

Assault of the Mushroom-Men

A Swords & Wizardry Encounter

A cavernous encounter with creatures that just keep coming!

REFUGE

The players have sought refuge for the the night in a spacious cave they discovered just as the rain began to violently come down. Although free of any signs of animal life, the cave is teeming with vegetation. Thick moss carpets the floor and climbs up the rounded walls and clusters of fungi, some edible, cover various sections of the cave. Also, long discarded items (utensils, bed roll, an old pot) attest to other wanderers having used this cave as a refuge in times past.



THE GREEN ORB

The last traveler to seek refuge in the cave was an elderly magic-user. The wizard was carrying with him a strange green orb which he sought to take to the elves of Mistwood in hopes that they might discern the orb's properties. Unfortunately, old age claimed the elderly wizard that night and the orb remained within the cave, crawling moss eventually covering the green stone and hiding it beneath a soft green canopy.

The reason the wizard sought the aid of the elves regarding the green orb was because of a peculiar ability the orb would manifest. At random times, the orb would flare with a brilliant green light, the viridian rays of the flare endowing the nearby vegetation with sentient life. The orb could also affect physical changes upon the neighboring flora, at times endowing plant matter with a human-like anatomy. Unfortunately, the plants which sprang to life under the orb's rays were not always benevolent, often wrecking great havoc after their transformation.

It was decided that the elderly wizard would take the orb to the elves. Wise in the ways of nature and magic, it was hoped the elves could find a way to master the green orb, stifling its more destructive effects.

UNDER THE ORB'S VIRIDIAN RAYS

Sometime during the night, the orb will flare with a brilliant green light. Anyone awake or on watch has a 65% chance of being surprised by the sudden flare of light. This first flaring of the orb will give life to the carpeting moss at the cave's entrance. Quickly (in 1 combat round), the moss will crawl, grow, and expand to cover the entrance, forming a mossy

wall to trap the players within. The players will need to "hack" their way through the moss-wall in order to exit the cave. Treat the moss-wall as having a AC of 9 [10] and 60 hp. When the moss-wall is reduced to 0 hp (or less) it will shrivel back from the entrance, allowing the players to exit.

As soon as any of the players begin cutting through the moss, the orb will flare a second time, transforming one of the mushroom clusters into 1d6 Mushroom-Men. The transformation take but 1 combat round to complete. Should the players defeat these mushroom-men (along with any subsequent mushroom-men brought about by way of the creatures' spores), the orb will flare once more, creating another 1d6 mushroom-men out of another cluster. The only way to halt further flaring from the orb is to destroy it.

Detect Magic may be used to quickly locate the orb. If *Detect Magic* is unavailable to the party, the players must rely on a simple search of the cave. For GMs wishing to rely on the dice for finding the orb, the task is of average difficulty (50% or 1-3 on 1d6). It will take a few rounds to carefully release the orb from the binding moss. Simply striking the fragile orb will destroy it.

THE AFTERMATH

Destroying the orb will only prevent further transformation of the surrounding flora. Anything created before the orb's destruction remains in place.

Keeping the orb, or fleeing with the orb intact, will see the players constantly forced to battle whatever greenery the orb's erratic flaring brings to life. These adversities caused by the orb need not be limited to anthropomorphic foes (like the mushroom-men) but can include things like falling branches, trees moving to block the players' progress, vines or bushes slowing the adventurers' movements, etc.

ANTAGONISTS

Mushroom-Men: HD 3, 2, or 1; AC 5[14]; Atk Fist (1d6) or weapon; Save 14, 16, or 17; Move 12; CL/XP 5, 3, or 1/240, 60, or 15; Special: Spores.

SPOILS OF VICTORY

No treasures are gained from this encounter. The players may decide to keep the orb but as stated above that course of action may prove costly.

NEW CRITTERS

MUSHROOM-MEN

Armor Class: 5 [14]

Hit Dice: 3, 2, 1

Attacks: Fist (1d6) or weapon

Saving Throw: 14, 16, 17

Special: Spores

Move: 12

Challenge Level/XP: 5, 3, or 1/240, 60, or 15 XP

Standing 4' in height, mushroom men resemble humanoid mushrooms endowed with both arms and legs. Mushroom men are usually found in natural caves, caverns, and

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underground passages.

Mushroom-men are initially created by magic. Once given life through magic they reproduce by way of spores. When a mushroom man dies (0 hit points or less) it releases 1d6 spores which rapidly (within 1d4 rounds) grow into mushroom-men of 1 HD lower than the parent mushroom man (1 HD mushroom men do not produce spores upon death). The spores have 2 hit points (before becoming fully formed mushroom-men).