflake*—no attack roll necessary, no saving throw (5d6); Search (DC 26); Disable Device (DC 26).

9. PERIVAX'S HAVEN







This is a small room richly decorated with bright tapestries depicting scenes from a foreign land and an ornate blood-red carpet that covers most of the floor. Much like the main hall, a smell of sweet perfume fills the air and the soft glow of magical light illuminates the room. Along the chamber's left wall is a small oak bookcase that is empty aside from three tomes that are neatly stacked on the shelves. Also in the room are a small bed and an oak desk with an ornate brass chest sitting on the floor next to it.

When the wall is recessed into the floor, there is a flash of light and the room's bound guardian is unleashed: An abyssal monstrous spider appears in the center of the room, nearly filling it with its horrible bulk, and rushes forward to attack the characters. The fiendish spider fights to the death and returns to its home plane if defeated. With the wall recessed into the floor, the spider can pursue fleeing characters into room #7, but cannot get through the doors into the corridor.

Scale:
One Square
Equals 3 Feet



Key

-  Stairs
-  Door
-  Engravings
-  Shaft
-  Chest
-  Bed

The Punishing Passage

Monstrous Abyssal Spider: CR 6; Huge Magical Beast; HD 10d8+10; hp 55; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 16 (-2 size, +3 Dex, +5 natural); Atk +9 melee (2d6+6 plus poison, bite); Face 15 ft. by 15 ft.; Reach 10 ft.; SA Poison (DC 22, 1d8 Str/1d8 Str), web, smite good; SQ Vermin, darkvision (60 ft.), cold and fire resistance 15, damage reduction 5/+2, SR 20; AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +3; Str 19, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 3, Wis 10, Cha 2.

Skills: Climb +16, Hide +2, Jump +4, Spot +7.

The chest is unlocked. The items of value in the chamber include:

600 gp

1 floor rug worth 50 gp

2 antique pieces of furniture (bookcase and desk) worth 200 gp each

2 wall tapestries worth 500 gp each

3 tomes (on bookcase): *Perivax's* traveling spellbook (contains five arcane spells of DMs choice), an antique book of history worth 500 gp, and *Perivax's Tome of Trapsmithing* (see New Magic Items)

1 ornate brass amulet: *Perivax's Amulet of Poison Perseverance* (see New Magic Items)



OPPOSING INTERESTS

This is an option for DMs who felt that the adventure might have been a little too easy for the characters, or who want a more dramatic conclusion to the adventure.

When the PCs emerge from the punishing passage, they will find that Fillian and his band of cutthroats have followed them to Tinneas and Alona's farm and have forced the young couple into the entrance chamber of the passage. They've allowed the PCs to take all of the risks in the passage while they simply wait to ambush them as they return. When the characters return to the entrance chamber of the passage or are close enough to hear the farmers pleading with Fillian, read the following aloud as Fillian shouts down into the room from above:

So my friends we meet again and it appears that you have discovered what secrets this passage protected. We're here to collect all the booty you discovered as payment for last night's disrespect. Pass all your belongings up to my men right now or I'll close the passage cover and seal you in this tomb forever.

Fillian will attempt to run if the situation turns against him, and his men will fight to the death only if necessary. If needed, Tinneas and Alona will try to aid the characters in the struggle. They will likely only be a distraction to the mercenaries.

Fillian Treebane, Male Human Rgr4: CR 4; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 4d10; hp 24; Init +6 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (+2 Dex); Atk +5 melee (1d8+1, +1 longsword); AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 11, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 9.

Skills: Craft +8, Hide +8, Intuit Direction +6, Jump +7, Knowledge (Nature) +6, Listen +1, Move Silently +16 (+10 *boots of elvenkind*), Open Lock +4, Spot +1, Use Rope +6.

Feats: Extend Spell, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Track

Spells (1): *entangle*.

Possessions: Clothing, boots of elvenkind, longsword +1, and 25 gp.

Description: Fillian is a handsome man with long black hair, olive colored skin, and an athletic build. He favors loose clothing of dark greens and blacks and wears no jewelry. He usually keeps his hair pulled back out of his face and is somewhat fanatical about the grooming of his long black goatee. He originally joined the militia as part of a bargain with the local authorities, as his tracking skills and wilderness knowledge were greatly needed. After a few months, Fillian made plans to desert his squad in a deep region of woodlands. With a few like-minded scoundrels, Fillian carried out his plans, leaving good men and women to die in the wild while he and his men made plans to begin prosperous new lives as highly paid mercenaries. Fillian is an evil man: He cares for one person in life and that is himself.



Fillian's Mercenaries: CR 1; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 1d10; hp 11; Init +2 (+2 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 leather armor); Atk +4 melee (1d8, longsword); AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +0; Str 17, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 7, Wis 11, Cha 10.
Skills: Climb +9, Handle Animal +2, Heal +2, Hide +2, Move Silently +2, Spot +1.
Feats: Combat Reflexes, Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (Climb).
Possessions: Clothing, leather armor, longsword, and 25 gp.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

With the mysteries of Perivax's passage revealed, the worries of Tinneas and Alona are over. The farmers give thanks and do not think twice of any goods found by the characters in the passage but insist on resealing the passage entrance and vowing never to open it again. If any deal was made between Tinneas and the characters, he will honor it without question and again give his undying thanks.

NEW MONSTER

ACID ELEMENTAL



Medium-size Elemental (Acid)

Hit Dice: 4d8 +12 (30 hp)

Initiative: +1 Dex

Speed: 20 ft., swim 90 ft.

AC: 15 (+1 Dex, +4 natural)

Attacks: Slam +6 melee

Damage: Slam 1d8+4 (+1d4 acid damage)

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5ft./5ft.

Special Attacks: Breath Weapon, Acidic Touch

Special Qualities: Elemental

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +1

Abilities: Str 16, Dex 12, Con 7, Int 4, Wis 11, Cha 11

Skills: Listen +5, Spot +5

Feats: Power Attack

Climate/Terrain: Any land or underground

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 4

Treasure: None

Alignment: Usually neutral

Advancement: Medium 5–7 HD, large 9–15 HD.

The sadistic creation of the mad trapsmith Perivax, the acid elemental is one of the more deadly of its kind. Typically created and used as guardians by powerful spellcasters, acid elementals closely resemble water elementals in appearance, with only the acid elemental's loosely humanoid appearance, glowing green eyes, four arms, and clawed "hands" separating the two creatures.

Most Medium-size acid elementals lie dormant in large brass containers until awakened, while larger specimens typically dwell in large subterranean pools.

COMBAT

An acid elemental prefers to lure victims close enough to make full use of its breath weapon attack and acidic damage. With its acidic anatomy, attackers are likely to cause more damage to themselves than the elemental if they attempt to face it in melee combat.

Breath Weapon (Su): An acid elemental has one type of breath weapon, a cone of acid. Characters must make a successful Reflex save (DC 13) or suffer 4d4 points of acid damage. Acid elementals can produce enough acid to use their breath weapon once every 2 rounds.

NEW MAGIC ITEMS

PERIVAX'S AMULET OF POISON PERSEVERANCE

This item is a small, plain-looking silver medallion on a simple chain. When worn, the amulet grants the wearer complete immunity to all natural and simple poisons. The amulet was one of Perivax's most prized possessions and is of great benefit to any character who regularly handles or works around poisons. *Caster Level:* 9th; *Prerequisites:* Forge Ring, *endurance*; *Market Price:* 50,000 gp.

PERIVAX'S TOME OF TRAPSMITHING

Appearing as an ordinary leather-bound tome, this book can be invaluable to any rogue or aspiring trapsmith. Once read, the tome grants the reader a +2 bonus to all Craft (trapmaking) checks, as well as a +2 bonus to all Search and Disable Device checks when dealing with both magic and mechanical traps. The tome has only one use and once read the text disappears. *Caster Level:* 17th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *wish or miracle*; *Market Price:* 55,000 gp.

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DRAGONSTAR

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THE PUNISHING PASSAGE

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Instant Adventure for 4–6 characters levels 4–6



The town of Hallows End seemed like the ideal spot to stop over for a night of rest on your long journey. The small farming village is known for good people and good ale. The only tavern in town, the Staggering Giant, seemed like the best place to get a little rest and have a nice evening. That was until you walked through the door to hear a deep, grizzled voice yell, "No! I don't think you understand! You're gonna tell me where this passage is so me and my crew here can look into it for ourselves. You'll pay us whatever we ask for and if you can't pay in coin then we'll just have to take whatever we want to make up the difference. Even if that means we have to take it out of your lovely little wife here!"

That was when you noticed a young farmer in the grasp of a tall dark-haired man and his four companions wearing the tabards of the local militia. "I told you, you aren't the kind of people we're looking for. You're a pack of deserters, what makes you think I would want you anywhere near my land?" the farmer yells with noble, yet terrified, composure. As the farmer struggles to get free, his wife lies on the floor next to him, holding the side of her newly bruised face, tears running down her cheeks. She begs for someone in the small tavern to help them. "What are all of you staring at? Please! Someone do something! Help us!" she screams.

It looks like it's going to be one of those nights...

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