

# CAPTURE THE TROLL

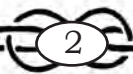
By Ken St. Andre



D. CANTON



G. G. Crompton © 91





# CAPTURE THE TROLL

*Tunnels & Trolls GM Mini-adventure #1*

**By Ken St. Andre**

Cover & Illustrations by  
**Darrenn Canton & Steven S. Crompton**

Graphics & Layout  
**Steven S. Crompton**

*Originally Published by Crit Hit 2016 in a limited run of 100 copies.*

Published by



Capture the Troll. Copyright © July 2016 by Ken St. Andre.

All rights reserved.

Art by Darrenn E. Canton, all rights reserved.

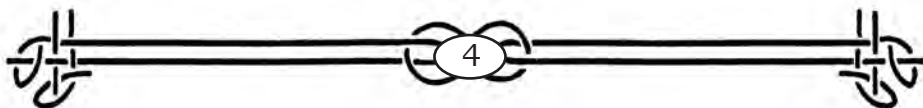


## Introduction:

Capture the Troll relies heavily on the wisdom and ability of the Game Master. Likewise, we don't need a real map for this adventure. The main action takes place in a maze of cave tunnels. This is no carefully planned dungeon. It's a wilderness. The Game Master can adjust the amount of time spent on each section of the game to suit herself. In the text suggested monster ratings are given for anything the player may have to fight. The GM may adjust these rating up or down to suit the fighting strength of her players.

## The Set-Up

Two days ride into the Nowtame Wilderness stands the Castle of Mingoh the Moneyless, an evil wizard of questionable sanity and dubious behaviors. The castle rises on the southern shore of the Gorbloom Lake. The road to the city goes off to the east into the Forest of Trees (yes, that's what it says on the official map: Trees), and to the west into the Badlands of Bolders (so called because the creatures and peoples that live there are bolder than the ones who live in the Forest. On the north side of the lake are the Cliffs of Anytee, thousand foot high walls of limestone known to be riddled with caverns. Horrible things are said to live inside those caverns. On the south side of the lake is the Castle and a small town surrounding it. There are a dozen farms on the flatlands beyond the castle to the south and the shore is lined with the huts of fisherfolk. There is a rugged path circumnavigating the lake and a small creek draining the lake off to the southwestern part of the water. A rather meager waterfall adds new water to the lake coming off the Cliffs. There is a cave village of troglodytes near the waterfall. These hairy, dwarvish humans divide their time between fishing in the lake, ambushing travelers on the path and in the forest, and exploring the caves in the cliffs behind them. There are several hundred of these trogs, more than twice as many people as





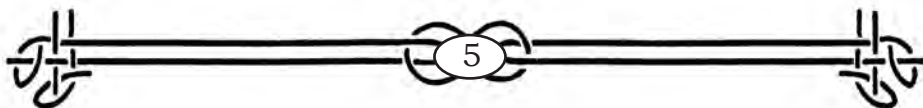
Ming has servants and subjects. They are self-sufficient and generally unfriendly and uncooperative. They call themselves Gorbleemees.

## Scene One: Gather the Adventurers

Character introductions and backstories: The players are all together in a waiting room outside the throne room of Mingoh the Moneyless. They have each been summoned to an audience with the wizard—just the one audience for all of them. These characters should all be 5th level or lower. (G.M. note: if someone wants to bring in a higher level character, you may allow it, but increase the difficulty of everything when in play.) Characters may have whatever they wish in the way of armor and equipment, but should be very careful with what they bring in the way of magical items. Mingoh is generally known as the Evil Overlord, and one of the evil things he does is take anything he fancies away from whoever brings it into his presence. The G.M. should roleplay the part of JeeVee the Castle Steward, and he will interview each player to determine their worthiness for the upcoming quest. Act as if you have already dismissed a few applicants. Have each one explain why they are there, what equipment they have, and why they are qualified to go troll hunting. This is a good opportunity for players to get into character.

## Scene Two: Interview with Mingoh

Called into the throne room, the G.M. gets to put on a show as Mingoh the Moneyless, a mighty, but crazy wizard. He's rather old, and he shows it. Think of the throne room of Ming the Merciless of Mongo, but rather gone to seed. The harem girls are all middle-aged and overweight. The numerous guards that line the throne room walls are not very impressive, but they are a mixed bunch of mostly humans and other near-human races, and there are a lot of them. Note: there are no trolls, ogres, centaurs, or giants in Mingoh's service.





Mingoh is the proud owner of an amazing menagerie. He makes no distinction between intelligent and unintelligent creatures that he keeps in his zoo. There is a one-legged hobb, a spotted bear, an oligoster, some birds of purgatory, a comatose ogre, a feathered lizard, and an invisible unicorn. He has heard that there is a wild troll living in the caverns on the other side of the lake, and he wants some adventurers to capture it for him, and bring it to the castle. He offers to reward anyone who brings him the troll with either 1000 gold pieces or a free magical wish.

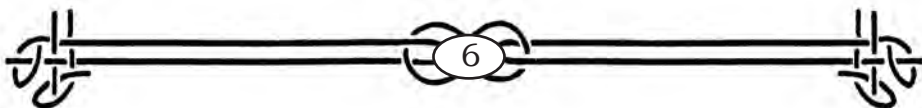
To make capturing a troll easier, Mingoh will give the leader of the party (whoever has the best magical ability) a troll jar. It looks like a fairly large transparent vase, but it is enchanted to suck anything into it that puts a body part inside the upper rim, reducing the target victim to 1/100 of its former size and power. The jar is sturdy, but it can be broken by a violent impact. The mission of the party is to find the troll and get it to put any part of its body inside the jar—then the magic will take over and suck it into the jar where it will be a helpless captive.

## Scene Three: Crossing the Lake

The players have their choice of either crossing the lake in boats, or walking around it on the path. Boats available include several row-boats, some one and two man canoes, and a large fishing barge-raft. (Really more of a large raft with a short railing built up around the edges.)

### A. Going by Water

Crossing by water will result in an encounter with the lake monster or monsters if the party is not all in one boat. These are hippoturts (MR = 200)—imagine a cross between a hippopotamus and a giant turtle—

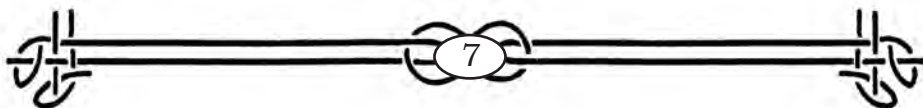


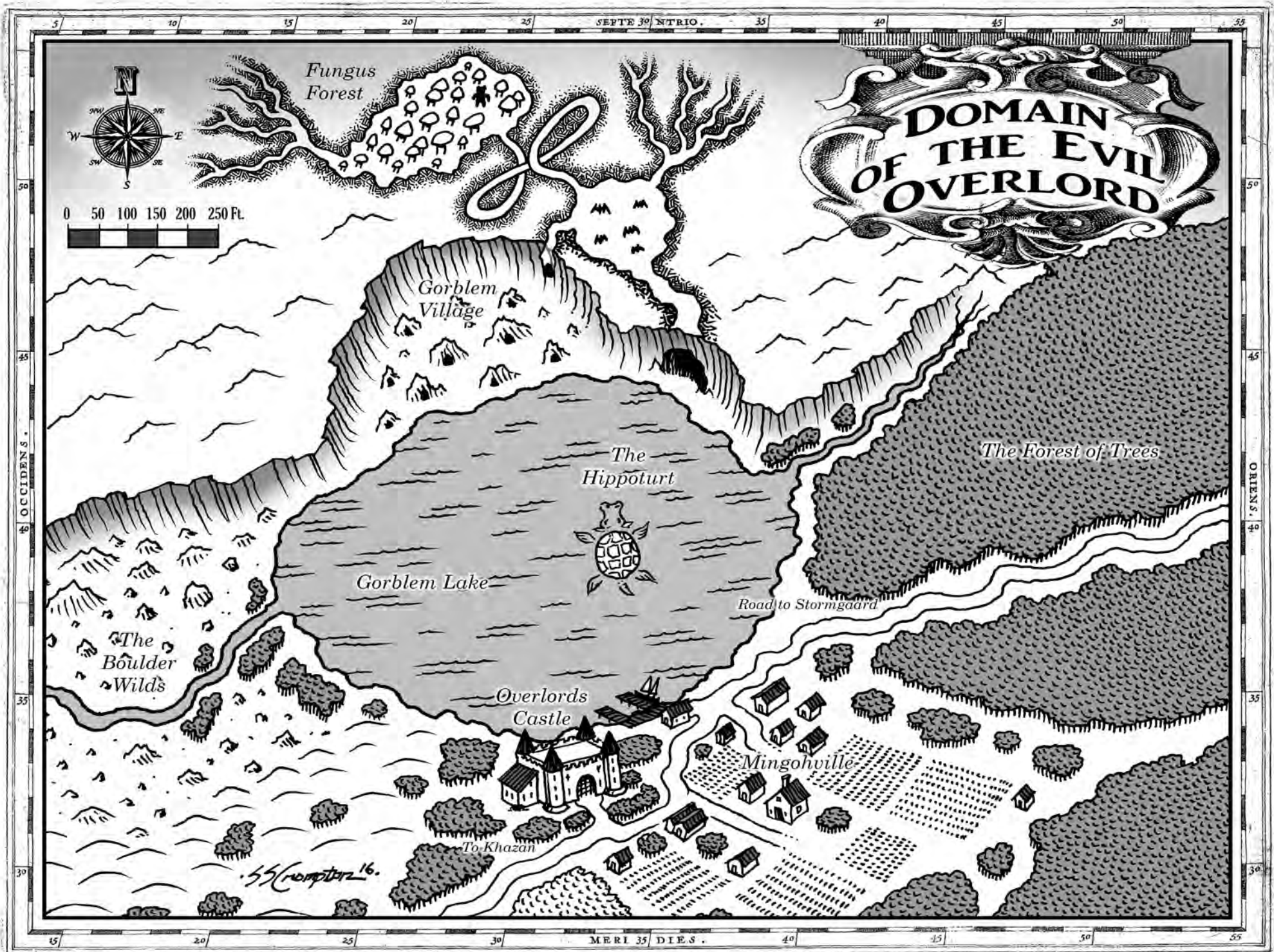


big rectangular gray head with a huge gaping mouth full of molars, and a large squarish body enclosed in a turtle's shell both top and bottom. Let there be herds of these creatures swimming in the deep part of the lake. Their favorite trick is to swim beneath boats and rise to the surface thus upsetting the boat and dumping the people into the water. The creatures are not carnivorous, but they are mean, and they don't like boats or other large creatures like men swimming around in their waters. The main danger is here is drowning, or being bashed to death by heads or flippers.

## **B. Going by Land**

If the players choose to go around the lake by land, they will find the path narrow and difficult, rising and falling and passing through rugged terrain that slopes down to the lake edge. At one point about halfway around they will enter a narrow ravine with steep rocky walls, and a few small side canyons branching off on the landward side—the perfect place for an ambush. This is the favorite ambush site for the Gorablemees, and they usually have a strong force guarding it. These trogs tend to start their attacks by throwing stones and small boulders at their targets, then rush in with clubs and hammers and crude forked fish-spears. Their motive is robbery pure and simple. The players look like a well-stocked hardware store to them. Note to the G.M. have at least 2 Gorablemees for each party member. They attack without warning, usually after a player says the magic word: ambush, which you should lead them into saying by stressing the uninviting aspect of this part of the trail, and letting them catch glimpses of people moving around outside their range. (Monster rating of 20 each for Gorablemees.)









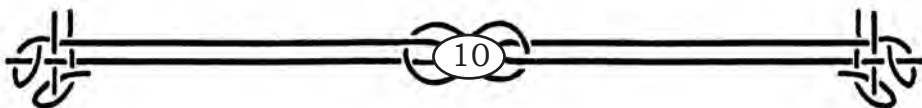
## Scene Four: Entering the Caves

The players will know they have reached the northern side of the lake when the terrain to the right turns into nearly vertical limestone cliffs. If coming by water they will reach a pebbly beach that slopes upward for about 10 yards before reaching the cliffs. The path stays very close to the water line—*inches* in some cases. There is not much vegetation—the soil is simply too rocky for any plants with roots to thrive. The pebbles at the water's edge are slimy with algae, and the water itself is a scummy green with floating water plants.

The northern shore is divided into 2 distinct areas. The eastern beaches and cliffs are uninhabited. There are several openings with visible caves leading into the cliff caverns behind. They are mostly too small to permit easy access. There is one notable large opening about halfway between the forest verge and the waterfall. It is located about 10 feet above the beach, and there is a 5 foot high slope of scree and broken rocks leading up toward it. The opening is wider at the bottom than the top, and there is a strong, pungent odor of bat coming from it. Beyond the waterfall the cliff openings get larger, mostly because the Gorbleemees have enlarged them. There are several dozen openings, some accessible by ladders or handholds gouged into the stone. This is the cave village of the trogs.

Players can do what they wish, of course, but it would be extremely foolish of them to force themselves on the Gorbleemees. There are several hundred of these nasty little cavemen. They hate all outsiders, and don't speak Common. The concept of trade is foreign to them, but they are all very keen on the concept of take. They don't have money. The only metal in their possession is stuff taken from any travelers or adventurers foolish enough to get too close.

The only real access to the caverns is through the batcave. Note that





players will have to climb into it and the footing leading up to is very treacherous. Nobody will die here, but players could get dinged up. Make a L1SR on DEX to see if they hurt themselves trying to get in. Those who fail take that many hits to CON.

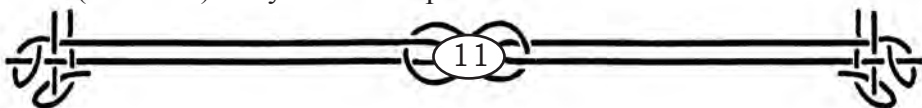
## Scene Five: The batcave

Enough light enters from outside to show that the entrance is basically a twisting tunnel. It is large enough for a large man to walk into, but it is a tight fit. There is no room to swing weapons. The tunnel gets much darker after the first twist, and is almost completely lightless after the second one. The air inside the cave is warmer than the air outside. The floor is covered with a layer of something noxious and squishy. Yes, it's bat shit. The smell is revolting. Make a L1SR on CON to see if anyone has to heave.

The tunnel slopes and twists upward. Walking is difficult but not impossible. The passage widens as it rises. After a considerable distance it really opens out into a huge grotto hundreds of feet wide, more than 40 feet high, broken by numerous stalagmites and stalactites, some of which have joined to form pillars. A steady dripping of cold water, not enough to be called rain, but certainly enough to be called annoying falls from the ceiling, spattering heads and helmets and making torches hiss.

The upper reaches of this grotto are the primary residence of a large colony of blood bats—hundreds of them. These large flying rodents eat insects like ordinary bats, but will also attack any large warm-blooded creature. If it is daylight outside, the bats are probably asleep and it would take a big commotion to rouse them. If it is night, they are probably all outside hunting. Any time near dawn or sunset could be trouble.

Blood bats are about the size of a large hawk and about that dangerous. (MR = 10) They can both rip with their claws and bite with teeth.





They echo-navigate and are very hard to hit on the wing. Once prey has started bleeding the bats swarm to the blood and lap it up with long sticky tongues. Blood bats hate fire, and smoke from torches will rouse them to attack if it persists for too long, say half an hour or more.

The lower parts of the grotto are full of water. It varies in depth from a few inches to several feet, and it's nasty because it is full of bat shit. There is a chance of catching some hideous disease here, but it wouldn't happen quickly enough to affect a single session of gameplay.

Searching the grotto walls will discover several exit tunnels, most of them large enough to accommodate a large man. All of them are fairly wet, some with streams trickling along the bottoms. They twist and turn all over the place, interconnect, sometimes go vertical. There is an entire hidden ecology operating inside these caverns.

## Scene Six: The Tunnels

Exploring these tunnels is a nightmare. The one thing that will never happen is a dead-end. It would be wise for players to come up with some way of retracing their steps, or they might get lost inside the cliffs and never find their way out. There are hundreds of miles of tunnels and grottos inside these cliffs, many of them far underground from where the players entered.

There are 3 notable locations to be discovered—all fairly close to the entrance that the players used:

1. **The bat cave.** Already described. Only real danger is attack by blood bats. (MR 10 each, attack in groups of 1-6 per player.)
2. **The caves of the Gorblemees.** Only real danger is attack by troglodytes. (MR 20 each, attack in groups of 1-6 per player)
3. **The Fungus Forest.** Only real danger is attack by the troll. (MR = 88)





The rest of the underground is endless tunnels. The chief danger is getting lost and starving to death. However, these tunnels are inhabited by a lot of dangerous vermin that are quite likely to attack any player characters they meet.

The tunnels are places of constant danger, especially if one cannot see well—only torchlight or lantern light—and even more so if completely in the dark. Every game turn check to see what is going wrong next. The rock is wet and slick everywhere. Players are in constant danger of falling, and any fall could injure or break someone. Sometimes the tunnel will go down abruptly. It's not a pit, but it might as well be.

Once each game turn have all the players make a L1SR on DEX. If they make it, fine. If they fail, let them fall and take a point of damage.

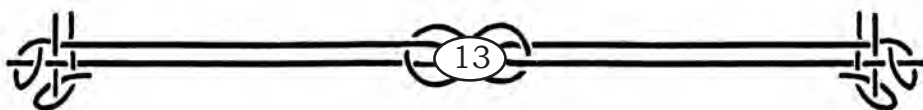
---

### **Tunnel Chart:**

The Game Master should roll 1D6 whenever the players have had about 4 turns of tunnel movement or rest. Consult the chart below to see what happens.

- 1 Tunnel branches into another tunnel.
- 2 Tunnel branches into a tunnel leading to bat cave
- 3 Hostile encounter
- 4 Hostile encounter
- 5 Tunnel branches into a tunnel leading to Fungus Forest \*if players manage to stay in a FF tunnel through 3 branchings they come to the Fungus Forest.
- 6 Tunnel branches into a tunnel leading to Gorbblemee caves \*  
All hostile encounters will be with Gorbblemees.

If there is a hostile encounter, roll 1D6 to see what horror attacks next:





## Hostile Encounter Chart:

**1 Gorbleemee foraging party.** Roll 1D6+1 to see how many trogs there are. If they are losing after 1 combat round, they will run away. Party is in a tunnel leading to the trog cave complex. If they stay in it through 3 trog encounters they will reach the home caves and be swarmed. Probable result death, but give players a chance to survive. If they find a way, let them exit the caves. (MR = 20 per trog)

**2 Grues.** Roll 1D6 to see how many grues attack. They prefer absolute darkness so their first attack will be an attempt to deprive the players of light. Grues can walk on the ceilings or sides of the tunnel with equal ease. Roll 1D6 for number of grues attacking. They only run away from intense light, and may follow the party and try to drag down stragglers. (MR = 36 per grue)

**3 Gakks.** Gakks are cave wolves that travel in packs of 2D6 creatures. They look like large balls of fur with 6 legs and a wide circular mouth like a lamprey's. They emit a high-pitched shriek and have an echo-navigation system similar to blood bats. Bats are their favorite prey. They have no eyes. (MR = 30 per gakk)





**4 Cave spiders** — giant arachnid monsters. They spin nearly invisible webs across passageways and rush to attack anything caught in them. Generally only one spider at a time, but it should be about as tough as the whole party put together. (MR = combined combat total of the fighters as determined by a weapons roll.)

**5 A troll.** Bigger than a man. Hideous. Regenerates  $\frac{1}{4}$  of total hit points every turn. Should be about as tough as the whole party. It's a flesh troll, so it needs to eat. The party has gotten lucky. Now all they have to do is capture it, and get it back to the castle. (MR = 88 — regenerates  $\frac{1}{10}$  of hit points per combat turn)

**6 A Cave Shadow** — the demented spirit of some being that was killed in these caves in the past. They are psychic vampires and only vulnerable to magic. Already in spirit form, they cannot be slain, but may be driven off or enslaved by the right magic. They tend to move along the wall as a shadow would move, and only become visible when there is light to show them. They will rush and attack some unlucky party member and possess that character unless he can win a mental contest. GM must judge the severity of the test.

A kind GM will let the party move through the tunnels strictly by luck (not really) to the Fungus Forest for an encounter with the troll. A strict GM will let the above tables run the party in circles no matter how long it takes.

## Scene Seven: The Great Fungus Forest

Deep below the earth lies the great fungus forest. This is not a mere grotto, but an enormous cavern at least as large as a football stadium. Here the fungi grow to enormous sizes, sometimes as much as 20 feet tall. They are mostly ghastly white toadstools but with color markings

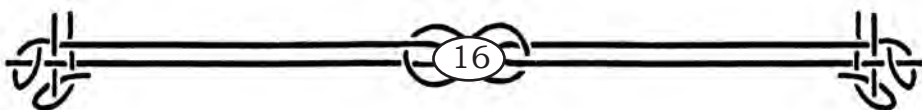
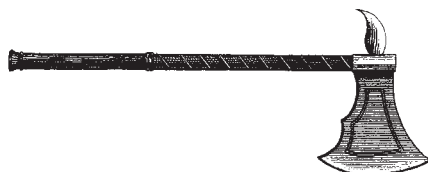




denoting different types. This is the burial place of the targs. For thousands of years they have been bringing their dead to this cavern and throwing them into it. There are smaller mushrooms and an almost grassy bed of moss covering the floor of the place. It is still humid, squishy, and miserable. This is the home of the trolls when they are not out hunting in the caverns. There may be as many as ten trolls living here, but players will never encounter more than one at a time. Large but mostly harmless insects abound in this forest—mosquitos the size of sparrows, beetles the size of chihuahuas, ants the size of cats. Unlike the rest of the caverns, there is a small amount of light in the Fungus Forest. All of the thallophytes have a faint phosphorescence and the overall effect is about as much illumination as a moonless night. It's dark still, but eyes adapted to low light conditions can see perfectly well in here.

Give the players a few turns to experience the eeriness of the place, and then let them find the troll. The troll is not interested in joining a menagerie, not even for the prospect of free meals. This should be the climax of the adventure. Somehow the players must get some part of the troll into the troll capture jar. Make it difficult for them. He's a troll, but he's not a stupid troll. If they succeed and can find their way back out of the caverns and return to the castle, reward them lavishly, perhaps by having Mingoh ask them to go capture a dragon for him. If they don't succeed, then there are more Cave Shadows wandering the Anitee Caverns.

The End.



# MINGOH THE EVIL OVERLORD

Would you go  
troll hunting for this man?



© J.S. Crampston '16

TROLLHALLA  
PRESS