

TAGGAR'S TOMES OF TROUBLES

Book 1: Traps

Josh Benton

DOG
SOUL

d20
system

TAGAR'S TOMES OF TROUBLES: TRAPS

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INTRO

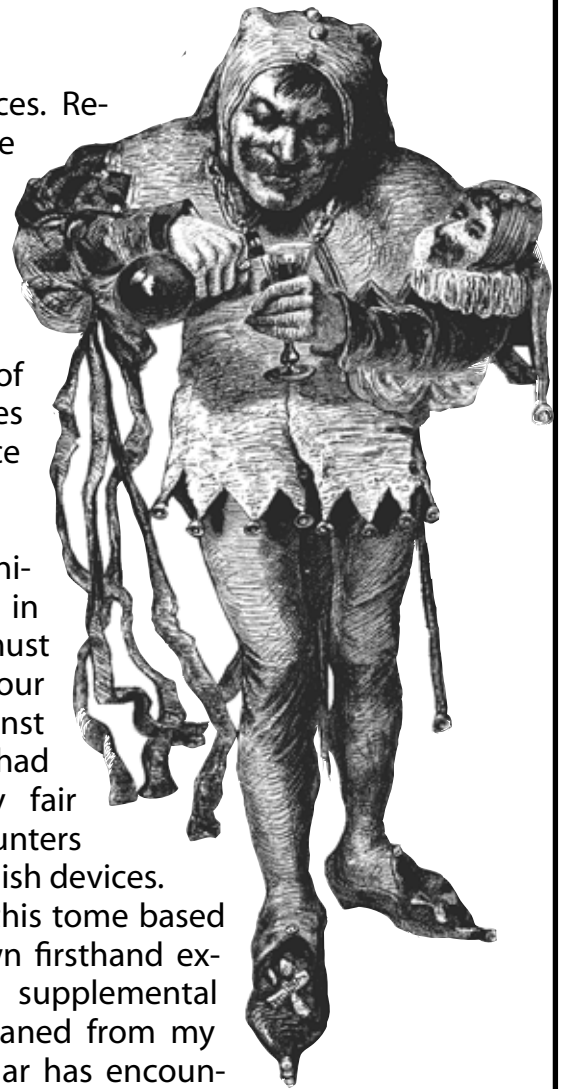
Since finding myself in the company of the estimable Tagar, it often seems that, through no fault of my own I assure you, I wind up in trouble of all sorts. I have seen the inside of more caverns, ancient ruins, lost cities and dungeons than I ever knew existed. Indeed, it almost seems as if these places arise as a result of our presence; appearing where there was nothing before..

My companion seems to think that we should spend a large amount of time exploring the places we come across. I, however, felt my evenings were better spent in a warm tavern, spinning tales and perhaps passing a moment or two in the company of a pleasant lass or three. Tagar eventually won me over to his point of view; which was a result of his reasoned arguments, and not because of any demonstration that my head was indeed an easy mouthful for a half ogre. Listen not to those who would spread such scandalous lies.

If you have experience of such places, then you will know that fell magic and foul beasts abound in these sites. Again, it is as if they were placed there solely for the purpose of bedeviling anyone who would

enter such places. Regardless, these are not the only hardships to bedevil intrepid explorers. Perhaps the most insidious of all the challenges you would face are traps.

Be they mechanical or magical in nature, you must always be on your guard against traps. I have had more than my fair share of encounters with these fiendish devices. I have penned this tome based on both my own firsthand experiences and supplemental information gleaned from my companion. Tagar has encountered traps even more frequently than I have.



WHO PULLED THE GROUND OUT FROM UNDER ME?

Is any betrayal so profound as when the very earth beneath your feet rebels against you? When you, all innocent and unknowing after a few sips of wine find the ground spinning, blurring out of focus and the suddenly leaping out from beneath your feet....

Yes. Well. Moving on.

These sorts of traps usually rely on the presence of flooring of some sort. It should be noted, however, that there are versions that can be constructed and concealed in a natural environment; the primitive pit trap being one

of the more common examples of this sort. Often, these traps are simply meant to impede or maim those who come across them. Victims of these traps who choose to continue on, despite being at less than their peak, run the risk of finding themselves somewhat lacking when faced with additional obstacles. Stepping into a device that offers a quick end is often a mercy when compared to the alternative.

This trap is both simple and sadistic. I've come across it on more than one occasion, but I'll never forget the first time. I watched as Boran the Brilliant took a step, and then screamed as a barbed spike shot up through his foot. While we were able to yank his foot off of the spike, the damage was quite severe, and sadly we lacked anyone capable of healing magic. Lamed by his injury, Boran fell as we were attempting to escape from a particularly aggressive pack of goblins.

BARBED SPIKE

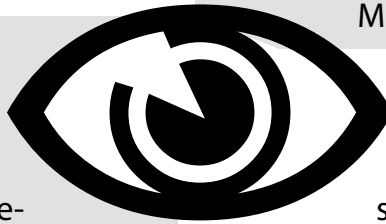
CR 1; mechanical; location trigger; repair reset; DC 20 Reflex save avoids; spikes (1d6 damage - piercing); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 15. Note: A character whose foot is pinned by this trap is considered flat-footed until freed. It requires a DC 20 Strength check to free a trapped person's foot. Even once freed, the character is limited to only one half his base speed. This movement penalty remains until the wound is healed. Market Price: 300 gp.

With the exception of the simple pit, I imagine this next one is among the very oldest of traps. It's also one of the most versatile: having proven itself both inside and out of doors, and for continuing to function in all weather conditions. It consists of a covered knee-deep hole. Sharpened stakes are then secured in the bottom of the shaft; these are usually tall and set at an angle, so that they'll impale the victim's foot before she has time to pull away. In addition to the impairment caused by having stakes driven into your foot, they are often covered in

rotten meat, excrement or something equally unpleasant. Let me assure you that it can be quite distracting when you're trying to sit down to a meal around the campfire, and the person across from you has a bloated foot that's leaking strange fluids and smells like ten kinds of dead thing.

PUNJI PIT

CR 1; mechanical; location trigger; repair reset; DC 25 Reflex save avoids; stakes (2d4 damage - piercing plus disease); disease (Filth Fever, Fortitude save DC 12, 1d3 days incubation, initial ability damage 1d3 Dex and 1d3 Con); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 10. Note: Victims of this trap have their movement speed reduced by half from damage, and by one-quarter if infection also takes hold; in both cases running is impossible. If the initial piercing damage is cured, but the character is still infected then their movement speed is only halved. Market Price: 1,800 gp.



Ah yes, I remember this next one quite well. A favorite of Baron Gragnek the Blind. I would have sent him the bill from my tailor, if Tagar hadn't bitten his head off, but I suppose the uncut gems we took were of some comfort. Still, nothing can replace a set of well tailored tights.

The trap is a simple one. A portion of the floor is weakly supported, and will collapse when weight is applied. This in turn causes a fine mist of acid to be sprayed upward; usually leaving the poor unfortunate soul who tripped it with nasty burns on her legs.

ACIDIC MIST TRAP

CR 5; mechanical; location trigger; repair reset; DC 25 Reflex save avoids; acid spray damage (2d6 acid/round for 5 rounds); poison (DC 25 Fortitude save resists, permanent ability damage 1d6 Dex/0); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 20. Note: Dexterity damage caused by the acid spray is permanent unless cured by magical means. Market Price: 16,000 gp.

I can attest to the sheer viciousness of this next vile device, having experienced it firsthand. Had Tagar not carried me to a cleric I would have lain there helpless; easy meat for whatever beast got hungry first. I but stepped on two innocuous-looking stones among many in a floor made up of loose stones. The difference being that these two collapsed under my weight, jarringly dropping me down until I was trapped from foot to knee. Before I had a chance to pull free, the front and rear of the pit trap smashed together with great force. I imagine that my screams were the only reason I didn't hear the breaking of every bone in my legs.

WON'T NEED THOSE WALKIN' SHOES NO MORE

CR 7; mechanical; location trigger; repair reset; DC 35 Reflex save avoids; crushing (4d8 damage – bludgeoning); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 25. Note: Victims who suffer their Constitution score or greater in hit point damage have their legs pulped, and are unable to walk until receiving regenerate spell, or equally potent supernatural healing. Even those spared broken legs will have their movement reduced to one-quarter their normal speed, and will be unable to run until aided by magical healing. Market Price: 58,100 gp.

I SAID I
ENJOY WALL
HANGINGS-
NOT BEING
HUNG FROM
WALLS.

I have never been one to give much thought to walls. They do have their uses: concealing one from a jealous husband's prying eyes, displaying works of art, even providing shadowed cor-

ners and alcoves that can prove to be pleasant places for the procurement of a stolen kiss. And yes, they can be quite helpful on those evenings when the ground sways like the ocean; doing its best to upset you, and causing you to have an unpleasant second encounter with that lovely duck you had as a light snack, along with the wine, the ale and...

Apparently others have more time on their hands than I. During some long forgotten and eldritch time, some petty tyrant or mad wizard decided that walls would be a perfectly good place in which to place yet more traps. Then somehow they managed to find someone to construct and place these devices. Which causes me to wonder: is there some sort of idiocy or sadistic bent inherent to certain craftsmen? Why would they wish to design and build these traps to begin with is a question best left to the ages and sages; their reasons aside, do they really think that, knowing all the secrets of these sinister traps, they will simply be sent home with a hearty thank you and a heavy purse?

Baron Gagnek the Blind is a rather inconsiderate individual. Not only did he ruin my clothes, but then he had the gall to refuse to remain properly killed. After a ridiculously complex scheme, he lured Tagar and me to his new lair; where we once more found ourselves running the gauntlet. I was particularly irritated by the blades which shot out of the walls. Not only did it ruin yet another perfectly tailored doublet, but the trimming of my beautiful mane of hair was both unwelcome and unappreciated.

Quartering him will perhaps ensure he has the good manners to stay dead this time.

FLYING BLADES

CR 4; mechanical; proximity trigger; repair reset; hidden lock bypass (Search DC 25, Open Lock DC 30); Attack +10 ranged (3d12/special, blades – slashing); multiple targets (all targets within a 20 feet long by 10 feet wide area); Search DC 20, Disable Device DC 25. Note: If the attack roll scores a critical hit, the victim is decapitated by one of the blades. Market Price: 12,400 gp.

After a night of revelry I once remarked to Tagar that I had a splitting headache. Had I found myself caught in this next device that would have been the truth. When this trap is triggered, two heavy stone cylinders extend from the wall with great force. For such heavy pieces of stone, they move surprisingly fast. The first indication I had that anything was amiss was a faint scraping sound. The next thing I knew there was a dull thud, like a melon dropped from a balcony onto a marble floor. I then spent quite some time wiping the remains of some hireling's head from my face. I was rather fond of that handkerchief. It was embroidered silk, a forget-me-not from a thankful *ahem* admirer of an evening's performance....



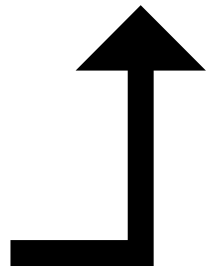
ing with all these devices placed inside it. One would think that all the hidden contraptions, compartments and associated googaws would weaken the structural elements. Perhaps I shall put that very question to those responsible for the construction... if I can ever find one of them before he finds himself bereft of life or freedom.

Simple doesn't mean ineffective. I have seen this next trap operated both by living beings and cunningly-wrought automatons. The operator simply waits until the intended victim is in position. They then drop a line through a concealed port, aiming so that a noose goes over the head and around the neck. The line is then pulled back, which is meant to pull the poor soul off their feet and render them helpless until the suffocation is complete.

I'M CRUSHING YOUR HEAD

CR 5; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset; DC 26 Reflex save avoids; smashing stones (3d6 damage - bludgeoning) Search DC 30, Disable Device DC 20. Market Price: 26,500 gp.

MISERY
FROM
ABOVE



As we travel ever onward let me direct our attention upward. I confess to having little use for most ceilings. They serve to keep the rain off; beyond that, I rarely notice them. There are exceptions: the exquisite mosaic which adorns the ceiling of the God King of... somewhere or another's throne room is a notable example.

It should of course by now be obvious to you that those who traffic in traps pay little heed to my way of looking at things, which shows you just how low of character they truly are. Irregardless of their lack of taste or style, these sorts of people do not hesitate to use the ceiling in the same manner as they use all else. Really, you have to wonder how a building remains stand-

HANGMAN'S JOKE

CR 1/2; mechanical; visual trigger; automatic reset; Attack +10 ranged (Suffocation); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC -/25. Note: The Disable Device DC information before the slash is if the trap is manually operated, the second for an automated system. Victims caught in this trap engage in a Grapple check with the operator; if the victim is successful he may attempt to free himself by cutting the rope or by other means (hardness and hp based on the material used for the line). If the trap wins, the character is jerked from his feet, and is considered helpless. Manually operated traps use the operating creature's Grapple score, automated traps have a Grapple score of +14. Market Price: 2,900 for manually operated/7,800 gp for an automated system.

Ceilings do seem to be the place for simple devices: witness this next offering. A simple cross-bow-style weapon is concealed in the ceiling above. A trigger below fires the weapon; anyone caught beneath is conveniently spitted. As you can imagine, it's all the rage among those with questionable dining habits.

JUST LIKE A PIGGY

CR 3, mechanical, location trigger, automatic reset; Attack +14 ranged (2d8+1d6 large heavy crossbow, gravity); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 25. Market Price: 10,020 gp.

AND I THOUGHT THE DECOR WAS IN POOR TASTE...

Tagar and I have been mauled, mutilated and mishandled by traps placed in floors, walls and even concealed in the very ceiling above our heads. Which if you've been paying attention is something you should be well aware of by now. I repeat myself here to inform the lazy and forgetful among you; along with those who can not content themselves with reading this tome's pages in their proper order.

Another thing that should be obvious by now is that people seem to enjoy hurting each other. If you have any doubts about that, simply stop by any tavern where so-called adventurers are prone to gathering. The variety of cutlery and other tools of mayhem will likely astound you. Some demented souls are content with neither simple weapons nor unleashing minions or hordes of fell beasts upon the way. The seek ever more elaborate ways to inflict harm upon any who enter their domain; turning even a simple room into an appalling instrument of pain and death.

From time to time Tagar insists I am being overly dramatic; leave it to a half ogre to fail to appreciate my hard work on his behalf. Irregardless of his doubts I bid you continue, dear readers, and judge for yourselves if I exaggerate.

I have only encountered this one on occasions when I have found myself in the current or former abodes of dark elves. They employ this particular trap with great gusto, as if they want to make up for the fact that it isn't particularly popular with anyone else. Really it isn't hard to see why. While floor-to-ceiling chains adorned with hooks and barbs that tear at everyone passing by is certainly cruel, it's just so terribly gauche. Who would want to look at that all day? There's also the bother of cleaning it. Of course you could elect not to, but then not only is it simply ghastly to look at, the smell defies description.

NO WHIPS, BUT LOTS OF CHAINS

CR 2; mechanical; no trigger; automatic reset; multiple targets; Search DC -; Disable Device DC -. Note: This version is in place at all times. Everyone attempting to move through the room must make a DC 35 Reflex save or Tumble check for every five feet of movement attempted. Each failed save results in 1d4 points of damage (slashing) as the victim leaves bits of himself behind on the various barbs, hooks and pokey bits. Market Price: 9,000 gp.

CR 4; mechanical; proximity trigger; automatic reset; multiple targets; Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 25. Note: This is identical to the previous version, the only difference being that the chains are launched into the room and locked in place only after the victims enter. A DC 35 Reflex save is required when the chains are launched, or the victim suffers 2d4 points of damage (slashing). After that the trap works as previously described. Market Price: 36,000 gp.



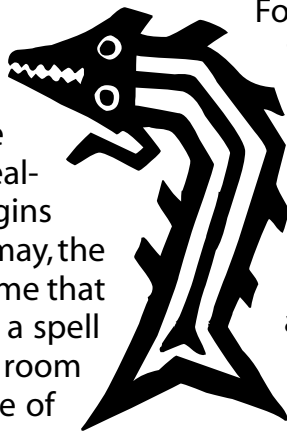
This next trap demonstrates that some days the bear really does get you. This is why I keep Tagar... err, allow me to rephrase; this is why I travel in Tagar's benevolent company.

Now that we've resolved that, let's talk about this particular device. It uses a cunningly crafted trigger - tied to the opening of a door, it is timed to activate after an interval roughly equal to the time it would take for a man-sized creature to reach the halfway point of the room. Since the trap is usually placed in a corridor, the doors at both ends will swing shut on their own, and are then held in place by a series of hidden weights. Once the victims are trapped in the room a hidden panel swings open, releasing a very hungry and none-to-friendly bear, or another creature of the trap master's choice.

EMBEARRASSING SURPRISE

CR 4; mechanical; timed trigger; mechanical reset; hidden switch bypass (Search DC 25); Search DC 30; Disable Device DC 35. Note: Disabling the trap will both keep the doors from closing and prevent the trapped creature from being released. Market Price: 28,800 gp.

I have been fortunate in that I have never faced this next device. I am told that it most often sees use among those magi who fear others of their kind will come to plunder their secrets. I really don't see the appeal. There are much more appealing things to plunder: treasure and virgins being at the top of my list. Be that as it may, the one living witness I spoke to informed me that this trap is capable of detecting when a spell has been cast. Once that happens the room is sealed, and depending on the choice of the entity responsible for placing the trap, the party responsible for casting the spell that activated the trap becomes the recipient of a less than pleasant effect.



damage); spell effect (*fireball*, 9th level wizard, 9d6 damage, DC 20 Reflex Save for half damage); spell effect (*fireball*, 9th level wizard, 9d6 damage); spell effect (*fireball*, 9th level wizard, 9d6 damage, DC 20 Reflex Save for half damage); Search DC 30; Disable Device DC 30. Market Price 76,500 gp, 6120 XP.

CR 8; magic device; proximity trigger (*detect magic*); automatic reset; spell effect (*wall of stone*, 13th level wizard); spell effect (*finger of death*, 13th level wizard, DC 26 Fortitude Save for 3d6+13 damage); Search DC 32; Disable Device DC 32. Market Price: 77,500 gp, 6,240 XP.

CR 9; magic device; proximity trigger (*detect magic*); automatic reset; spell effect (*wall of stone*, 15th level wizard); spell effect (*incendiary cloud*, 15th level wizard, 4d6 fire damage per round for 15 rounds, DC 27 Reflex Save for half damage each round); Search DC 33; Disable Device DC 33. Market Price: 97,500 gp, 7,800 XP.

For those magic users with a more sadistic bent, this particular trap provides a measure of "entertainment". A teleport spell is cast, and linked to a nearby location. That location is then heavily altered, or even destroyed outright; the original teleport spell remains in place, but it no longer has a specific destination. Those stepping into the spell will, if lucky, simply find themselves teleported to a place much like the spell's original destination. Those less fortunate may have to rely on their companions' willingness to hunt down all the pieces.

WARNING: SPELLCASTING MAY BE HAZARDOUS TO YOUR HEALTH

CR 6; magic device; proximity trigger (*detect magic*); automatic reset; spell effect (*wall of stone*, 9th level wizard, DC 20 Reflex Save for half damage); spell effect (*fireball*, 9th level wizard, 9d6 damage, DC 20 Reflex Save for half

TELEPORT WITH ERROR

CR 8; magic device; proximity trigger (alarm); automatic reset; spell effect (*teleport*, 13th level wizard, DC 26 Will Save negates); multiple targets (everyone in a 20' x 20' room); Search DC 32; Disable Device DC 32. Note: Use the False Destination listing from the teleport spell listing. Check separately for all characters who fail their save. Market Price: 45,500 gp, 3640 XP.

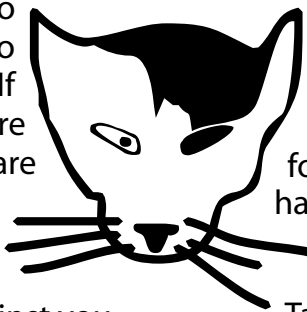
TAKING ITS STUFF JUST BECAME A RISKY PROPOSITION.

Floors, walls, ceilings - even rooms and corridors. Did you think our tour of madness was complete? Perhaps you said to yourself, "Surely, this is the worst of it, and I shall face no more of these horrors." It pains me to impart the following to you, my dear, dear readers: you are wrong.

There are madmen (and women as well - I, for one, do not hesitate to alert you that the fairer sex can be just as mad as men) who are not content to turn structures into nightmarish instruments of torment. If only such were the truth. Alas, there are those whose perfidy and turpitude are without limit. They find ways to turn the things most dear to us into vile treachery. A bottle of wine, a work of art or even clothing can be turned against you.

If you are sensitive of constitution I beg you avert your eyes. We now stare unprotected into the mouth of hell, and I would not wish you to come to harm.

This is another insidious device which I must confess caught me in its clutches. How was I to know that so simple an action as trying on a lovely new cloak would see me locked in a life-or-death struggle. I tell you that cutting my way free of that beautifully patterned fabric is one of the hardest things I have ever been forced to do. At least it allowed me to discover that, properly prepared, scorpion flesh can make a wonderful dish; you should also place the shell out where it can be seen - it makes a wonderful conversation starter.



CLOTHES THAT MAKE THE MAN DEAD

CR: 2; magic device; touch trigger (alarm); no reset; spell effect (*entangle*, 3rd level caster, 3 round duration, no save); spell effect (*Summon Monster I*, 3rd level caster, 3 round duration, no save); Search DC 26; Disable DC 26. Note: Victims of this trap are caught inside a giant fabric bag, and are then attacked by a summoned creature. For the duration of this trap he will lose his Dexterity bonus to his armor class. The effect may be ended early by tearing through the cloth with a DC 25 Strength check, or it may be cut through - the bag has hardness 0 and 10 hit points. Market Price: 150 gp, 12 XP.

While nearly identical to a trap I personally encountered, one that caught my companion unawares deserves mention. It was particularly insidious: it left one unmolested so long as you used the handles of doors. You could even pick the locks, or otherwise touch the surface of the door. However, Tagar, much to his chagrin discovered that striking any of the doors with more force than is generally used to knock had consequences. I can assure you that being hugged by a suddenly happy, and incredibly dumb(er) Tagar is not a pleasant experience... particularly when it's happening for the seventh or eighth time that day.

IT'S NOT POLITE TO KICK DOWN DOORS, TAGAR

CR 2; magic device; touch trigger (alarm); automatic reset; spell effect (*touch of idiocy*, 2nd level wizard, victim loses 1d6+1 points to Intelligence, Wisdom and Charisma for 30 minutes); Search DC 26; Disable Device DC 26. Note: Any force sufficient to overcome the door's hardness and inflict even a single hit point of damage activates the trap. Market Price 1,500 gp, 120 XP.

Sometimes even the cautious can be taken in by a trap: such was the case with this next creation. Serianne the Nimble was a magus of supreme caution and boundless avarice. While

exploring an ancient ruin we came across a well preserved drinking skin from which Seriana felt the weavings of magic. She performed every test available to her, and concluded that there were no maleficent qualities to either the skin or the liquid inside. Confident in her abilities she took a drink. At which point the trap was sprung. I imagine Seriana was trying to scream quite loudly; it's just that the roiling cloud of caustic gas which dissolved her face and throat kept us from hearing anything.

TEETOTALLER'S REVENGE

CR 7; magic device; visual trigger (*arcane eye*); no reset; spell effect (*acid fog*, 11th level wizard, 20' radius x 20' high, 2d6 damage a round for 11 rounds); Search DC 31; Disable Device DC 31. Note: The spell is triggered when any creature with a humanoid mouth structure takes a drink from the flask. Because the spell is activated directly into the mouth, the initial victim takes triple damage in the first round, and double damage during the second round of the spell's duration. Market Price 5,500 gp 440 XP.

I was personally introduced to this next one thanks to Gragnek the Blind... the second time. After he'd managed to ruin another suit of impeccably tailored clothing, we came across a wardrobe. I felt it only fair that Gragnek replace what he'd damaged. Unfortunately I didn't notice his little surprise until it was too late. I have also heard tell of a version often placed on spellbooks, in order to punish those nosing about in wizard's business.

LOOK BUT DON'T TOUCH

CR 8; magic device; touch trigger (alarm); automatic reset; spell effect (*insanity*, 13th level wizard, DC 26 Will save negates); Search DC 32; Disable Device DC 32. Market Price 45,500 gp, 3,640 XP.

READING IS FUNDAMENTAL

CR 6; magic device; touch trigger (alarm); automatic reset; spell effect (*feeblemind*, 9th level wizard, DC 23 Will save negates); Search DC 30; Disable Device DC 30. Market Price 22,500 gp, 1,800 XP.



THANK YOU FOR
YOUR PURCHASE OF
ANOTHER QUALITY
PRODUCT FROM DOG
SOUL. AND ALWAYS
REMEMBER, IT'S ALL
FUN AND GAMES
UNTIL SOMEBODY
LOSES AN EYE, AND
THEN, HEY-
FREE EYEBALL!

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