

INCIDENT AT THUNDER RIDGE

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Tractor Feed Adventures

Character Levels 1-3

Notes

Modern notes

In college, around 1983/84, we found a bunch of boxed sets of *DragonQuest* in the bargain bin at one of the local textbook stores. We all picked up a copy. After we played it a couple of times, I thought that a good adventure could be written using a “low experience” villain and heavy use of rituals. The rituals meant that special things (such as kidnapping people for sacrifice) were necessary to perform the rituals; it also meant that a mage could set up more powerful spells by waiting until just the right time (in this case, the new moon) to ritualize spells that they couldn’t normally perform reliably. This adventure was a way of playing with that idea.

Later, when we started playing AD&D again (and, presumably, after second edition came out, see the text) I thought it was a decent enough adventure to convert, but discovered that the conversion required lots of special cases, such as giving the villain the magic items instead of letting him have created them, and so on. It lost a lot in translation.

In *DragonQuest*, the fact that these were rituals provided clues as to how to deal with the villain, since there were strict rules on rituals. In AD&D even what remains of rituals doesn’t really tell the players anything, since they don’t know anything about them, as rituals don’t exist in AD&D.

There is no written connection between the dungeon portion and the ghost portion. There’s a lot of stuff that’s expected to be made up on the fly, and the PCs are expected to talk to people and figure out where the murders and disappearances have been centered—the graveyard—and go there. Or, they could wait until someone is kidnapped and try to track them. But there is no physical clue to find; they’re expected to figure out how to figure it out on their own.

Player’s History

There have been strange things happening lately in the vicinity of Stone Goblin. Animals—sheep, chickens, dogs, and smaller wild animals, and a few humans—have been found dead. Their bodies have been torn as if by wolves. Some people have even disappeared.

Strange things have been seen. Some claim to have seen shambling, half-human shapes just off the trails at night. Some people have seen great man-sized bats flying high across the moon.

It is a strange time. People are talking of werewolves, ghouls, vampires. Some even talk of the Hunt, last seen over a hundred years ago when the Black Mage attempted to take over the area with his hordes of Orcs. Nobody truly knows what is happening. Nobody travels at night!

Game Master’s History

The source of the problem is the Night Stalker. He who walks the Night. That is his own name for himself. He moved into Firetree, into an abandoned mansion, about a month ago. He is from Pirate’s Cove. His ancestors once lived in Stone Goblin, but were thrown out under suspicion of sacrifice. That was over a century ago. He discovered references to the secret crypt beneath the crypt, and decided to return to find it.

He is now using this area as a base to create magic items.

He summoned the two main ghouls, and they have since created more ghouls in the area of Stone Goblin.

The ghouls are not the only killers. Sometimes he has his two ghouls capture a woman or old man when he needs a sacrifice to create a wand or magic item.¹ He takes from Stone Goblin, Firetree, and Pike Hole.

This morning, walking through the woods, Carol Langtree took a route home past the graveyard, stopping by her father's grave. On her way out, she found a small doll, ragged, which she decided to clean and fix up for her sister, Wendy. This doll had been carried the night before by a young girl from a Pike Hole farm, on her way with her parents to Stone Goblin. The girl was Susan Williamson, and her parents were Jason Williamson and Susan Martin Williamson. Her parents were killed by ghouls, and she ran, but was caught also. Her ghost is tied to the doll, a very emotional gift from her parents. Until her spirit is put to rest, she will continue to haunt the doll on nights of the new moon.

The Night Stalker has already sacrificed six people for wards and magic items:

- 2 from Stone Goblin: Arthur Smith and John Wilson Jr. (Alice's nephew: her brother's son)
- 3 from Pike Hole:²
- and 1 from Firetree:

He is about to create a massive human ghoule gem.³ The night after the incident at the Langtree's is a new moon. He will attempt to kidnap Carol around 9 PM, and use her in a sacrifice starting at 10 PM and ending at 4 AM.

1. This adventure was originally written for DragonQuest, for which there were specific ritual rules for creating magic items.

2. I didn't make up the names for other towns because I didn't expect the players to ask. I left a blank spot in case they did; presumably they did not.

3. In DragonQuest, this was a Blackfire Wand. Also, I think "human ghoule gem" is a typo for "control ghoule gem".

The Old Crypt Key

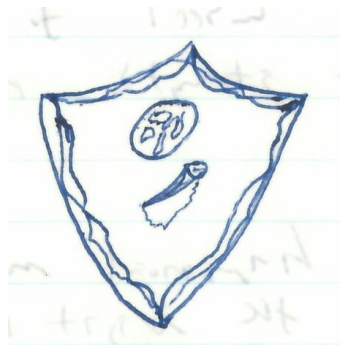
Wandering Monsters

01-50	Rats (2d60)
51-75	Skeletons (1d4)
76-90	Zombies (1d3)
91-00	Ghouls (1)

First Level

10' high; increase encounter check to every 15 minutes.

The door swings outward. Inspection (before opening) will allow the characters to realize that the door has been opened recently. The name on the door (Darkhölme) is so faded as to be unreadable. The only recognizable imprint is hidden by vines above the door; a full moon, finely carved, above a raised horn.



Inside is dust. The coffins (stone) are on a ledge coming out of the wall. The ledge on the far north wall is 4' 6" tall. The first two statues are warriors, scimitars raised, guarding the inner part of the crypt. The vases are filled only with dust, webs, spiders, and rats. The arch at the end is a double-trunked willow, bending, in stone to the center. Beneath, a man and a woman raise a wine glass in toast to the coffin below.

Careful search will reveal that the far ledge is not as strongly connected to the wall. The right statue is part of the ledge. The left one is part of the wall, requiring an open doors roll at a bonus of 6.

Lower Level

8' high; encounters reduced to every 30 minutes, 1 in 12, rats only

The ancestors are stacked 3 high in wooden coffins. Towards the far end, the coffins are practically not there.

1. When a humanoid looks at this skull, a save vs. spells must be made or run in fear for 2d4 rounds.
2. This is the wheel to close the secret entrance. A strength roll must be made to do it.¹

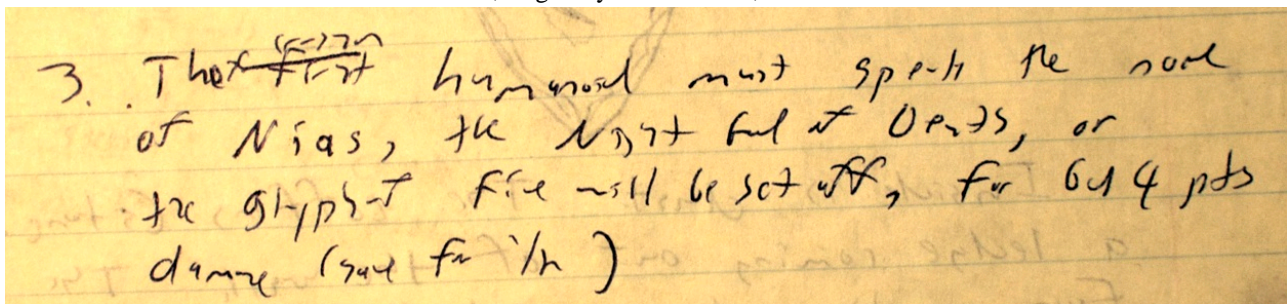
¹ I don't recall at all how Martin Darkhölme is opening and closing this door. With a strength of 13, he'll be able to open it easily enough with the +6 bonus, but the close? Perhaps the +6 bonus applies to the wheel as well—it ought to be at least as easy to use.

3. The crossing¹ humanoid must speak the name of Nias, the Night God of Death, or the glyph of fire will be set off, for 6d4 points damage (save for ½).
4. Cages: there are rats, bats, and squirrels caged up here. The cages are light wood, a strength -1 roll is required to break.
5. Empty cages. These are 5x5x5, and a bend bars X 3 roll is required.

The altar is carved out of the rock outcropping from the floor. A gold bowl is to one side (20 ss²). A platinum dagger with a gem-encrusted hilt (tiny emeralds) is to the other side (460 bp³). There are also a pair of iron arm bands and ankle bands chained to the altar.

6. This is a small box. Inside is a blood-encrusted robe (black) and a golden tiara with a black opal centerpiece (550 ss). It is to become the control ghoulish item.
7. The two main ghouls are kept here except occasionally at night. They are always there during a human sacrifice. After a sacrifice the remains are thrown in. The rock requires a strength -3 roll to move, additive.⁴

1. I can't read it. It looks like crozin or croson; originally it said "first", but that's crossed out.



2. Silver Shillings. At this point I was going with a silver-based currency, so that one standard AD&D gold piece was a silver coin in *Highland*.
3. Bronze Pennies. Basically a silver piece in AD&D value, I think.
4. "Additive" means that if multiple characters assist, their strengths are added together.

The adventure begins...

It is Friday night. The moon is nearly gone. The PCs are in the local tavern, The Cloven Shield. There is music, dancing, drinking, and talking. Some gamble in the back room. The owner, 'Barky' Snell, is behind the bar weaving tales of the war as he pours drinks. The fiddlers break occasionally to drink a glass or two and talk about their travels. Alice and Carol, the waitresses, run about bringing drinks and food to the customers. Alice is an older woman, late forties.¹ Carol is younger, 15. She lives down the street. Her father was a good friend of Snell, but died a couple years ago, and Barky often looks in on Carol, her mother, and her younger sister.

Very late, about midnight, a young girl (about 3) runs into the bar, screaming for help. She falls, as if something heavy fell on her, and screams louder. Her screams are cut short as her throat is torn out and the image fades. People are stunned. Some have fainted, some have run. PCs should save vs. 3xWP-20 or panic (save vs. paralyzation, bonus of wisdom points-4)². As people regain composure, many cross themselves.

The ghost appeared here because Carol has the doll behind the counter.

The next night, at midnight, very few people are there—mostly people there on a dare or out of curiosity. Some kids who snuck out of their houses despite the danger are outside. Old Will³ is out there telling them ghost stories with a capital G.

Suddenly, the piercing scream of a child is heard—down the road towards the Langtree house.

In the house, Wendy Langtree is crying in her mother's arms. Carol is looking around for an intruder. As Wendy calms down, some of the story is gotten—how she saw a girl die!

1. DragonQuest version: late twenties. So old that was! Good God, I wrote this a long time ago.

2. That is, whatever their wisdom bonus is, subtract four. Which means most people panic.

3. Old Will is a vague rip-off of Gandalf, except that he lives here and has for as long as anyone can remember.

Martin Darkhölme

Human, Cleric of the Night Gods. 6th level, Lawful Evil

str: 13
 con: 13
 dex: 17
 int: 14
 wis: 15
 chr: 3¹
 HP: 35
 Armor: Leather; Cloak of the Bat; AC 3

Weapon Proficiencies

Bastard Sword², Dagger, Staff

Nonweapon Proficiencies

Ancient History: Dark Gods
 Ancient History: Cthulhu
 Astrology
 Religion: Dark Gods
 Religion: Cthulhu
 Riding Horse

Common First Level Spells (5)

Command x 2, Cause Fear, Invisibility to Undead, Entangle

Common Second Level Spells (3)

Wyvern Watch, Trip, Hold Person

Common Third Level Spells (2)

Cause Blindness, Cause Disease
 also, Glyph of Warding, Animate Dead, Plant Growth

Magic Items

Bastard Sword + 1, 10 charges.³
 Cloak of the Bat, inherited.⁴

1. At the time, I had this idea that negative charismas were how evil you were. So a 3 charisma is like an evil 18.
 2. I'm guessing that I did the conversion from DragonQuest to AD&D after second edition, because Clerics can use pointed weapons and because of the nonweapon proficiencies later.
 3. The bastard sword likely has charges because it originated in DragonQuest, and rituals in DQ put charges into items, even adding bonuses to swords. As you may guess, this adventure loses a lot in translation from DQ to AD&D. It was originally an exercise in seeing how rituals can make an enemy more formidable and how they can inform an adventure.
 4. The Cloak of the Bat is what lets him fly around like a bat. It also is, I think, what brings his Armor Class down from whatever leather is to 3. In the original, he made this himself using ritual. In the AD&D version, it's a family heirloom.

Map of the Crypt

