

RAGING SWAN PRESS

GM'S SCREEN #12:
DARK CAVERNS



SYSTEM
NEUTRAL



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GM'S SCREEN #12: DARK CAVERNS

Space behind your GM's screen is precious (and limited). You've got dice, figures, the adventure, reference books—obviously a drink and snacks—as well as pencils, pens, a notebook and more! Often times a GM needs to be a juggler to make it all fit. That's why we created the GM's Screen line. Most GM screens focus on presenting the rules. This GM's Screen line is different. Instead of rules, each instalment presents hyper-focused pages of dressing, minor events and more all designed to add depth and flavour to an adventure. (And better yet, you can use the tables without your players realising what you are doing!)

This instalment of GM's Screen comprises three tables designed to bring to life the dark caverns in your campaign and is compatible with virtually any roleplaying game.

DESIGN CREDITS

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HOW TO USE THIS SUPPLEMENT

Using this supplement is easy. Simply print out page 2 and pin it to the inside of your GM's screen. (You can also print it out and cut it up before clipping it to your screen so you do not obscure vital tables printed on the screen itself).

When play calls for it, roll on the relevant table and use the result to build verisimilitude, detail and flavour into your game. Always re-roll inappropriate results, but consider any given result as a starting point. Describe the situation and see how the players react!

Because words have power, we've also added some flavoursome examples to help you bring the setting alive in your players' minds.

SYSTEM NEUTRAL EDITION

Welcome to this Raging Swan Press System Neutral Edition supplement. Herein you'll find evocative, inspiring text designed to help you—the busy GM—run better, quicker and easier games.

This book is compatible with most fantasy roleplaying games. It's impossible to create a truly system neutral book, though, and some generic game terms—wizard, fighter, human, elf and so on—lurk within. These generic terms are easily modified to the GM's system of choice.

One special note about the NPCs in this supplement. While some are wizards, fighters, clerics and so on, others are simply normal folk. Because different game systems handle normal folk differently we've made no attempt to note their "class" leaving them simply as "female human" and so on.

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DARK CAVERNS

CAVERN DRESSING

1. The rubble from a broken stalagmite covers the floor, nearby to its stump that yet juts up from the floor.
2. A single booted footprint on the muddy floor betrays the passage of previous explorers.
3. Rubble covers the floor throughout this area, except for an obvious path, which has been cleared. Piles of rubble flank the pathway, creating areas difficult to move through.
4. Mud covers the floor and water drips from the ceiling above. The mud hides several deep hollows in the floor, which could trip unwary explorers.
5. The faint scent of burnt flesh reaches the party's nostrils.
6. A luminescent fungus grows high up one wall. Its faint glow reveals a narrow passageway slanting steeply upwards.
7. A narrow fissure little more than one-foot wide splits the floor in twain. A faint breeze emanates from below.
8. Three splintered crossbow bolts lie about the floor. None have any blood on their points.
9. A rocky outcrop on one wall looks a little like a melted giant's face emerging from the rock, in the party's flickering lights.
10. Water drips from a crack in the ceiling. Explorers passing through the area discover the water is very cold.

NOTABLE CAVERN FEATURES

1. Water drips through cracks in the ceiling, creating a liquid curtain. This provides a concealing mist that makes it slightly harder to notice enemies nearby.
2. Steep steps lead to a small cavern that shows signs of mining. Perceptive PCs notice glimmering flecks of unidentified metal (platinum) in the walls.
3. The floor is unstable. A weight of 150 lbs. or more causes it to collapse into a water-filled sinkhole. The 80-ft. deep (and cold) water breaks the falling character's fall, but falling rocks may prove fatal.
4. A small stand of heligmites—stalagmites resembling trees with "branches" growing off from the main body in erratic and bizarre directions—fills the area.
5. Thick, cloying mud covers the floor and fills several deep pits. Within, the mud acts like quicksand.
6. A thin sheet of dripstone reaches from the ceiling to the floor. In several places near the floor, small holes pierce the dripstone.
7. A field of gour water-filled pools—pools whose rims stand about three-foot high—dot the chamber. Water drips from the ceiling into the pools; in this caverns it sounds like it is raining.
8. Long ago an explorer died here. His calcified bones remain, transfixed in a slowly growing stalagmite.
9. A bubbling pool fed by a vauculian spring dominates, this chamber.
10. Detritus and rubble obviously deposited by flooding covers the floor. To the east, a trickle of water dribbles from a cavern mouth high up on one wall.

POOL, STREAM, RIVER DRESSING

1. A bedraggled, ripped brown cloak is snagged between two large boulders. The sodden cloak is half in and half out of the water. It is cut for a halfling-sized creature (or perhaps a human child).
2. The rusty hilt of a notched two-handed sword juts from the water. Any attempt to pull the sword from the water snaps the blade.
3. Several pieces of splintered wood—perhaps remnants of a spear's haft—bob in the water.
4. Two abandoned crudely crafted wooden buckets stand on the river bank. One has been knocked over, but the other is full.
5. Crystals embedded in the wall just below the surface of the water glimmer invitingly when the PCs' lights reach the area.
6. A thin crack in the ceiling lets a solitary beam of faint light play upon the water's surface. The shimmering glimmer is noticeable from quite some distance. Perhaps subterranean predators have learnt the light often attracts prey, and lurk nearby...
7. minerals in the rock discolour the water; perceptive explorers spot a faint pink tint—akin to diluted blood—to the water.
8. The water is deceptively deep. At its deepest point, perceptive PCs spot what looks like a small cairn partially covered in silt and mud.
9. A large stone as a stepping stone across the water. Unfortunately, it is precariously balanced.
10. Tiny (harmless) white albino fish live in the water. Always hungry, they swarm anything entering their domain.

WORDS & DETAILS HAVE POWER—USE THEM TO ADD FLAVOUR AND ATMOSPHERE TO YOUR GAME

Cave: cavern, cavity, hollow, grotto; **Dark:** dim, gloomy, murky, pitch-black, shadowy, tenebrous; **Lifeless:** barren empty, bare, uninhabited; **Illumination:** light, lighting, ray, beam, brightness, radiance; **Illumination (Strength):** faint, dim, low, feeble, bright, blinding, intense, flashing, radiant, flickering; **Stone:** rock; **Stony:** rocky, rough, gritty, gravelly, rock-strewn; **Quiet:** soft, low, muted, faint, muffled, indistinct; **Underground:** subterranean, hypogean; **Cave Hazards:** turgid air, explosive gas, strong winds, flash flooding, sinkhole.

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