

THROUGH DUNGEONS A DUNGEON-KEEPER

A SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR DUNGEONEERS

AS WRITTEN BY A SURVIVOR

A PRACTICAL
GUIDE TO HELP
DUNGEONEERS
SURVIVE AND
THRIVE WHILE
DUNGEON-
CRAWLING*

PRESENTED BY



MAXIMILLIAN SPARFOOT
DUNGEONEER, SURVIVOR, EXPERT



* 100% GUARANTEED OR YOUR MONEY BACK
USE AS INTENDED FOR BEST RESULTS
RESULTS VARY AND ARE NOT TYPICAL
GENERAL ADVICE ONLY AND NOT INTENDED TO REPLACE
THE ADVICE OF LEGAL, MORAL, OR OTHER AUTHORITIES
PLEASE ENSURE ALL INSURANCE IS CURRENT BEFORE
ADVENTURING AND DUNGEONEERING
TITHE ACCORDINGLY TO YOUR DEITY OF CHOICE, AS IT
MAY HELP YOU COME BACK IN ONE PIECE
CONSIDER A SAFER CAREER, LIKE DRAGON HUNTING
TIP YOUR BARTENDER AND WAIT STAFF APPROPRIATELY



JASON PAUL MCCARTAN

T H R O U G H
DUNGEONS
DEEPER

A SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR DUNGEONEERS

AS WRITTEN BY A SURVIVOR

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For Steven Scott

Judge, GM, Troublemaking Twin.

There will ALWAYS be time for tea and crumpets.

Also for Chris Gorman and James Watterson

The other Kilwinkie gamers. Good times, good times.

Also also for Gareth Jones

You created a monster. You monster.

Also also also For James M. Spahn

Even though you love squirrels, you're still good people.

That is, if halflings are people.

(EDITOR — MAX SAYS THEY ARE THE BEST PEOPLE!)

Also also also also for the Lady Knights of the Northwest

whose motto really should be "Shenanigans, we cause them."

IN MEMORIAM

"Sir" James A. Koti

Friend, Gamer, Fighter

Went into the West September 9, 2017

The world is made smaller by his passing.

*If ever there was a real-life human
version of Max Sparfoot, it'd be James.*

AUTHOR NOTES



GASWAX STONEHAND

LAWYER AND AGENT FOR
MANY, MANY, MANY,
MANY, MANY, MANY,
MANY DUNGEONEERS

ALSO

WILL EXECUTOR
WARRANTY GUARANTOR
BODY PARTS COLLECTOR
PART-TIME MORTICIAN
FIVE SKULL DUNGEONBAY SELLER
MONEY LENDER
GEM APPRAISER
MAP SELLER
SNAIL RAGER
BADGER AFICIONADO

EDITOR OF THIS
FINE PUBLICATION

"IF YOU'RE NOT
(UN)DEAD, WE'LL
INSURE YOU!"

NOTE, THE FIRST: *The inner voice you hear when you read this book should sound like a Transatlantic-accented streaming broadcaster presenting their VERY IMPORTANT OPINION on things. Consider reading the book aloud to yourself and to others, whether they care to hear it or not. Throw in completely obtuse and obscure pop culture references, and drop expletives every fourth or fifth word. Be sure to mispronounce words that you shouldn't and make up completely new ones as you continue. Throw some ads written on index cards up in front of you for the truly authentic experience. It'll be fun. No, really. The forthcoming audiobook version of this book will provide all this for you. Until that's out, you'll have to do it yourself¹.*

NOTE, THE SECOND: *Although this book is written VERY tongue-in-cheek and with humor (which is subjective, and if you don't find it funny, well, sorry, but thanks for the purchase anyway!) it does include a great deal of information to help the novice (and even not-so-novice) adventurer survive old school-style dungeon-crawling². The majority of it comes from hard-learned experience, some of it from watching others, and some from a stale bag of fortune cookies found nestled in a couch between some old coins and a soft toy of a popular character from the '90s that we all remember but desperately want to forget. The rest is blatantly made up³.*

¹ The audiobook doesn't really do this. I only wrote this as a trap to see how many people would read these Author's Notes. Also, the audiobook itself may be a fiction.

² As long as they're playing the game with an old school GM/Judge/Referee who follows the boundary-fluid rules of old school play, is fair to players, and doesn't break Wheaton's Law ("Don't be a Dick"). If you're such an old school GM/Judge/Referee, then hopefully you'll find a few nuggets in here that you can use in your own games. If you're not, please be kind to your players, as they may be the only ones that will put up with your shit, and even then only until they can find a way to game shit-free — you've been warned.

³ And good luck working out the percentages of each! Answers, on a postcard, can just be put straight into the trash. But if you do work it out, don't tell anyone else. Let them work it out on their own, the sods. Everybody wants spoon-fed these days, dammit!

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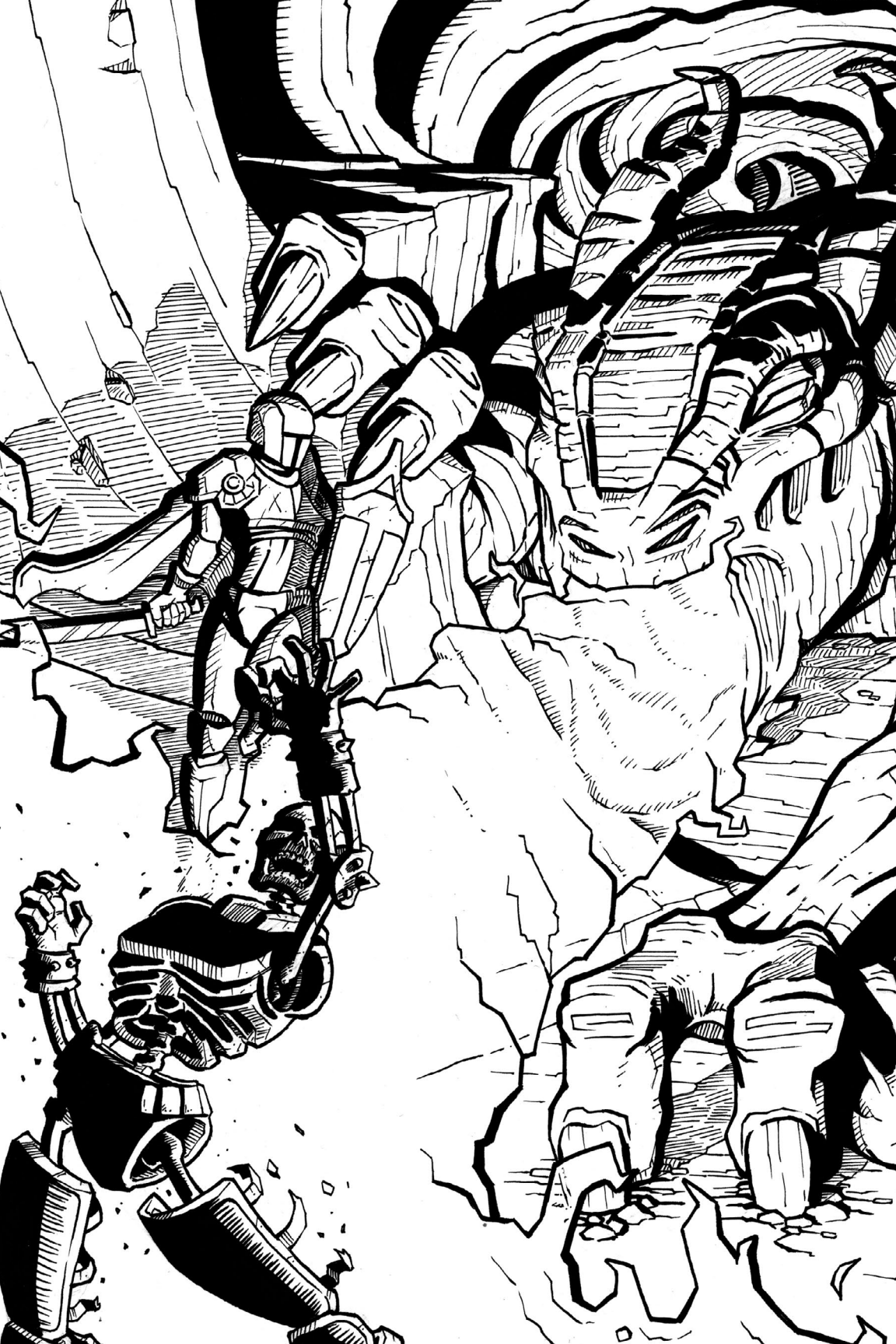
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HEY THERE!

MAXIMILLIAN SPARFOOT HERE!

You may recognize me from wanted posters hung in most cities and towns, or from the center spread of the recent Fall issue of *Dashing Dungeoneers*. Or simply from the front cover of this book itself. (Hint, I'm not the worried-looking guy.)

I'm going to be your guide throughout this wonderful tome, because I wrote it and I'm full of all sorts of sage advice when it comes to surviving dungeons. And why not, because I'm still here, aren't I? And I've plundered more dungeons than lichs have successfully transplanted themselves into a phylactery (see **page 121** for information on how to deal with lichs).

Now, see those guys on the left there? The ones fighting the giant flame-breathing beastie? They're toast. **T-O-A-S-T.**

Don't be like them. Be like me. Be a **SURVIVOR!**

Now, you may never be as pretty or as suave or as sophisticated as me, but you too can learn the secrets of plundering dungeons and making it out alive (or at least in enough functional bits) to spend the hard-earned loot that you've ganked from whatever previously held onto it. And you can learn to love it! You **TOO** can become a **FUN-geoneer!**

Throughout this book, I'm going to give you the benefit of my many years of experience of not dying while fungeoneering, and provide you with the very best advice you can get for whatever you paid for this book. What a deal, eh? (If you stole this book, the money-back guarantee is null and void. See my lawyer-editor for details.)

By the way, you may want to take notes as you read.

Those notes will probably save your life (see **Rule #27**).



THIS IS WHAT
A SURVIVOR
LOOKS LIKE.

I SMELL AND TASTE
JUST AS GOOD
AS I LOOK.

SAMPLING
AVAILABLE FOR
A SMALL FEE.

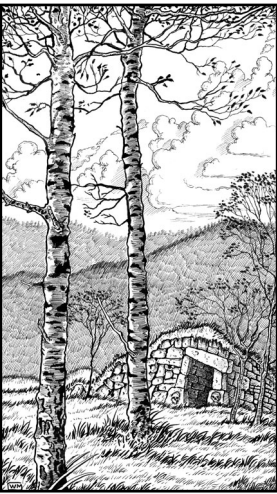
GO ON.

YOU KNOW
YOU WANT TO.

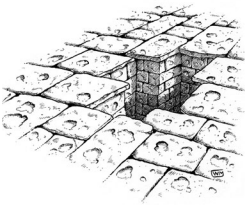
MMMMMM.

THE DUNGEON AXIOMS

There are some axioms, or truths accepted without controversy or question, about dungeons that typically hold across each and every one you'll find yourself exploring. Most of these axioms are agreed up within the dungeoneering community, although certain vocal personalities in it might disagree with one or more items. My book, my dungeon axioms. Want to push your own axioms? Write your own damn book.



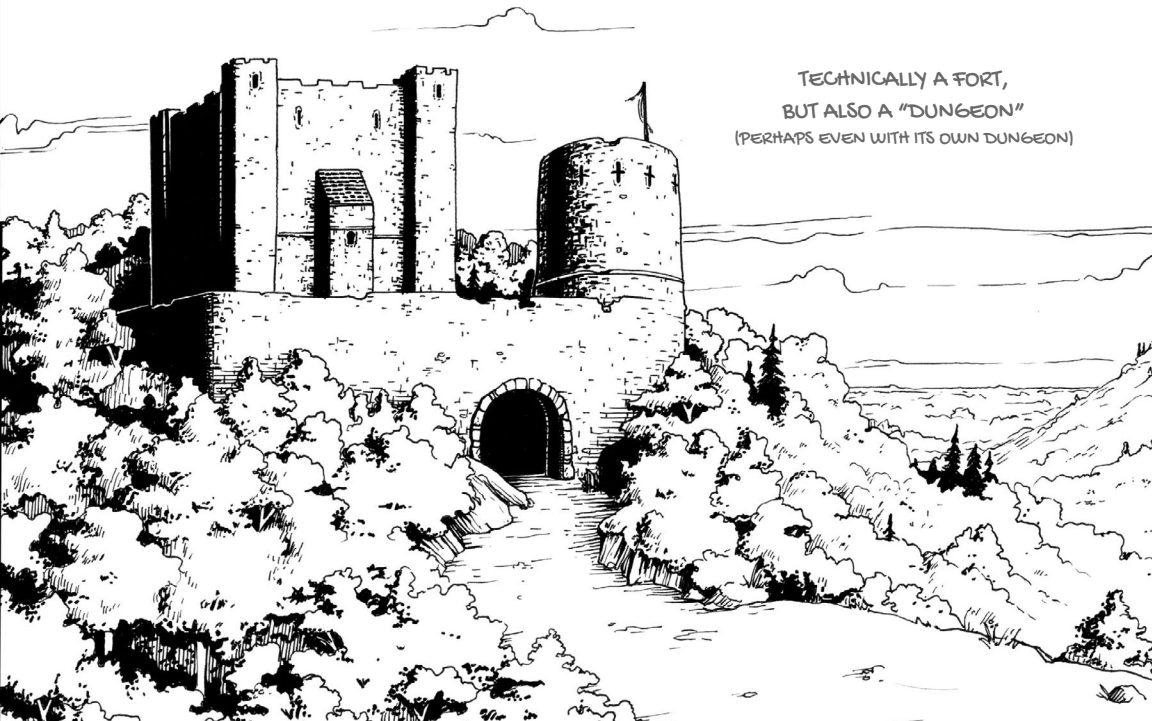
A FAIRLY STANDARD
DUNGEON ENTRANCE



A FAIRLY NONSTANDARD
DUNGEON ENTRANCE
(OR POSSIBLY A LATRINE)

1. Dungeons exist as many different types of places. The word *dungeon* is used to identify explorable areas full of risk and reward. They can be buildings or structures built up (castles, forts, etc.) or exist as negative space underground (actual dungeons, prisons, cave complexes etc.).
2. A dungeon may be only a single room or be an entire sprawling complex and can have one or more entrances or exits that are either visible or concealed.
3. Many dungeons are older than they appear and have changed over time. They have been claimed by those who came after. Some have had many cycles of ownership. The dungeon of today is not the dungeon of yesteryear. Things get left behind, things are lost, things are re-purposed.
4. Some dungeons are manufactured and made up of rooms and connecting corridors while others are formed from the natural environment itself. Some combine both of these, either on the same level or different levels. Some dungeons are made up of many smaller connected dungeons.
5. Every dungeon has its own set of interacting ecologies. There may seem to be no rhyme or reason to the purpose, the design, or the utility of a dungeon. They often do not make sense to the uninformed. Ecologies change over time.

6. Dungeons are dangerous and become even more so as they advance in design. Challenges ratchet up in kind and death becomes more likely.
7. Dungeons come with challenges and dangers, natural and unnatural. Those who currently inhabit or control the dungeon are responsible for the majority of these.
8. Some monsters and creatures are found in multiple levels or areas, while others are found in only a few specific ones. This usually relates to their difficulty to overcome or defeat. There are monsters and other creatures that wander the levels.
9. Dungeons require explorers to manage resources carefully and be creative with solutions to the problems they encounter. Brains often win out over brawn.
10. Those that explore dungeons come out alive and changed by the experience or they end up dead or worse.



TECHNICALLY A FORT,
BUT ALSO A "DUNGEON"
(PERHAPS EVEN WITH ITS OWN DUNGEON)

MAP TO THE RULES

RULE 20

RULE 21

RULE 45

Replace the garnets in the eyes with rubies. Pull the lever.

RULE 46

RULE 20

RULE 52

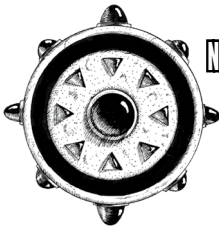
RULE 24

The lower antechamber has a three layer trap within.

- Trap 1 - Door
- Trap 2 - Puzzle
- Trap 3 - ?

Remember to recover Declan's body from that pit.

He still owes money.



NORTH

DO NOT COPY OR DISTRIBUTE THIS MAP TO UNAUTHORIZED PERSONS.
DO NOT DAMAGE ORIGINAL. DO NOT USE MAGIC TO MEMORIZE.

THIS MAP IS OWNED BY THE CITY OF VALSTOCK.

PUNISHABLE BY HANGING, QUARTERING, HANGING AGAIN, THEN BOILING, THEN BEING FED TO THE CITY'S POOR.

What has cities, but no houses; forests,
but no trees; and water, but no fish?

Grelish the Gaunt
Does he haunt?

RULE
48

RULE
11

Use the jade monkey key.

Altar with
five skulls.
The goblin
skull.

RULE
53

RULE
20

ORTOK?

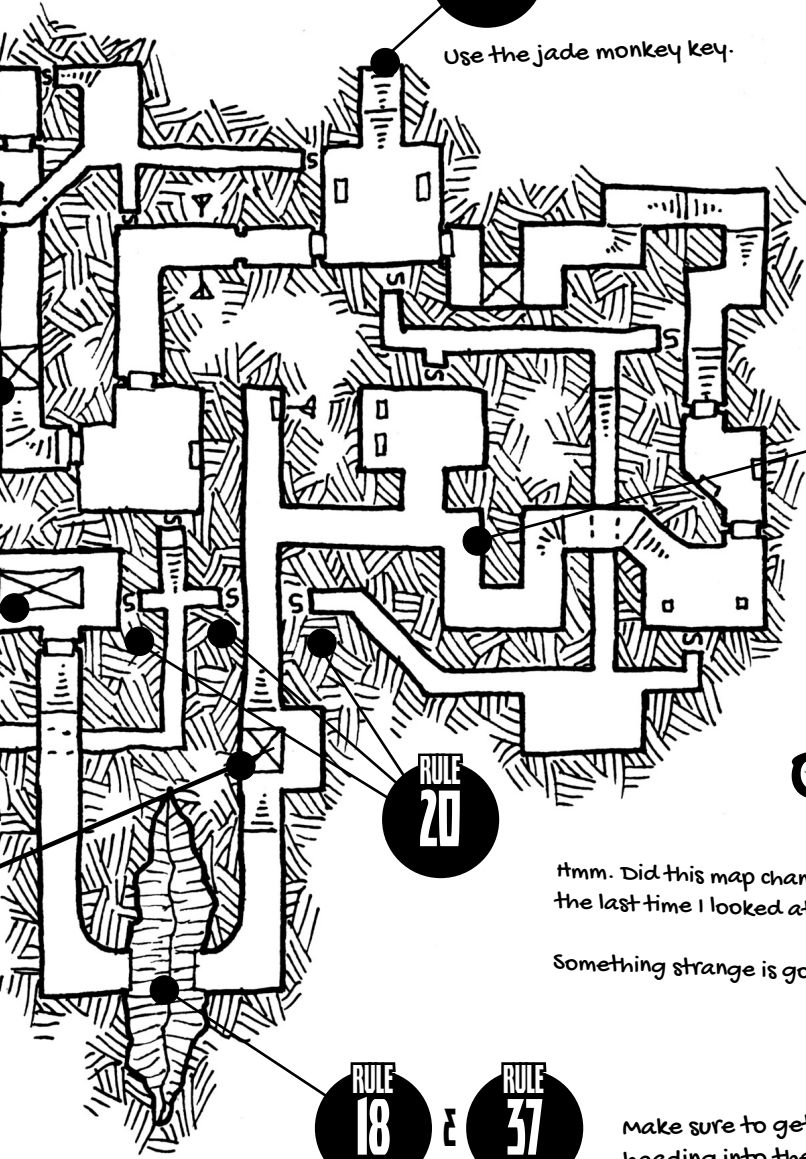
Hmm. Did this map change from
the last time I looked at it?

Something strange is going on.

RULE
18

RULE
37

make sure to get this map copied before
heading into the next level. Just in case.



THE RULES

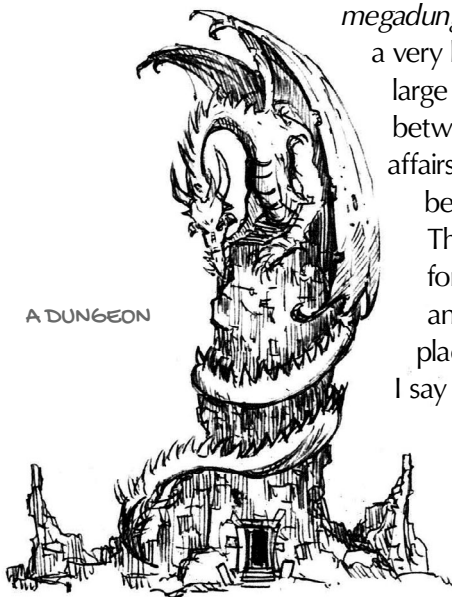
Here, presented for your pleasure and survival, are the MAJOR rules you should follow if you're planning to explore dungeons. Some would say that these rules are really more guidelines to adhere to as require. No, these are rules — follow them or die. Seriously.

1 NOT ALL DUNGEONS ARE DUNGEONS



A DUNGEON.

The first thing you should know is that the word *dungeon* is often used to describe a number of areas of differing size and construction, not just dungeons proper: this includes cave systems (natural or unnatural), underground lairs or complexes, underground cities, floating castles, wizard towers, forts, and non-floating castles. The definition that serves best is “an explorable area, which may or may not be underground or an actual dungeon, and that is filled with challenge, loot, and opponents”. Got it? Good.



A DUNGEON

You may have heard the terms *superdungeon* or *megadungeon* used by some. These terms refer to either a very large dungeon with multiple levels or areas, or a large number of dungeons with multiple connections between each of them. They're often vast, sprawling affairs that offer lots of good loot, but also tend to be VERY deadly and take a long time to explore. There's often many factions (see **Rule #16**) vying for control of one or more of the dungeon areas, and often some sort of ancient evil lives in the place (at least in my experience). So trust me when I say that if you choose to go adventuring in one of these dungeons, take all I say in the remainder of this book to heart at least five times over. Otherwise, you're not going to survive. At least not if you want to get to the good stuff. The REALLY good stuff.

CHOOSING DUNGEONS TO EXPLORE

This part is tricky. You don't want to simply just find the nearest dungeon and go exploring it. Others have probably already thought about doing that. Some dungeons are simply too deadly for the inexperienced and ill-prepared to explore (but these also tend to cull from the unwashed masses). If you want to end up dead, choose those. Things to consider when thinking about a dungeon for you to explore:

- **SIZE.** If you're just starting out as a dungeoneer, consider tackling smaller dungeons. These tend to be less deadly, and are left alone by the more experienced groups looking for a challenge and for good loot. You may run into other inexperienced dungeoneer parties when exploring these, but you can either ally with them or come to an alternative arrangement with them. I recommend the latter, just FYI.
- **DISTANCE.** How far a dungeon is from your camp or base of operations is important (**see Rule #6**). You want it to be close enough so you can resupply, or to escape and regroup. Consider dungeons near (or in) a settlement as you start out dungeoneering. As you get more experienced, start using camps nearer the dungeon (**see Rules #2 and #50**).
- **PERCEIVED DEADLINESS.** This can be gauged by how many other adventurers enter the dungeon and never return. Dungeons that kill off mid-level and high-level adventurers are something to be avoided initially; new dungeoneers are just offering themselves as fodder attempting to explore those.
- **THE PAYOFF.** What you get out of exploring the dungeon is important. Some people with morals and other restrictive outlooks on life delve into dungeons to remove evil or monsters. Others who are more realistic focus on the type of loot that can be recovered. Know what you're potentially going to get out of exploring the dungeon before you do so. If it's not worth the hassle, then don't delve. Not until the hassle is worth it.



WELL-TRAVELED
DUNGEONS ARE
USUALLY ALREADY
LOOTED.

AVOID UNLESS A
BEGINNER.

3

CONSIDER PARTY NUMBERS

There's an art to working out how many partners you should dungeoneer with. When you have more people with you to help you slay enemies, this also means that there's more fingers in the loot pie. Too few extra pairs of arms and you'll all end up slaughtered. Some will recommend parties of five or six adventurers, supported by a number of henchthings. Others will recommend fewer henchies and more dogs (see **Rule #65**). Dogs, especially trained war hounds, are great at helping take care of enemy mobs but keeping them under control (especially underground (that can be really difficult).

As I said, the more people in your party, the more the spoils of war and looting get split up. This means less loot for you. Sometimes that the breaks, because to get the loot means you need to have a strong enough group that can secure it. Party size is often a trade-off between strength of numbers and the potential loot that can be collected. Remember that attrition in party number size can often help increase final loot shares, but it also means less help carrying the loot home and keeping it secure on the road there.

It may take a little bit of time for you to work out the optimal number for your party. Sometimes some adventurers don't fit with party and need replaced. Adventurers are also likely to become wounded or killed, which leads to even more replacing. Most adventuring parties are close-knit groups that don't do well with taking on new members unless they're coming in as meatshields or with skills or gear that are needed.

4

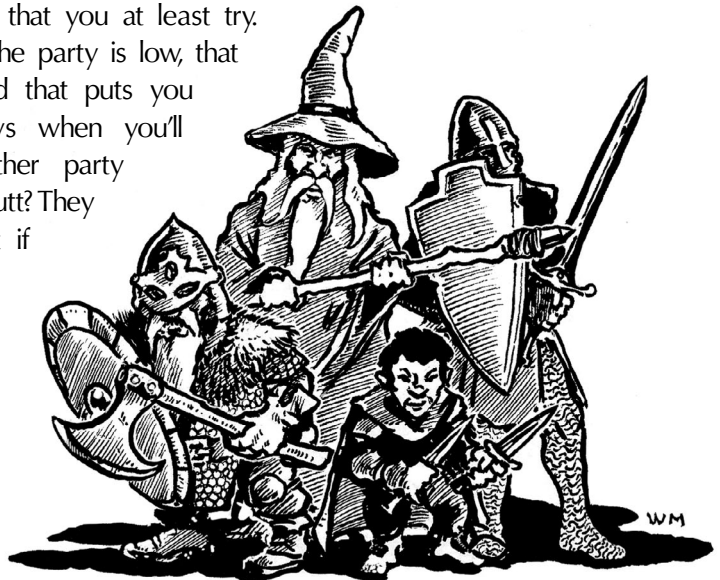
ALWAYS TAKE FRIENDS AND ALLIES

Do this, even if you have to pay them. Just make sure that you get a good rate (saving money is ALWAYS important – look after the coppers and the gold will look after itself!

Having a good crew with you when you dungeoneer is paramount to survival. Not only are they potential meatshields for you to use to help you get your hands on phat loot, they're also the ones who can get you out of the dungeon and back to safety if anything happens to you. So, it's important to make "friends" with others, but don't get too friendly — if you do then you may end up getting emotionally attached to them, and nothing good ever comes of that. I speak from experience. Collaboration within the party is the key to survival.

Now, you may find that it's difficult to make friends and continually be nice to the other members of the party, but it's important that you at least try. If the level of trust in the party is low, that makes morale low, and that puts you in danger. Who knows when you'll need one of the other party members to save your butt? They certainly won't do that if you've been a pain in the arse to them.

Don't get too friendly with henchmen or hirelings. There's a good chance they're on one-way trips, anyway. Just don't let them know that, and of course put the kibosh on any such rumors.



THE ADVENTURING PARTY

A TYPICAL GROUP
OF PRE-DEAD "FRIENDS".

BETWEEN 4 AND 10 PARTY
MEMBERS IS A GOOD SIZE.

Henchmen and hirelings, what's the difference anyway?

Quite a lot, really. Hirelings are only along for the ride and a little bit of pay. As soon as there's some sign of trouble, there's a pretty damn good chance they'll scarp off never to be seen again (and probably won't even make it out of a dungeon alive on their own). Henchmen (or henchwomen or henchthings, as the case may be) are more invested in cultivating a continuing prosperous relationship with you, usually because there's a percentage of recovered loot involved in their hiring or they're in the same guild and have professional morals and respect for you. In short, henchmen will stick around when trouble starts, while hirelings will run and run and run and run and run and run. Point made?

CARD GAMES ARE GREAT
WAYS TO BUILD MORALE
AMONG HIRELINGS AND
HENCHMEN DURING
DOWNTIME ...

... AND ALSO TO RECOVER
THE MONEY YOU'VE PAID
HIRELINGS AND HENCHMEN.

Converting a hireling to a henchman is usually pretty easy, should you be so inclined and have found someone valuable enough for such an upgrade. By investing in them and supplying armor and weapons and other gear, along with some additional spoils, you can gain a reliable henchman. These have a vested interest in keeping you alive and well and will do what they can to make sure that happens. Regular pay and spoils help with this. As does making them sign a contract.



Mercenaries are technically hirelings that don't run away when trouble starts. This is because they're trained to fight and there's a contract involved in their hiring, which they'll honor. Mercenaries are great to have along during delves but remember that if their services can be bought by you, they can be bought by someone else with a bigger bag of gold. I like to call these types of mercenaries *land pirates* – that hasn't quite caught on yet, but I think it will. You should use that term. Often.

6

ESTABLISH A BASE OF OPERATIONS

Having a base of operations outside any dungeon is a Smart Thing To Do. It gives you a starting place for delving and a place to return to should you need to rest or resupply (or even lick your wounds). Horses and other pack animals can be left at the base when not needed, as can retainers or hired help that won't accompany you (and that you trust to watch over such things). It's also a place for people to find you.

Many adventuring parties have at least two bases of operations: one in a nearby settlement, and a smaller movable camp closer to the actual dungeon. Small temporary camps can be made inside the dungeon as needed, but you should still have one or more bases outside the dungeon.

The most common base of operations within urban areas for most parties seems to be an inn, which provides food and rest to parties constantly on the move from place to place (referred to as *murderhobos* — see **Rule #76**) that don't settle down. More established parties, such as those staying some time in an area or those with patrons, may rent houses or other private accommodations. This necessitates hiring additional help, including retainers and protection staff when the party is both in and out of residence and provides additional privacy and security for loot gathered. These private dwellings are also excellent places to conduct research and business in.

NOT ALL SETTLEMENTS
ARE THE SAME,
SO IF SETTING UP A
BASE OF OPERATIONS IN
ONE, KNOW THE LAWS
THERE AND THE PEOPLE
WHO ENFORCE THEM.

THAT WAY YOU CAN
PROTECT ANY LOOT YOU
KEEP IN TOWN.







Any base of operations should be defensible, especially if you plan on entering the dungeon multiple times. There's nothing worse than coming out of a dungeon and back to your base to find everyone there dead and all the cool loot you've acquired absconded. Hire retainers that are trustworthy or sticklers for sticking to agreed contracts (**see Rule #5**) and who can fight when needed.

Camps need to be secured properly. This means choosing an appropriate location for the camp, putting up perimeter defenses, and setting watches. Rests should be short and frequent with at least two party members awake (**see Rule #50**). Defenses can be made from furniture, rubble, or other detritus found in dungeons. Campfires should remain low or screened to hide light, unless bright light is something that keeps certain monsters or opponents away; large and bright fires not only announce where a party is but also act as a bright tapestry for silhouetted party members to be targeted (**see Rule #42**). Smoke from campfires needs to be managed safely (**see Rule #69**). Magical light can solve some of these problems, but doesn't give off heat for warmth (a major reason to light a campfire).

If danger comes close to your camp, rather than shout or use a loud alarm that lets attackers know that they've been spotted, wake sleeping party members gently and softly. Let them know what's happening. Everyone should prepare weapons and armor quickly; the easiest way to do this is to sleep with weapons near, and sleep in padding or light armor (heavy armor is uncomfortable to sleep in I've been told). This gives the greatest chance of being able to surprise opponents when they rush in (**see Rule #41**).

INNS AND TAVERNS

A POPULAR BASE OF OPERATIONS.

ALSO A GREAT PLACE TO FIND WORK AND TO RELAX AFTER DUNGEONEERING. THE BEST ARE RATED 5 TENKARS.

When in an adventuring party, it's important for you to know what roles you'll perform. In general, there are five specific roles that you can play, though you may end up performing more than one (sometimes at the same time) depending on the party's needs and current deficits. Having a well-rounded party means having at least one person covering each of the roles, although having multiple characters covering each role is not a bad idea, especially if there are enough party members. Just be careful not to unbalance the party by having too many of each role in the party.

Discussion of roles and getting agreement from everyone in the party before heading out to adventure is a Smart Thing To Do (so you should do it). It means everyone considers themselves part of a team, and are prepared for inevitable combat, and will know what to do when it happens.



DUSTAN MALARKY

THIEF
(STRIKER / SUPPORT)



SKAAT THE PRETTY

FIGHTER
(PROTECTOR / STRIKER)

STRIKER

Whether a swift attacker up close in melee or firing waves of arrows into opponents at range, a striker's main job is to put the hurt on others (usually bosses or specific problem enemies) and whittle away at enemy forces. They hold the primary offense role in a party and tend to specialize in one or two types of attacks, often with devastating effectiveness. Many different types of strikers work well together. Find what works for your party.

PROTECTOR

Often called "meatshields in tin", protectors act as a bulwark against enemy forces, soaking up and sponging damage aimed at the party. Often they focus on protecting the more squishy members of the party, or as a foil to bosses or really tough opponents. Think of them as a moveable wall. Being tough and highly mobile means they can place themselves in danger as much as they need to, and they can be just as effective as strikers in taking down opponents.

CONTROLLER

The job of a controller is to manipulate the battlefield to help keep the good guys (you) standing while knocking the bad guys (not you) on their arses. Whether it's using arcane, divine, or some other form of magic or powers, controllers affect many targets at the same time, providing offense or defense that cover large areas, often softening up targets for others to take out.

SUPPORT

Most support roles fall to those with alteration magic or the ability to heal others. While strikers attack enemies and protectors shield others in the party, those in support keep them up and fighting as battle wears on. Many in support act as less powerful versions of strikers, protectors, and controllers with the right combination of skills, abilities, and gear.

EVERYMAN

This is anyone that doesn't fall into any of the other roles, including hirelings and some henchmen, particularly those that can't act as strikers or protectors. Their job is to do all of the other jobs beneath everyone else, such as setting up camp, cooking, latrine duty etc. Their reward for doing so, apart from continuing to breathe, is companionship and sometimes a little coin as a reward. And sometimes the option to receive training and take on one of the other roles.

So, that's it. Know the role you play in the adventuring party and know what roles everyone else plays. If you do that, the chances of you all surviving to spend all the loot you gather increase tenfold.



MELITHAANA OF THE RED WAY

MAGIC USER
(CONTROLLER)



SARIS, GODQUEEN OF SA

CLERIC
(PROTECTOR / SUPPORT)



BOLGAR THE VULGAR

HIRELING
(EVERYMAN)

There's an old adage among surviving dungeoneers: those who fail to plan, plan to die horrible and gruesome and usually avoidable deaths. Something like that. Before you go anywhere near a dungeon you should:

- **DO GROUNDWORK.** Find out as much as you can about the dungeon before you go anywhere near it. Lots of people may have information that's useful to you. Books and texts may hold important information. Balance being overt and secretive about gathering this information. The more that know you're thinking of attempting a particular delve, the more may try to waylay you and take your spoils if you make it out. Or ask to join you.
- **GET MAPS.** Maps are important. Often inaccurate, but important. A good map is worth a hefty portion of any loot recovered from the one or more dungeons. Not all maps are created equal though (see Rules #20 and #21)
- **INTERVIEW SURVIVORS.** Those who survive going into dungeons can often impart quality information about it if you know how to get them to talk and tell the truth (hint: usually involves money). Some may even want to return with you if you look like you can handle yourself. They may want revenge, a piece of the action, some loot, or just bragging rights that they survived more than once. Remember that the larger your party, the smaller the cut of the final loot you get.
- **CONSIDER YOUR APPROACH.** How are you going to travel to your final destination? If you're traveling far, you may want to consider using horses or coaches to get there. If there's water travel involved, will you schlep along the edge of rivers, or will you travel in boats? What settlements are nearby that you can regroup and re-equip at?

- **GATHER YOUR GEAR AND EQUIPMENT.** Once you know what you're getting into, put together a detailed list of everything that you'll need. Don't go overboard, but also don't scrimp on things that you may need (**see Rule #28**). There are certain items that will be more important than others depending on the dungeon you're choosing to explore. If you have a lot of gear, consider having a pack animal to transport it to the dungeon, or some helpers. Just remember that when you're in the dungeon you (or lackeys) will have to not only carry the gear in but carry it out along with any treasure. On that note, you may get lucky in finding some gear in the dungeon left or dropped by other adventurers who have explored it but don't bank on that.
- **DEVELOP AN ESCAPE PLAN.** This matters more than you think (**see Rule #19**).
- **SET YOUR EXPECTATIONS.** Know that some of you won't make it back, and plan for this. Perhaps a last will and testament is in order? (**see Rule #75**).

9

IMPROVISE, IMPROVISE, IMPROVISE

In saying that, pretty much every plan you will ever make will fall apart when you encounter trouble (which is why you should always have that escape plan). This means improvising at times, rather than following the true and tried and planned.

This isn't a bad thing. Not only will this give you an element of surprise, as most enemies you encounter probably are used to standard combat, but it may also save your life. This may seem antithetical to what was in the previous rule, but it's an important thing to consider if you want to survive some dungeons. Especially those that don't make sense in any way when you are actually in them.

BE WARY OF RUMORS

One of the easiest ways to find out what's going on in an area is to ask locals of that area. Often for the price of a drink, some food, or some other favor, locals may impart some local rumors to you.

A word of caution, though: not all rumors will be true, and some may include only a modicum of truth. Some will be outright lies or based on fear or gossip. The trick is to discern which rumors you discover are true and which are not. There's no simple way to do this, but the more rumors you encounter, the easier it is to get closer to the truth if you spend a little time thinking about it.

THERE MAY BE MANY ENTRANCES

Bad dungeons have only one way in and one way out. These should be avoided if possible because you can easily get trapped. Of course, sometimes you don't know a dungeon only has one entrance and exit until you explore it and don't find any others, so you should make the assumption this is how the dungeon is until you find out otherwise.



A DUNGEON ENTRANCE.

ALSO A DUNGEON EXIT.

- **MOST DUNGEON ENTRANCES** are usually blocked in some way, either by doors (magic or normal), portcullises (see page 126), grates, secret mechanisms, illusion spells, or other fancy ways to hide or deny access. It's the rare dungeon that is openly inviting. Carrying gear that can help you enter dungeons is a good idea, even if you may not need it. Lots of rope (see Rule #63), climbing pitons, a block & tackle, and a sledgehammer are generally a good investment for any dungeoneering party.
- **SOME ENTRIES INTO DUNGEONS** don't look like traditional entries. These include chimneys, wells, airshafts, crevices, rivers, and waterfalls.
- **ALWAYS REMEMBER** that a dungeon entrance is also technically a dungeon exit. Unless you screw up.

ADVANCE ONLY WHEN READY TO

At first, you'll encounter easy-to-defeat and overcome opponents and challenges at the initial entry levels, but things become a little more dangerous as you keep progressing deeper into the heart of the dungeon (no matter what direction that lies in). Remember that the further you are from the entrance to a dungeon, the more the risk increases for you and the party. This is offset by the fact that most of the most powerful and valuable loot tends to be in areas of high risk. If you want that stuff, you need to delve deeper. Just use some proper planning.

Don't overstretch yourself. You still need to exit the dungeon at some point. With a decent map (see **Rules #20 and #21**) and knowing what resources you have (see **Rule #28**), you'll know at what point you have to turn back to restock and then re-enter (see **Rule #14**). Also keep in mind access to spells and healing magic (see **Rule #61**) and the fact that they'll start being used up more often and quicker as you encounter more challenging portions of the dungeon.

THINGS GET MORE
AND MORE DIFFICULT
THE DEEPER YOU DELVE.

MAKE SURE YOU'RE
READY FOR THAT.

MOST PEOPLE ONLY
GET ONE LIFE.

BE SMART WITH IT.



13

MORE SMALL DELVES OVER LONG

If you can, at least at the beginning of your exploring a dungeon, perform a number of small delves before committing to longer explorations. The main reason for doing this is to allow you to sample the dungeon and get an idea of potential problems you may encounter, and gauge how potentially troublesome deeper areas of the dungeon can be. You also stay close enough for reinforcements and resupply should you need them. It also allows you to be systematic in clearing dungeons areas, although after leaving each time, some things may change (see **Rule #14**). Dungeons do abhor a vacuum.

If you decide to make longer delves, consider putting resupply caches in specific locations you have explored that you can go back to easily. This stops you from having to go all the way back out of a dungeon unless you must. Make sure to mark these locations on a map, possibly using a cipher (see **Rule #20**). Don't lose this map!

14

IF YOU LEAVE, THINGS WILL CHANGE

Dungeons aren't static, and with factions and wandering monsters, a hole in the dungeon ecology is often quickly filled. While you can block up the entrance (that you know of), that won't stop the dungeon potentially backfilling from factions and monsters deeper in the dungeon who choose to expand their own territory.

The presence of other parties in the dungeon can also cause minor or major changes. Not only may they have encountered some good loot that would be better in your hands, but they may either have cleared out some factions/monsters or caused them to be on high alert. Or taken any supply caches you've strategically left about.

CONSIDER DUNGEON ECOLOGIES

Each dungeon ecology is different from the next one, though many can share the same characteristics. Dungeon ecologies define the types of creatures and monsters that inhabit a particular dungeon environment. Some dungeons, (usually smaller ones) are made up of only one ecology, but other larger ones have many different interlinked ecologies. Examples of the former are simple cave complex or a single lower level of a ruin, while the latter could be a castle or fort with underground levels purposefully created that attach to one or more naturally-occurring underground cave systems.

You get the idea, right?

Each of these may be home to one or more specific groups of inhabitants that may have had a hand in shaping the dungeon or have taken advantage of it, and these inhabitants will have formed factions (**see Rule #16**) that live in constant competition with others. Ecologies change over time (**see Rule #14**) both naturally and with the intrusion of loot-seeking adventurers. Sometimes ecologies go through many cycles, and the dungeon is no longer used for its original intended purpose. Don't be surprised if things don't make a lot of sense at times. I've seen stuff that would turn your hair white multiple times.

This affects the adventuring party because before entering a dungeon you need to have an idea of what to expect (**see Rules #1 and #2**). Knowing the potential hazards in a dungeon (**see Rule #18**) as well as the factions currently in resident allows you to plan and prepare better (**see Rules #8 and #9**). Dungeoneering is all about risk versus reward, and it should be heavily skewed towards the reward side.

In every dungeon, there are likely to be a number of different factions, especially if there are humanoid races in it. Most factions have some sort of shared end goal or set of objectives they're trying to achieve or are at least led by someone working towards those.

Finding what these are means being able to know if the factions will be a problem for you and your party, or are something you can leverage to your benefit. Allying with factions is certainly something that should be considered, though the length of the alliance may only last as long as needed (because the more hands in the pot, the smaller the amount of loot everyone gets — do you see a pattern here?). Allied factions can often help out take out other factions in the dungeons; they often just need some information and encouragement to do so.

Most factions are controlled by one or more bosses or leaders (see **Rule #39**). Sometimes factions have their own internal power struggles going on, which you can take advantage of if you're clever and have opportunity.

If you know the factions that you'll be encountering, consider having someone in the party that can speak their language or has some sort of connection to them. This can go a long way in making sure that the first contact you have with the faction doesn't end up in a bad day for everyone involved.

DECIDE THE LOOT SPLIT EARLY

Before you even go anywhere near the dungeon you've selected, everyone in the party should work out and be in agreement about how found loot is going to be split. Perhaps everything is split evenly, but usually not. There are a couple of categories of loot that any party should discuss how to split:

- **COINS** are pretty easy to split and share. Coins don't fluctuate in value much, though some may be ancient or from another geographic area (and have more value). These can usually be split evenly. They can also be used to pay henchmen and hirelings. Having a shared group coin fund is also a good way to help spread the cost of adventuring and having everyone contribute to success. You'll need to consider how you're going to carry lots of coins around when adventuring, as coins can be quite loud (see **Rule #44**) and cumbersome.
- **GEMS** come in all shapes and sizes and qualities, and this affects their value. Gems are the preferred way to carry lots of money (see **Rule #68**) and to trade for higher priced items. They can usually be traded in settlements and converted to coins or credit for a small fee, or may require going to a gem merchant for conversion. Some magic users may need gems for use with spells, rituals, and magic items.
- **WEAPONS AND ARMOR** are often readily found on others in a dungeon. Some can be high quality, or even be magical; most adventurers tend to claim these as they go. Collecting these in dungeons can often help increase the loot pile, but they're hard to carry around dungeons. Excess armor and weapons can be deposited back at your camp or base of operations outside a dungeon as needed — keep in mind that leaving dungeons has consequences (see **Rule #14**). Weapons and armor can be given to hired help to bolster them (but don't forget to provide training in how to use them!).

- **ARTIFACTS** are old and ancient and have a great deal of value. They also tend to be fragile, unless they're magical. If you can't use them, sell them.
- **MAGIC ITEMS** always present difficulties to work out for most parties. While they can be sold for money, their real value comes in being able to actually use them. Some parties share items among the group by giving specific items to those who can use them best, while others use straws, dice, or cards to determine who gets what. You'll want a way to identify magic items as you go (see **Rule #60**), because you won't know exactly what they do until they're identified or you try to use them (see **page 130** for information on how to detect what magic items do).
- **TOOLS** and other items are best shared through the group as needed. High-quality tools may end up being "purchased" by party members using some of their loot share to acquire the items, or if the item is a specialist item (such as lockpicks) it goes straight to the specialist.

If you start collecting more loot than you can carry, consider creating loot caches that you can return to on your way out of the dungeon if you need to resupply. These can be concealed in the environment or through the use of magic. Existing loot caches can be found by other adventurers and monsters, so be prepared for them to potentially be missing when you return to them.

I'd advise getting the loot spread in writing and have everyone sign their agreement. That way there's some legal protection if things go awry. This also stops arguments after escaping a dungeon about who gets what.

Keep some money back to finance the next dungeon delve you're going to make. That makes sure that there's money in case things go sideways (which they usually do) to cover all of the costs you might accrue next time.

KNOW THE DUNGEON HAZARDS

In any dungeon, there are two main types of hazards you should be aware of: natural and unnatural. Natural hazards are the results of time and the environment affecting the dungeon, while unnatural are those that are made by monsters and other dungeon denizens. Both are annoying.

Some hazards you may encounter, in no specific order:

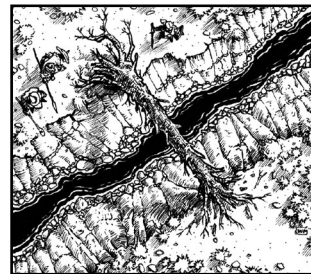
- **DISEASE** is an ever-present danger in dungeoneering. Bodies left to rot in dungeons often end up diseased, which animals feed on and then also become diseased. Some monsters are carriers of disease and quite enjoy passing those diseases to others in bites or scratches. If you encounter a potentially diseased monster, keep your distance while you take it down. If you end up diseased, clerics and paladins and magic potions can help stop or at least contain the disease until it can be treated.
- **FALLING** is an incredibly common dungeon hazard, even if the fall is short. Ledges, holes in floors, pits, broken bridges, ropes, and the like can provide many opportunities to fall. Falling isn't *always* fatal, but it can cause a number of problems for individuals and parties. If you're aware of a potential fall, it can help lower the amount of hurt that follows it — it's not really the falling that does the damage, but the final landing. The higher the fall and the harder the surface you land on, the more damage you'll take. Falling into water is going to do less damage (usually) than falling onto spiky rocks, but can cause drowning. I've heard of people being able to jump from the top of large buildings into bales of hay, but I wouldn't want to try it and I suggest you don't either. Consider getting magical items or spells that will slow your falling or allow you to teleport to safety.
- **FORTIFICATIONS** are barriers made to stop forward progression. Encountering these usually means that something is trying to slow down or stop others

from getting somewhere. They take time and effort to surmount while offering protection for those defending them. They're also useful in combat.

- **MONSTERS** are another thing you need to ready for. Some will wander (**see Rule #53**) while others will have camps they operate from. Some monsters are especially tough because they have immunities (**see Rule #54**), or special abilities. A well-planned delve into a dungeon should anticipate the types of monsters you may encounter (**see Rules #2 and #8**).
- **SURFACES**, especially slick ones such as sheer walls or ice, make dungeoneering difficult. Sharp and jagged surfaces can cut into flesh or through clothing, and bloody well hurt. Cracked surfaces can indicate a structural problem or a sinkhole waiting to happen. Vegetation and water can make for slick surfaces that cause you to slip and slid on your arse.
- **SLOPES** that have minimal elevation are usually easy to walk on unless the surfaces are slick; jagged slopes with minimal elevation are easier to move on because your feet gain some purchase from the angled surface. Slopes with elevations over forty-five degrees become exponentially harder to traverse unless there are steps or handholds in them or that can be added. Sheer walls and slopes that are almost vertical are very difficult to traverse and may need the use of rope (**see Rule #63**).
- **BARRIERS AND RUBBLE** can be difficult to navigate and can open you up to be an easy target while scrambling or climbing over them. They provide good cover at times, though, so consider that.
- **CAVE-INS** either block your way forward (**see #Rule 47**), or fall on top of you and kill you. They can be full or partial. Cave-ins make the area around it unsteady with the possibility of even more cave-ins. This is especially true in mines where support struts can break, causing ceilings to collapse. And kill you.
- **SMALL SPACES** make it difficult for all but the smallest party members to move through (like halflings). Some small spaces are enough to get

stuck in, and they make excellent locations to place traps (see Rule #25).

- **ROPES** can be hazardous to use, due to using one or both hands to keep hold of the rope. You can easily be thrown off-balance or be unable to defend yourself against attackers while using rope.
- **FIRES** in dungeons can kill easily and quickly (such as oil and explosives – see Rules #69 and #70). The biggest danger in dungeons from fire is smoke in enclosed places that chokes and suffocates.
- **SMOKE** can be especially deadly, whether natural or man-made. The less ventilation and smaller a space you are in, the more you choke. Smoke also messes with visibility (see Rule #44), though those with enhanced senses aren't affected as much.
- **GASSES** in dungeons can kill without warning. Some gasses have an odor or color to them, allowing you to discover them, but some are colorless and invisible. Gas can be found in natural pockets or be released from sprung traps. Be careful with open flames around some gasses, unless you enjoy exploding.
- **WATER** in dungeons is often a lifesaver (see Rule #32), but it doesn't come without its challenges including potential disease, things that live in the water that want to munch on your face and other bits, or the potential for drowning in even shallow water. Water can be found in pools, reservoirs, streams, rivers, and even waterfalls. Dams, to control the flow of water, are not unheard of. Geysers may exist in natural (and unnatural) dungeons, showering scalding hot water over those within range. Flooding is also a possibility, making it easy to drown, especially underground.
- **CHASMS** can be problematic to cross without rope (see Rule #63). The real danger of chasms is they can be very, very, very deep. If you're lucky you'll find chasms that already have bridges or other ways to travel over them. Spells that allow flying or floating help with these.
- **LEDGES** can seem stable but often aren't. It's also easy to fall from them or even have them collapse



ONE WAY TO GET
ACROSS A CHASM.



A PERFECTLY GOOD
AND FUNCTIONAL
ROPE BRIDGE.

IT'D BE A SHAME TO
DESTROY IT.

OOPS.

BETTER FIND ANOTHER
WAY BACK NOW.

under you. Roping together party members (see **Rule #63**) can help save lives. Or cause more deaths.

- **BRIDGES** may be natural or unnatural and come in many different varieties. Stone, wood, foliage, and metal are some of the most common bridge materials. Be careful fighting on bridges, as you can easily fall from them, or they can collapse under the movement and weight of those on them. You may need to make your own bridges using rope or other materials, or use spells to create them. Breaking or collapsing bridges behind you is a good way to stop opponents following you, but it makes getting back over difficult – think about if you'll need a bridge again before destroying it.
- **HUMIDITY AND TEMPERATURE** can easily kill inside dungeons, especially in areas that are closed off without ventilation. Heat will cause exhaustion, while steam scalds the outside and inside of your body. Cold temperatures can freeze and kill.
- **VENTILATION** is important because breathing is important. Certain areas in dungeons may restrict the flow of air, making it difficult to breathe. Smoke and steam also make breathing difficult, unless it can be vented.
- **TAR** can be exceedingly deadly and the home of strange monsters. If you fall into a tar pit, you can get sucked down to a horrible death. Tar can be set on fire, which makes it an ideal way to stop opponents chasing you.
- **LAVA** isn't overly common, but it's not unknown to find it in the deeper levers of vertical dungeons. Metal, wood, and flesh and bone are no match for this, and it will eat them without regard. Avoid.
- **UNDERGROUND WEATHER** isn't something that you typically have to worry about, but due to strange magics (see **Rule #62**) as well as strange natural occurrences, you may encounter rain, mist, fog, and even lightning in dungeons. Wind is incredibly common in natural caverns and ventilation holes, and can sweep people off bridges and ledges.

Knowing the type of dungeon you're about to explore and the hazards it may have allows you to equip yourself properly for adventuring in it. A list of the most common dungeon hazards is given later in this book (see page 135). Planning for these types of hazards is the absolute least you should do if you want to stay alive.

19

ALWAYS HAVE AN ESCAPE PLAN

There's nothing worse than finding yourself (and the party) caught in a situation with no way to escape. That's why you should always have an escape route in mind before embarking, even if you're doing a simple, easy delve and don't expect much danger or resistance. Lady Luck is a fickle mistress, and sometimes she will change on you on the flip of a worn-down, well-used copper piece that may or may not have two faces. So have that escape plan ready.

What's even better than having an escape plan is having several, especially for dungeons that are known to have multiple entrances and exits (see Rule #11). As you map the dungeon (see Rule #20), make adjustments to any escape plans that already made, and even come up with new ones. When updating, remember to take into account new loot and gear you've acquired that can help in any planned escape, as well as allies and discoveries made.

Don't try to make plans too complicated; the more complicated they are, the harder it is to keep all the moving pieces together and moving in the same direction. This is especially true of plans made with key personnel performing specific tasks during escape. Make sure you can trust them (or find a way to bribe or coerce them to ensure they do what you want). If key personnel become unavailable, escape plans often become useless or need revising.

Some people just wing escapes, running in the opposite direction from where trouble appears. While this may work once or twice, the odds of it succeeding all of the time are low, and sooner or later anyone doing this will end up between a hard place and a bunch of enemies ready to take you down.

Rather than simply relying on maps acquired from others (which can be inaccurate) you should make your own maps as you explore a dungeon. This can help you stop from becoming hopelessly lost and not knowing where danger lies. At least one party member, the most literate and with the best handwriting usually, should be the one creating the map. Having more than one person creating a map provides a backup in case of errors, or losing the adventurer with the only map. It also gives you a map to sell to others.

- **PAY CAREFUL ATTENTION** to the dimensions of the rooms and corridors you explore through.
- **MARK ALL DOORS AND PORTALS** on the map, as well as what types of doors they are (one way, two way, secret, magical etc.). If doors are pinned shut or barricaded, make sure to note that too.
- **INCLUDE STAIRS AND STEPS** that take you between levels, and the connections between them. This will help you know how different parts of the dungeon connect with each other, and aid in planning delving as well as escaping.
- **MARK ANY SPECIAL FEATURES** such as slopes, rubble, holes, statues, altars, pits, nests etc. as well.
- **DWARVES** are typically very good at making accurate maps due to their understanding of construction but sometimes have to be coerced to not create maps with “improvements” in them. The map should be reflective of what’s actually there.

Some things to keep in mind and add to your notes (**see Rule #27**) on the dungeon.

- **THE DIMENSIONS OF ALL ROOMS** should be carefully noted, with a standard scale applied. Doing so not only makes the map accurate, but allows you to guess where secret or hidden rooms, doors, or passages may exist.
- **SOME STAIRS AND EXTENDED PASSAGES** may be long and steep and may go to multiple levels, sometimes even bypassing one or more levels of the dungeon. Make sure to mark these appropriately on your maps.
- **DEAD ENDS** aren't always dead ends. With the use of magic, especially illusion magic, dead ends may actually conceal secret doors or extended corridors.
- **SUBLEVELS** may exist between the standard levels of the dungeon and may offer alternative routes through it. Some may offer danger and/or loot.

Some adventuring groups have specific approaches to searching dungeons, but with each dungeon being unique there's no right or wrong way to map (except quickly and inaccurately). No matter which approach you take, make sure that you keep your map accurate.

Be sure to maintain tight control of any map made while exploring. The last thing a party needs is to lose its precious map while adventuring. If possible, make two copies of maps in case you lose one.

Partially or fully completed maps can also be sold to others, which creates a lucrative sideline income for parties. Over time, dungeons restock over time with new and varied inhabitants (**see Rule #15**).

Maps don't always lead to treasure, and X doesn't always mark the spot. Treasure comes in all types, and one man's treasure may be another's throwaway item. When acquiring a map, make sure that you know exactly what it leads to. You should also make sure that you know of any and all dangers that you'll encounter on the way to the map's location, as well as any resistance you may encounter while attempting to liberate the treasure. Some handy information about maps can be found on **page 114**.

The most "authentic" maps you'll encounter are drawn in a special magic blue ink. But don't be fooled. Although blue ink is expensive and drawing maps in it makes it difficult to copy (even magically), there are many with advanced skills who can create forgeries that look authentic. Many map makers purposefully put errors into their maps, little subtle differences between each of them, so that they can clearly identify which map was copied and given to whom. Important details are often left off maps and committed to the memory of the mapmaker or commissioner, so as to protect items of real value and importance. Sometimes special cryptic codes and ciphers are used on maps, so having someone in your adventuring party can read and decipher them is a bonus. Magic is often used to obscure and hide important information.



MAPS ARE EASY TO
COME BY.

GOOD MAPS ARE
HARDER TO FIND.

ACCURATE MAPS
ARE MUCH RARER.

Of course, if the difference between the choice of two maps is one costs 1,000 gold pieces and the other costs 100 gold pieces, you're only out a little if the latter ends up being junk. And you can always hunt down the miscreant that sold you the map in the first place for a refund. Or to visit some gratuitous, and possibly well-deserved, violence upon them.

There are times when copying maps is a smart move, such as when the person holding the original map becomes fodder for a great dungeon beast, or if they run off with it, or if you're accosted by other adventurers intent on taking the quick way to treasure acquisition. Altering existing maps with a modified copy is another way to protect any investment

you put into the map's acquisition, as well as a way to stymie miscreants who purloin your own acquisition opportunities.

***EDITOR:** This Rule does not apply to any map purchased from the Law, Entertainment, and Dungeoneer Support Division of Stonehand & Associates. All of our maps are authentic and have been verified through a number of processes. See the small print that comes with each of our maps for additional terms and conditions.*

22

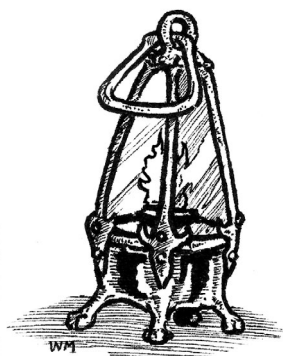
USE THE RIGHT LIGHT SOURCES

It's going to be dark in many dungeons, so having the right light sources with you is important. As you explore the dungeon you may get lucky and find some sources you can take with you. Light sources let you see the way, but because you must carry them, they can limit your ability to respond to what they shine a light on. Most light sources cast a strong glow for a limited distance, and the light provided diminishes beyond that. Some light sources are better choices than others.

- **TORCHES** are far and away the most common light source for dungeoneering. They're not only common in most settlements, but also easy to make, requiring only a long piece of wood, some scraps of fabric wrapped at the end, some oil, and a tinder and flint or open flame. When lit they give out a decent amount of light, at least enough to see things that are attempting to get up close very and personal, and they last quite a long time. Because they're an open flame, they can create a smoky environment that makes it difficult to breathe or can cause gas to explode. They're excellent for throwing onto oil-soaked targets and igniting them. Dropping them often causes them to go out. Sometimes, when under pressure, they're not the fastest things to light. A bonus is that torches can be used as fiery clubs, which is ideal if you also use oil as a weapon (see Rule #69).



EASIEST WAY
TO LIGHT YOUR WAY
WHILE DUNGEONEERING.



YOU CAN NEVER GO
WRONG WITH OIL LAMPS.

UNLESS THEY EXPLODE ON YOU.

OR OVER YOU.

- **OIL LAMPS** tend to be more expensive than other light sources, but are safer and burn longer than torches. They're more difficult to put out as well. They can also be thrown over a short distance, causing them to strike a target and burst into flame. Many lamps have a shutter or directional hood allowing for the focusing of light from the lamp into certain angles, or allowing it to illuminate a specific area. Lamps generally illuminate a larger area and can be placed down as needed, or placed on the end of a large pole to help illuminate even better.
- **CANDLES** are a stopgap measure and should rarely be used as the light they give off is weak with a smaller radius, and they're easily extinguished by moving too fast or if there is too much wind; lamp enclosures help with those challenges. Candles are not recommended except in emergencies. Dripping wax can be used by others to track you
- **MAGIC SPELLS AND MAGIC ITEMS** are excellent ways to create light. Some spells can be targeted and localized to a particular object or a large area, and some magic items can give off light that can not only have its brightness controlled but also directed. Some paladins and clerics can imbue their weapons with light and divine power, and other magic users can magically create weapons or effects that give off light. Magic items that emit light and heat are often useful against certain monsters and do additional damage to them. As with hooded lamps, magic light can easily be covered when you need to quickly be stealthy. An excellent trick is to cast a light spell on a coin or small stone – it can be kept in the hand, or thrown some distance to illuminate a more distant area. The tip of a staff can also be enchanted in this way, and quickly covered too.

The drawback to light sources is that they can announce your presence to denizens of the dungeon, and it makes you easier to hit from the shadows. You'll have to choose when to use light sources, and when not to.

If you're lucky enough to be a halfling (or dwarf, elf, or select others), you'll have excellent low-light vision or the ability to see in the dark, and you can often get by without using other light sources. This can be beneficial but those with this type of vision are easy to blind, as they're typically sensitive to rapid changes in light. There's nothing worse than allies creating an instant burst of light and blinding you when you're just about to get into a fray. Of course, this is something that can be used to your advantage on others in combat.

23

SCOUT AHEAD

The smart adventuring party always scouts ahead both above ground and below it. Scouting should usually be performed by those who are most adept at the area being traveled through and not being discovered:

- **THIEVES AND ROGUES** are especially useful in dungeons. They're often the best choice for scouting. Assassins and monks can stand in for them.
- **RANGERS AND DRUIDS** are excellent in wilderness and natural areas and also have utility in dungeon areas, where they can read tracks.
- **HALFLINGS**, being naturally small and quiet, make excellent scouts, especially in narrower areas of the dungeon. We make excellent burglars.
- **DWARVES** have experience with slopes and construction underground and they can often identify special landmarks and areas.
- **ELVES** are not only stealthy but can also detect secret or hidden doorways to special passageways or rooms without seemingly even looking for them.
- **MAGIC USERS** with access to spells or items that imbue invisibility or mask sounds may also be particularly useful as scouts. If they have a familiar that can travel some distance from them, this is an excellent way to scout — the link between the magic user and familiar allows them to see, hear, and smell over long distances.



A MAGIC USER'S FAMILIAR

YOU MAY BE SURPRISED
TO KNOW THIS BUT NOT
ALL MAGIC USERS LIKE CATS.

THE STRANGEST FAMILIAR
I'VE EVER SEEN WAS
A DOLPHIN.

TOTALLY USELESS IN A
DUNGEON ENVIRONMENT.

EXCEPT THAT ONE TIME.

WATCH OUT FOR PITS

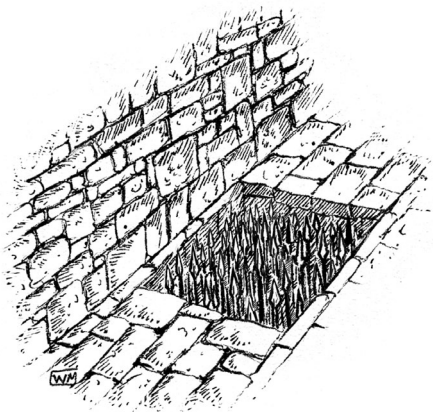
If there's one thing that's truly, truly annoying in dungeons, it's the number of pits that you'll find there. The pit is a standard design element in dungeons. Pits are different from sinkholes, which naturally form when the ground underneath breaks down over time. Pits are man (or monster) made.

Pits often don't reveal themselves until you've fallen down inside them, and they're usually deep enough that not even the tallest elf can climb out of them without help. Really nasty pits don't just rely on their surprise factor or depth.

There are a number of strategies for discovering and getting over them:

- **ALWAYS CARRY A TEN-FOOT LONG POLE**, or have someone else in the party do that. A spear or polearm will do in a pinch. This pole can be used to feel out the area in front, to the side, or above you to determine if there's a pit (or trap). In most cases, you'll find pits easily this way, unless the pits have some illusion magic covering them; these types of pits can be detected like most other magics.
- **CARRY A SMALL BAG OF STONES**. Individual stones can be dropped into pits to discover how deep the pit is (or even if it's bottomless), and entire bags can be thrown to detect covered pits.
- **PITS** are often a great place to find easy loot and supplies. Dead adventurers that fall prey to the pits really don't need to hang onto any loot or equipment that previously carried, and it'd be wasteful to just leave it there, wouldn't it?
- **PITS OFTEN CONTAIN TRAPS**, such as spikes or a floor trigger that drops flaming oil or poison gas into the pit area. I avoid these and so should you.

- **MOST COVERED PITS** can usually bear a minimum amount of weight or load before being triggered. A well-covered pit will give no indication that it's a pit, and even be able bear some weight before activating. Pushing with a ten-foot pole or dropping some weight in an area suspected to be a covered pit can often uncover it.
- **SOME PITS ACT AS TELEPORTERS** to other locations in dungeons. These can sometimes be excellent ways to traverse dungeons quickly. Unless the pit randomly teleports you elsewhere into the air or into an oubliette.
- **VERY DEEP PITS** can cause a great deal of damage when encountered. There's very little space to roll or tumble and reduce the damage. Having magic items or spells that allow levitation, flying, or falling slowly can help with these pits.
- **BOTTOMLESS PITS** are literally the last pit you want to fall into. Fall into these and you'll never get out. Some bottomless pits may lead to the center of the world, or be connected to another plane, or merely be simple illusions that have you fall a small distance but make it seem that you're falling forever. There are few ways to escape a bottomless pit, most of them involving some form of magic or divine intervention. The easiest way to escape these including tying ropes around other adventurers using belays, or attaching safety ropes to the dungeon structures such as walls, floors, or ceilings outside of the pit.



A SPIKE TRAP

NO MATTER HOW MANY
SPIKES ARE INSIDE ONE
OF THESE TRAPS,
THEY TEND TO BE DEADLY.

THE LESS SPIKES, AND
THE SMALLER YOUR BODY
AND THE BETTER YOUR ARMOR,
THE BETTER YOUR CHANCE
OF SURVIVING THESE.

EVERYTHING IS A POTENTIAL TRAP

Traps are made to either stop you getting to something or stop you leaving somewhere. They're either lethal by killing you immediately, or causing a slow and prolonged death through poison, crushing, bleeding out, or some other horrible, terrible way to die.

The trick to surviving traps is to avoid them or identify and nullify them. This is best done by assuming that pretty much everything you encounter in a dungeon could be a potential trap. (It's not paranoia, but good practice. It's worked for me!)

Most traps can be disarmed if you can avoid setting them off. This requires some time, skill, luck, and equipment to do. Know that some traps may have multiple triggers or steps involved, and that makes things much more complicated. Disabling isn't something you should do when you're in a hurry. If you can disarm a trap, you can usually re-arm it to use against others in some way.

There are rumors of a master trapsmiths book that is shared among an exalted order of dungeon design specialists, but I've never seen a copy of it. That doesn't mean it doesn't exist. But some of the rumored traps sound like fun.

TRACK TIME PASSED

This is something that most beginning adventuring parties don't do well. Time will seem to pass at a different pace when you're in a dungeon, and it's important to know how long it's taken you to travel a certain distance, as well as how long it will take to get back to an entrance if you need to. One way to do this is to count how a small number of paces to get a baseline amount of time passed; with this, you can track the number of paces that you've taken to get an estimate of time passed. This time will be affected by any stops you make to rest, doors opened, areas searched etc.

KEEP TAKING NOTES

In addition to mapping as you go (see **Rule #20**), you'll want to keep taking notes as you go, and not just on the map. What kind? Well, really, pretty much everything: special formations and landmarks, potential escape routes, altars and statues, signs of tracks or scat, and ciphers for encoding/decoding secret information like secret doors. Just make sure to keep taking notes. Your life may depend on them. Often.

ABC - ALWAYS BE CARRYING

When adventuring, it's important to have the right gear with you to help you survive and accomplish your goals:

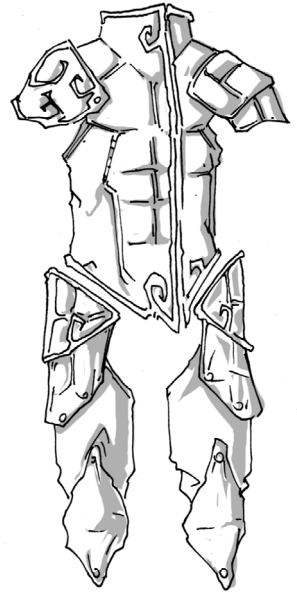
- **ARMOR** goes without saying, because you're going to run into things that will want to fight you. Depending on your specialization and your role in the party, some armors are going to be better than others. There's always the chance that you'll pick up better armor on the road, but that's leaving a lot of chance. Best to equip yourself with the best armor you can before you go adventuring. If you're lucky you'll find some enchanted or magic armor, or at least better quality armor, when dungeoneering but don't count on it. For more, see **Rule #29**.
- **WEAPONS** are also a must. Carry a selection of both melee and ranged weapons with you. Know how to use them. Make sure to take whetstones with you to keep blades sharp, and oil to keep bowstrings supple. Having a plentiful supply of daggers and throwing knives is also recommended, especially if you're expecting to do a lot of sneaking and attacking. As with armor, it's possible to get magical loot when dungeoneering, but equip your best weapons before heading out to increase your chances of surviving, and keep them in shape. For more, see **Rule #30**.

- **OTHER CLOTHING** beyond armor is something to consider, especially if there is travel through areas with changes in temperature and weather. Armor protects against physical attacks but can become cumbersome and dangerous when worn when not needed. Many an adventurer has died from exposure because they didn't take additional clothing with them.
- **LIGHT SOURCES** are a must, especially for those who can't see well in low-light or darkness (see **Rule #22**).
- **OTHER GEAR** that is handy includes things like a ten-foot pole, lots of rope (see **Rule #63**), and wooden and iron spikes can help you during dungeoneering. Have a backpack to carry stuff, and a good belt that has lots of pouches attached to it. Make sure you have plenty of sacks or containers to help you carry loot back to your base or camp.
- **TOOLS** are often overlooked but are be incredibly handy. Pickaxes and large hammers can be used to break down or open swollen wooden doors, or grave entrances. Make sure to carry iron spikes to help break apart stone as well as to jam doors shut when performing tactical retreats. Have files, hand hammers, axes, saws, twine, and other items also.
- **MAGIC ITEMS** are usually always a good idea to take, especially since most magic items are immune to wear and tear when interacting with non-mundane items. It's possible for magic items to become damaged if they are struck by magic or by other magical items. They can also be detected.
- **MULES AND CARTS** are handy for transporting loot, gear, and adventurers to and fro. It's hard to get these into some dungeons, so you may have to keep them above ground with one or two henchmen or hirelings to watch them until you return.
- **INFORMATION** about where you're going and what can be found there is of critical importance. Maps, rumors, experiences from other explorers, texts in libraries and in holy places all may help you stay living alive a little longer (see **Rule #8**).

WEAR ARMOR

Armor will help protect you from damage, but it comes with a few cons with that pro. Heavier armor that is more likely to protect you from more damage tends to make you less stealthy and sometimes a slower moving target.

- **HELMETS** only protect noggins if actually worn on their head. The strongest helmets are made of metal, while the worst tend to be made of leather or fur and do little except protect against scrapes and scratches. There's a dichotomy with helmets in that the more it covers, the more it messes with perception. The traditional pot helm, which basically just covers the top of your body coconut, allows you to see around you easily and doesn't muffle sound. Other helmets that cover the side of the head can make it difficult to hear, but give you added protection. Helmets that have a full face visor and eye slits obviously make it harder to take damage, but they can be even more limiting to see and hear out of. Also, getting a good conk on the head while wearing a helmet can feel like using your head as a bell clanger.
- **SHIELDS** come in many shapes and sizes, but they all serve to either stop or reduce the damage you're going to inevitably take from others trying to poke and slash you with weapons. Small maneuverable shields can sometimes be more helpful than larger shields, especially if you need to stay mobile. You can also use shields as a weapon to stun opponents with a shield bash. Shields that have barbs and points can do even more damage.
- **MAGICAL ARMOR** is desirable for many reasons, if you can get it. It tends to be lighter and protect not only against normal attacks, but also magic attacks. Magic damage done to magical armor can wear it down and make it ineffective, so keep that in mind.



MAGICAL ARMOR

THIS SHOULD BE ON EVERY
DUNGEONEER'S
SHOPPING LIST.

Just as important as being well armored, you want to make sure that you're well armed.

- **CLUBS.** Pretty much everything is a club if you use it to hit people with; clubs are heavily weighted on one end, specifically the end that connects with others. Most clubs are made from tree limbs, but there are more exotic clubs that can be used. There's a thriving trade in custom quality clubs, as well as clubs with metal shodding, and even magical clubs. I've also known people to hammer nails through clubs to make them even more dangerous (to everyone). Broken furniture, particularly table and chair legs are good improvised clubs.



A RATHER NICE
CUSTOM CLUB
THAT CAN
ALSO SCRATCH AND
RAKE AND
STAB.

NNNNNICE!

- **BLADES**, both short and long, and of the straight or curved blade varieties, are a staple through most settlements. They're ubiquitous and easy to come by, even if the quality of the weapons varies from place to place. It's always a good idea to have a couple of different blades to hand (hah!) in case of emergencies in combat. You can never go wrong having lots of daggers or knives, unless you're carrying them in a place doesn't allow them, such as some cities, and religious and government buildings.
- **AXES**, according to dwarves, come in two varieties: non-dwarf-made and great. I know — it's a terrible joke. That's dwarves for you. Axes come in different sizes, and either have a blade on one side of the haft, or two or more blades. In the right hands, axes are deadly weapons. They can be thrown with reasonable precision should you need to hit something not standing next to you.
- **OTHER MELEE WEAPONS** include maces and flails, which are incredibly deadly in the hands of someone who is well trained. Whips can also be highly effective, but they require training to use them without hurting yourself (and others you don't intend to be hurt).

- **POLEARMS** and staffs provide reach when you need to get an opponent that isn't right next to you. These are ideal weapons to use in a ranked formation (see **Rule #37**), as well as to block anyone getting by you in enclosed areas. Polearms with blades provide the best of both worlds: a pointy sharp end and a non-sharp bashing end. The best polearms and staffs are iron-shod to do more damage and to last longer. They can stand-in for ten-foot poles.
- **BOWS AND CROSSBOWS** do a great deal of damage in the right situations, and allow you to attack enemies at range. The big difference between the two is that bows rely on strength to fire, while crossbows use a mechanical design which makes them just as powerful as bows but take more time to use (often two to three times as long). Crossbows allow ammo to be loaded and fired when needed. If you're not trained in using a bow, a crossbow is an ideal weapon for ranged combat.
- **THROWN AND OTHER MISSILE WEAPONS.** If it can be picked up, it can be thrown. This includes vases, small animals, and potentially other adventurers. While they *can* be thrown, they're not particularly aerodynamic, and may not land where you expect. You're better off making sure you use weapons that are designed to be thrown, rather than improvised ones. Knives, axes, darts are what you should be looking at. Oil (see **Rule #69**) and lamps (see **Rule 22**) can be effective thrown weapons.

Keep your weapons in good condition. A well-kept weapon is a weapon that will do right by you. Mistreat your weapons, and that's all on you when things go south.

Many weapons found in dungeons aren't well-cared for and may be of lower quality than what you'd expect. Those that look to be brand new or pristine may actually be magical.

31

MANAGE RESOURCES PROPERLY

When adventuring, it's important to carefully manage all resources you have at hand. This not only includes water (see Rule #32) and food (see Rule #33), but also supplies of torches or lamps, oil, rope, metal spikes, and anything else that may come in handy (see Rule #8). While some of these can be replenished during expeditions (usually by discovering those who no longer have a pressing need for such resources), don't expect to find merchants wandering dungeons or stores that contain everything you need. Most stores in large towns specialize in specific goods and cater to the needs of more than just adventurers (although they're often a good place to get rid of excess items at a somewhat decent price). Stores in small towns are likely only to have staple items and a small selection of things that may be useful to adventurers.

One thing that should never be forgotten about is to repair or replace equipment when you can. There are few things worse than having your weapon break or your armor splinter because you haven't been taking care of them.

32

STAY HYDRATED

Dungeoneering is thirsty work and you'll need to stay hydrated while doing it. As you delve deeper into dungeons, you need to consider having adequate water supplies with you in case you can't restock while in there. Most people can last only a few days without water (and a lot longer without food). The quality of water that you drink is important, and you'll want potable water over other types.

- **WATER GOURDS OR BOTTLES** are your safest bet for water. If you bring the water with you into the dungeon you know that it's safe to drink.
- **FRUITS AND VEGETABLES** are potential sources of water, but ensure they don't spoil.

- **UNDERGROUND STREAMS** are reasonably safe and can be used to replenish water supplies. Make sure to filter the water through some cheesecloth and boil it before drinking.
- **STAGNANT POOLS OF WATER** or water basins should be avoided unless you have the ability to purify the water in some way. Drinking this kind of water leads to diseases like dysentery and worse.
- **WATERFALLS ARE USUALLY SAFE** to gather water from, at least as it falls. The pools at the bottom of waterfalls sometimes act as drinking areas for dungeon creatures and monsters, so be on your guard around those.
- **SALT WATER SHOULD BE AVOIDED** as it simply makes you more thirsty. There are a number of ways to remove salt from water, but none of them are quick and easy to perform while exploring dungeons. Except with magic.
- **ALCOHOLIC DRINKS CAN SERVE AS A STOPGAP** measure for water, but that brings a whole new set of problems. Dwarven ale is the stoutest substitute you can have and is almost a full meal in itself.
- **MAGIC SPELLS THAT CREATE FOOD OR WATER** are excellent backups for when water becomes scarce, as long as the ability to cast them isn't compromised.
- **SOME MAGIC ITEMS** such as Everflow Bottles and bottles of Holy Water can provide water in a pinch, but you may need to treat the water first before drinking.

It should go without saying that any water not already purified should be purified before drinking it. It's also advisable not to simply drink the liquid in a bottle until you've identified what the liquid is. The last thing you need while thirsty is to be polymorphed into a giant snail or a sheep. Unless that's something you've been wanting to happen. I won't judge.

BRING YOUR OWN FOOD

You can't live on water alone, so you're going to have to make sure you've got food to eat too. This means taking food with you, and having a plan to restock when you run out:

- **TRAIL RATIONS** are the first staple you should consider. They're hardy meals that last a long time and are nutritious, even if they taste terrible. They're at least edible and can help you survive. Hard-boiled eggs, nutbreads, unleavened breads, fruitcakes (ugh!), jerky, and pickled vegetables are also options. These rations are compact and easy to carry.
- **ENEMIES AND MONSTERS** are another potential source of food. If there in the dungeon, they've got to have the resources to eat, right? (Unless they tend to have a menu limited to eating dungeoneers!) Scouts and advance parties will at least have some snacks on them to keep them going while performing their duty. Enemy camps will probably have food and supplies that you can acquire. The worst case scenario is eating what was trying to kill you. What doesn't kill you could potentially be lunch.
- **FORAGING** can turn up mosses, mushrooms, and other plants and small animals that you can eat. Just be careful to cleanse and cook anything you forage to remove any poisons or contaminants.
- **HUNTING** for food may be an option for you once you leave the dungeon (but **see Rule #14**). Retainers and hirelings may be able to hunt and restock for you while you explore, keeping food supplies stocked.
- **SPELLS AND MAGIC ITEMS** that can create real food (as opposed to imaginary food) are great backups for not having access to food already prepared. Just be sure you don't need to cast other more important spells before you use them.

PACK ADVENTURE KITS

Consider having standard adventure kits that you build for each party member before adventuring. Each specific party member has specific skill sets, so tailored adventure kits are a good idea. Fighters should have lots of things relating to weapons and armors, thieves and rogues should have lockpicks and other items.



PIECES TO INCLUDE IN
ADVENTURE KITS
WHEN IN THE
LAND OF TRANSGROVIA
INCLUDE HOLY SYMBOLS,
GARLIC, WOODEN SPIKES,
MIRRORS, HERBS,
SPICES, MALLETS,
AND A FRESH
SUPPLY OF
UNDERGARMENTS.

AND OIL AND FIRE.

LOTS OF OIL
AND FIRE.

NEVER SPLIT THE PARTY

There are times when you're going to want the party to split up to tackle two different objectives at the same time.

Let me make this clear: this is a **TERRIBLE** idea and you should **NEVER** do it. Tackle one objective at a time.

Splitting your party means reducing the number of bodies available to defend against anything problematic that you run into. It's simple, really. There's safety in numbers, both from being able to do damage to others, as well as spreading any damage taken across a larger number of bodies. Making the party smaller increases the odds of dying.

Now, sending one or two people off to scout ahead (see **Rule #23**) isn't the same thing as splitting the party, mostly because where the scout goes the remainder of the party will follow, and the rest of the party remains behind as a larger group until safe to move forward.

DON'T ARGUE WITH EACH OTHER

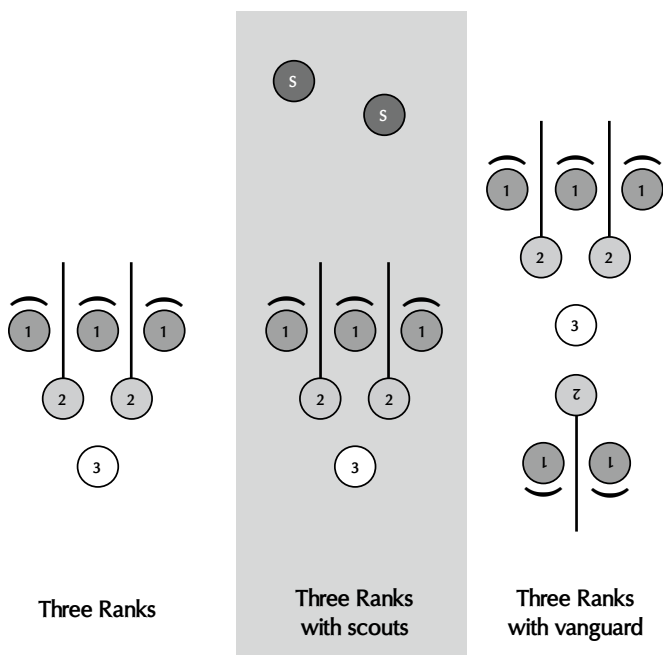
There will be times you and the other party members will disagree on things. The trick is not to disagree too loudly, as sound travels in dungeons (see **Rule #44**). If you're finding the party is at odds on something, it's best to already have a process in place to help make decisions, whether it's drawing straws or pulling stones from a bag. The easiest solution is to have a leader for the party from the outset who makes executive decisions for the party when these issues arise. Table arguments until it's safe to rest up and discuss them.

MOVE CAREFULLY AND WISELY

The standard dungeon corridor is about ten feet wide by ten feet high (most dungeoncrafters seem to have attended the same basic architecture courses). This is enough room for three average sized humanoids (or four halflings) to walk side by side when moving down it. Some corridors are wider than this, some are taller, others the inverse. For most purposes, this three-person (or four-halfling) limit should be observed to create the front rank of your advancing party, assuming you have enough party members to do that.

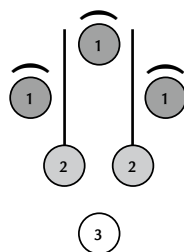
Most parties should have at least three ranks in their march order while moving forward. The first rank should be strikers and protectors that use sword and shield. The second rank can be anyone who knows how to wield a pole weapon without killing their allies. The first rank protects the second rank while the second rank, with its longer reach, protects the first rank. The third rank should be made up of support characters who can perform ranged attacks or magic. Party members or allies that need more physical protection can be in the third or another later rank. There can be some distance between the second and third ranks, but the first and second ranks should move as a tightly-knit unit. The idea is to optimize party protection at the frontline.

The reverse of the ranking above is useful to protect the rearguard of a party. If you know the way behind you is clear, you need only put one or two strikers or protectors at the rear as a vanguard. This counts almost as a fourth rank.

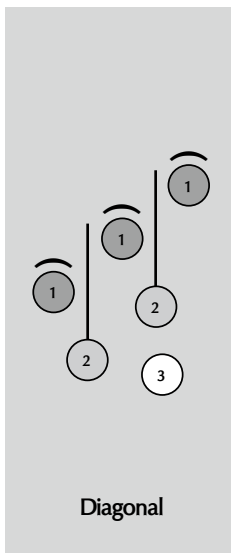


Having single or multiple scouts moving ahead of the main party is often a good idea, as they can help detect traps and potential bottlenecks and opponents that the party may be about to stumble across. Those doing this should be stealthy and have a good memory, as well as skills and magic items or spells that can help conceal them from sight and sound.

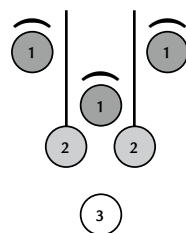
The first and second ranks don't need to remain in a straight line, but can (and should) change position to become more effective during skirmishes. Using an arrowhead formation helps with punching through enemy groups or larger opponents. A diagonal forces enemies more to one side than the other, where they can be skewered more easily, as well potentially surrounded on all sides for an easy takedown. A reverse arrowhead drives opponents into the center and allows attacks on three sides, which is especially deadly if the most powerful Strikers and Protectors are there too – they may also be able to flank around targets completely.



Arrowhead



Diagonal



Reverse
Arrowhead

If you have a varied party missing some roles, such as strikers and protectors, hired help can be placed in the second rank, arming them with spears and polearms. Most spears and polearms don't require specialized training to use, which makes them ideal weapons for the ill-trained. You may also only have one or two strikers or protectors, but if they're powerful enough, they can hold the front rank by themselves while receiving support from others in the following ranks.

When entering combat, consider keeping the rank formation being used in place if you end up in an open area, and then increase the space between the ranks and individuals to allow them to more freely engage in wanton destruction of opponents.

Consideration should also occur regarding who is responsible for providing light to the party (**see Rule #22**). Light can interfere with vision, but the front rank of the party needs to see what's coming at the party. Having someone in the second or third rank carrying a lamp on the end of a pole is a good solution at times. Those with darkvision can see in the dark, but it's a big hindrance for almost everyone else. Remember that light not only allows you to see others, but allows them to see you too.

When moving forward in dungeons, consider that you may encounter multiple different types of path. There may not only be corridors, but walkways, bridges, and passages that are too small for those of normal size to pass through. This is where you need to consider what resources you have to enable continuing moving, as well as think about changing up how you move forward. Are there enemies at the other side of a rope bridge reigning fire on you? Can you fit through the crack in the wall only by removing armor and gear? Can that bridge or arch bear the weight of more than one person at a time?

Don't actually march in a dungeon, because marching is loud and can be heard (**see Rule #44**). Walk softly, and carry big weapons that can do lots of damage.

Here are some strategies on how to change up your march order when encountering some difficulties.

- **CORRIDORS** are usually consistently sized within the same dungeon, though there may be some subtle or not subtle variations. Have multiple march orders to handle different corridors you encounter.
- **MULTIPLE EXITS** in a room or open area can cause problems for your party as they allow entry and exit. Double-check each of the exits first with one to two party members scoping the exit to see if it's safe, while the rest of the party stay ready in reserve. If the party is moving on, form up ranks as needed, keeping a strong vanguard. Seal exits you're not going to use or that you're going to come back to later.
- **HIGH EXITS** usually require climbing and the securing of a rope or rope ladder for others to ascend. A single party member, one of the best climbers and who can handle themselves in combat, should attempt to get to the exit and secure a way up for the rest of the party as soon as the area is safe.
- **DEBRIS** should be skirted around, rather than going over. Moving over this type of terrain can be difficult

as well as make you an easy target for anyone ready to snipe at you. If you need to move over debris, move one party member at a time in a staggered formation, rather in a line that can be picked off by ranged enemy attacks. Use shields.

- **SLIPPERY FLOORS** become dangerous because of having weak footing. On these, step carefully and slowly while lowering your center of gravity to reduce falling. For extremely slippery floors, you may need to crawl or slide across them.
- **INCLINES** should be traversed one party member at a time, no matter which direction they travel. Also be careful of things coming up or down the inclines and potential traps or pits at the bottom that you can't avoid.
- **CHASMS AND PITS** are problematic only as long as your party is all on one side. When you get someone on the other side, things get easier. Usually, pits can usually be jumped across, sometimes with a running start, but only have one person attempt the leap at one time. (handy for checking for traps). Those on the other side should be ready to catch them. Chasms are much wider than pits and may require the use of ropes or climbing to get to the other side. Magical spells and items that support levitation or flying are especially useful here. When traversing large chasms, watch for snipers.
- **TRAPS** are tricky to get around. Depending on the type of trap that's been detected, it may be easier to trigger the trap than defeat it or go around it. Once a trap is detected, everyone should move away from it until the trap is defeated or disarmed, especially if explosives or blasts are a potential consequence.

SEARCH ALMOST EVERYTHING

Searching is a skill that anyone can try, but the real trick is to learn how to do it without it killing you. This takes practice, as well as learning from the true masters such as elves and members of any Thieves Guild (at least those still have most of their fingers attached to their hands and that work in the way they're intended). These types will be able to tell you many of the best ways to search in specific situations, but there are a few standard things you can consider:

- **LARGE ROOMS** in dungeons take longer to search than smaller rooms. This can be offset by having more people searching at the same time, which is a good idea if the people searching are good at it. It's not a good idea if they set off every trap that they run into. Unfortunately, you often don't find out which are which until they've attempt to find (and probably set off) a few traps. The good news is that problem usually sorts itself out.
- **SPLIT SEARCHING** among the majority of your party, but not all. The more people searching the more you'll be able to find what you're looking for. At the same time, you reduce the odds that something bad will happen only to you.
- **SEARCHING TAKE TIME**, and while you're searching, wandering monsters and other adventurers can come upon you. This is why you always have at least one person per exit to watch. You did set someone to watch while you were ransacking the current room, didn't you? Good dungeoneer.
- **IF YOU SUSPECT A TRAP** (see Rule #25) then you should try a number of different approaches to detect and disarm it. Using a ten-foot pole or polearm to tap along in front of you before you move can often detect and set off traps (good if they're small traps, and no good if they're poisonous traps or involve ceilings falling on you). Many thieves have excellent abilities in trap-finding and should be

employed before sending the less-skilled, although henchmen who aren't cutting the mustard can be offered the option to improve their involvement by being trap-testers (with compensation). Magic users often have spells or magic devices that can detect traps, especially magic ones (or just magic in general). The old standby to detect traps is simply to have the least-liked and/or most annoying party member proceed at the front and look for traps.

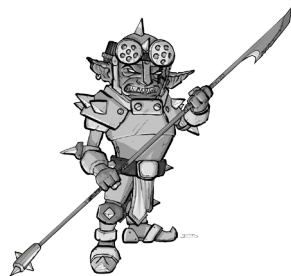
- **DWARVES HAVE SPECIAL SKILLS** that aid in searching, particularly relating to the slope of underground passages and the like. If there are no dwarves in your party, consider looking for some dwarven hirelings. They're usually not cheap, though.
- **SECRET DOORS** that lead to secret rooms or secret pathways can often be found in certain rooms or corridors, placed there by the architects of the dungeon for various purposes. There are many types of secret doors including doors that swing open, doors that slide, doors that are actually holes in the floor or ceiling, illusionary doors, doors that are doors that have walls behind them until you invoke a magic activation word, and many more. Elves have an unnatural ability to find secret and hidden doors, even when they're not looking for them. Bastards.

Why search *almost* everything? There are some things that you don't want to search, whether it be the inside of one of a demon's stomachs or some sort of strange statue or idol. There are just some things that are just going to give off the wrong *vibe*. Feel that *vibe*, listen to that *vibe*, and don't search what you feel may be dangerous. People who search everything is the reason we have mimics looking like treasure chests or ration supplies or anything else that catches a dungeoneer's eye. Remember, doing something too much is the reason you get mimics. So, cut it out, whatever it is that you're doing. I hate mimics. I really hate mimics (**see page 124** for information on detecting mimics).

KNOW YOUR OPPONENTS

Let's face it, in life you make enemies, and that's just the way of things. And if you're dungeoneering, you're going to make a lot more enemies, not just including other adventurers but also people in power, the nobility, monsters, martial orders, religious fanatics, and very possibly demigods and gods. While there are numerous potential enemies you can make, they're pretty easily categorized:

- MINIONS:** These guys are generally weak but plentiful, and often used as arbalest fodder by those more powerful than them. They tend to like to swarm their targets and overpower them by sheer numbers and have little real skill in combat. The good news is that if you put a large enough dent in their numbers they'll usually break and try to escape. Of course, that depends on how fanatical they are about various things. Fanatics suck big time because they generally don't give way or surrender, but they often protect some of the coolest loot.
- SOLDIERS:** Not necessarily someone with a rank in the army (though often they are). They're fighting men and women who are trained or have experience in combat. These are the rank and file of just about every organization everywhere that is trained to fight. Soldiers typically have some training in operating as a cohesive unit and have training in tactics (and sometimes strategy). They can be quite challenging as when they and the party are reasonably balanced. Expect soldiers to know how to fight dirty and take advantage of the environments around them to help flank or outmaneuver you. Soldiers are certainly a step up from minions, and they often let minions know this. One soldier is worth several minions in a fight.
- BRUTES:** These are tough guys who can take a beating, and they usually fight either solo or in very small numbers. They're good at what they do, which is usually beating the living crap out of others. Often



A MINION

NOT TERRIBLY
DANGEROUS ON ITS OWN.

BECOMES A LOT MORE
DANGEROUS WHEN
THERE'S A SWARM
OF THEM.

AREA AND BLAST
ATTACKS ARE
EXCELLENT WAYS
TO REDUCE
THEIR NUMBERS.

they have highly specialized skills and attacks, either gained because of skills and experience, or from natural ability. Brutes are often under the command of bosses, and won't listen to soldiers most of the time unless compelled to. Most brutes are simply sent into a fight and left to their own devices, allowing them to create chaotic destruction and carnage as only they can. Don't let the name fool you though, as many brutes can be incredibly savvy and smart, especially when in the thick of combat. They're not quite boss or leader material, but that doesn't stop them from bullying or whupping others.

- **BOSSSES:** Typically in charge of a small number of brutes, soldiers, and minions. They're the big tough guys that stand at the back (or rarely at the front) who are easily identified by some sort of insignia, clothing, or the fact they're bellowing orders at everyone else in the thick of things.

- **LEADERS:** You won't often find leaders in the deep of battle. They tend to hang out at their base or headquarters handling strategy, leaving tactics to bosses and the others beneath them. On the rare occasion, a leader may enter a fray or be encountered freely. Most leaders tend to be very experienced and have clawed their way through the ranks to achieve their positions of authority.

- **GODHEADS:** Staying behind the scenes and inspiring others to do their whim is the godhead's approach. They're usually very powerful and held in very high esteem or even reverence by those who follow them. They often manage grandiose plans and think themselves untouchable. This, of course, often leads to their downfall, just as soon as you get through the throngs of followers that stand between them and you.

- **ACTUAL GODS:** These are usually badass, and you don't want to encounter them at all, even if you're an experienced adventurer like me. While they're often behind the scenes like godheads, manipulating things to their own desires, a number do choose



A BOSS

NOT ONLY DO THEY
LOOK BADASS,
THEY ARE BADASS.

YOU CAN BET HE KNOWS
HOW TO USE THAT WEAPON.

THERE'S ALSO A GOOD CHANCE
THAT WEAPON IS MAGICAL.

YOU SHOULD LIBERATE IT.

to personally intercede in the world, especially if someone becomes a pain in their side and starts ruining their plans (even if they don't realize they're doing it. Honest! It was one time. Okay, may twice!). Going against gods leads to lots of death and destruction, usually yours and your friends.

That covers most humanoids and some monsters. The different monster types you may run into while delving includes:

- **MINDLESS MONSTERS** have no reasoning capabilities at all and generally can't interact socially. Don't let the term mindless fool you, as these types of monsters are still incredibly dangerous, having enough raw smarts and cunning to attack and defend themselves. They understand self-preservation.
- **LOW INTELLIGENCE MONSTERS** include smarter animals and the more cunning monsters. They can be communicated with, either through language or the use of spells. Their vocabulary is usually very limited, and many of the concepts they understand may be confusing to those not of their species.
- **INTELLIGENT MONSTERS** have more or less the same intelligence as the average humanoid. Some are smarter than others. They can handle complex ideas and communicate in one or more languages.
- **HYPER-INTELLIGENT MONSTERS** should absolutely worry you. Not only are they smart, but they're very cunning, and tend to be equivalent to bosses and leaders in their ability to think, plan, evaluate, and execute.

Intelligent and hyper-intelligent monsters may have a social structure that allows them to be categorized in the same way as most humanoids (minions, bosses etc.). This makes them all the more dangerous.

What order should you use to take out your enemies? That depends on the specifics of the encounter, but a good rule

of thumb is to take out minions and mindless monsters first, especially if there are a number of them that charge and attempt to overrun you. Bosses are also a prime target, especially if they have certain powers, abilities, or spells that are being used against the party — they're a little tougher to take down. Don't even think about trying to take down a godling or a god unless you've got a huge arsenal of weapons and magic at your disposal — they'll wipe the floor with you before you get a chance to even get one good hit in. In these cases, following **Rule #45** is often the best bet.

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NEVER UNDERESTIMATE ANYTHING

Even the smallest or seemingly weakest opponents you encounter can cause you grief if you're not careful enough, especially if they're sneaky at fighting (**see Rules #41 and #45**) or they're actually not a minion, but a soldier or boss (**see Rule #39**). Never underestimate any potential opponent because there's a good chance they're not exactly what they seem to be in the first place. Going by first appearances and impressions leads to them being last appearances and impressions. And don't even get me started about mimics! (**see page 124**). Can you tell I hate mimics?

The same goes for hazards you encounter (**see Rule #18**). Things may not look particularly dangerous, but it's when complacency sets in that the real danger appears. Swinging on ropes (**see Rule #63**) is easy when you're not under the pressure of being changed. Things that look like bottomless pits may not actually be bottomless, for example.

This is why secret doors are so hard to find most of the time — they don't often look like doors.

USE SURPRISE

Surprise is one of the most important elements in combat. Ambushes are highly effective at allowing you to take control of combat before your adversaries are prepared, as is sneaking up on them when they're not yet aware of you. This allows you to get critical first strikes in and potentially thin their ranks at the start. Awareness and perception, and the ability to move silently and hide well, increase the odds of success for surprise. Magical items, potions, or spells that offer this are also highly recommended. Do buy.

Another way to use surprise is to do the unexpected in combat (**see Rule #45**). If your opponents expect you to do X, do A instead, even if it looks initially like a meat-headed solution. Hopefully, you'll get lucky, and you'll knock them off-guard because they're expecting you to act another way instead, giving you an opportunity. This approach doesn't work terribly well for magic users that attempt to rush or engage in hand-to-hand combat, although sometimes they get very, very lucky, especially so if they have spells that can make themselves or their allies move faster than normal.

SURPRISE,
MOTHERLURKER!

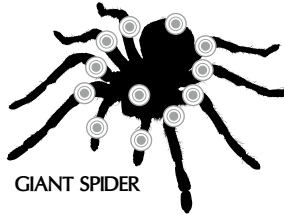
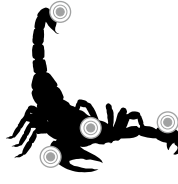
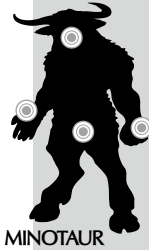
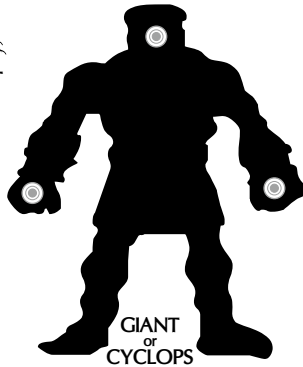


AIM, AIM, AIM

Make each attack against enemies count, because you can be sure they'll be doing that against you. Aim for your target's most vulnerable spots when attacking instead of just trying to whomp or mash on them, hoping to hit. Aimed shots may take more effort but they reward you with more effect.

Specific parts of the body that benefit from aimed attacks:

- **THROATS** are small targets and usually not well protected. This means a well-placed punch, kick, sword, spear point, or any arrow or crossbow bolt can take an enemy out quickly.
- **MOST HEADS** are covered by some sort of helm or armor to protect against having brains bashed in. Not all helms are created equal though, and too often they're not padded well. Some headgear limits the wearer's visibility while giving enhanced protection. Headgear is usually kept on by some sort of strap or buckle and removing or cutting that gets rid of that pesky piece of armor. Because of the way most headgear is made, the face is usually unprotected, making it an idea target for just about any attack. Strikes to the eyes can blind opponents, and broken noses can be driven up into the braincase. A good bloody nose can make it difficult for an opponent to see, and a good smack on the side of the head can daze or confuse an enemy.
- **LIMBS** are usually well-protected, but are weak at the joints, or on the side that meets the main trunk of the body. Areas like the armpits are usually not well protected, making them ideal targets for close and ranged attacks.
- **KNEES** of opponents can be taken out by bashing weapons or a good kick or push on them. Most knees are only meant to bend in one direction and without them opponents tend to buckle and fall. Knees are also ideal targets when you're prone.



TARGET HERE



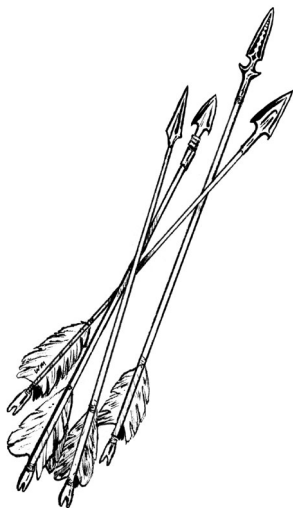
APPROXIMATE SCALE



- **HAMSTRINGS AND HEELS** are excellent targets if you want to stop opponents moving. Hamstrings can be protected by armor, but a good slice across them removes an opponent's ability to stand. Heels, usually protected but still needing some flexibility, are excellent candidates for arrows and bolts as well as blades. Cutting into the muscles just above the heel can lead to opponents becoming lame, and even cause them to bleed out.
- **AN ENEMY'S CROTCH** is given less thought about than other parts of the body for protection by most. A swift kick there can usually incapacitate most creatures or at least cause them to pause painfully in what they're doing. The crotch can also be used as the entry point for getting to the soft and squishy parts protected by armor above it. This area is especially easy for halflings and dwarves to target.

ABOUT HALF THE ARROWS
YOU FIRE CAN BE
RECOVERED AND
USED AGAIN.

JUST DON'T DO IT WHILE
THEY'RE STILL STUCK IN
THINGS THAT ARE TRYING
TO KILL YOU.



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RECOVER YOUR AMMO

When using ranged weapons, there's a good chance that some of your ammunition will be able to be reused, so make sure to collect as much of it after a combat as possible. About half of arrows and bolts fired are probably good enough to be fired again. Just be sure to test them for durability before using them, because the last thing you need as enemies are bearing down on you is to have ammunition break in place before it gets launched towards them.

Additionally, stones for slings can usually be found quite readily in many dungeons in rubbles. Small pouches of stones can easily be filled before entering the dungeon too.

If you've gone up against opponents that have used ranged weapons, they may be carrying ammo that you can claim, so don't forget to check what they're carrying.

USE ALL OF YOUR SENSES

Sounds and smells carry in dungeons and often are the first hint of detectable danger. Almost everyone has at least five senses and they should all be used to gain information about the dungeon and any danger you may find yourself in:

- **SIGHT.** This is your most important sense, but only if you've got enough light to see with, or enough light to contrast against. It lets you see dangers as well as judge distances. Sight can easily be messed up with quick flashes of light and smoke, so don't rely only on it exclusively.
- **HEARING.** In dungeons, hearing becomes incredibly important, especially if you're trying to be stealthy, or there's difficulty with vision. If you can hear yourself move, there's a good chance that others can hear you too, even at a distance. Listen for the tell-tale sounds of monsters and armed persons moving around, and try to limit how much noise you make.
- **SMELL.** Dungeons smell, and things in dungeons smell. Many of them are truly odoriferous, which can either be a boon in identifying potential dangers, but can also cause health troubles if noxious.
- **TOUCH.** If blinded or having difficulty seeing, you should be able to feel your way around in dungeons. One flaw with touch is that you can easily trigger any traps that are set off with a light trigger.
- **TASTE.** Surprisingly, taste can help you determine if foods are safe to eat (if bitter, generally not), as well as if something is poisoned (someone else tests).

A few races and creatures have enhanced senses that can be of additional help, or hindrance, in dungeon exploration.

- **LOW LIGHT VISION** provides the ability to see better in limited light. Many demi-human races have this ability. It still requires light to see with, but less, so it makes detection by others harder.

- **DARKVISION** allows some to see completely in the dark without any light source. In fact, light sources can interfere with this, especially bright ones that flare quickly.
- **ENHANCED HEARING AND SMELL**, such as those of a dog, can be useful to detect a wider range of smells and noises over further distances.
- **ECHOLOCATION** allows certain animals and monsters to “see” by using sound that only they can hear being bounced back to them. Some creatures that are blind or mostly blind have this ability.
- **VIBRATION SENSING** is the ability of some creatures to feel movement as it passes near them. A number of horrible creatures that live in the ground use this ability to track and capture prey.
- **LIFE SENSING** is very rare and usually something the nastiest monsters have. Avoid creatures that have this at all times.

45

FIGHT WISELY

Many fighters will tell you that difference between life and death in combat simply comes down to creating less opportunities for you to die. This is most easily done by putting the odds in your favor and whittling down the other side before they do the same to you. The most effective parties have fought together before, know each other’s strengths and weaknesses, know each other’s role in the party (see **Rule #7**), and trust and rely on each other to be able to defend and support each other.

When engaged in combat, take every opportunity to turn things in your favor. This means taking advantage of the environment, your gear, and your own wits and smarts. Remember too, that while you can use tactics against opponents, they can also use them against you.

- **USE SURPRISE OFTEN.** A surprised target is easy to take out and gives you a great advantage by whittling down enemy numbers quickly and quietly. Know which of your party members are best at making surprise attacks and build them into tactical approaches in combat. Characters who are immune to surprise or are very perceptive should lead the vanguard when moving around in dungeons (see Rule #41).
- **USE DIVERSIONS.** A well-placed stone throw, whistle, or magic spell can be used to distract opponents, giving you the ideal chance to use surprise. Sometimes you may need to have a party member act as the diversion, so consider who will best do this, and work out a backup plan if things go sideways. Some smart opponents and monsters won't fall easily for distractions, but on minions and lower-rung types, they can be highly effective.
- **DEVELOP TACTICS WITH OTHER PARTY MEMBERS** that you can use when you get into combat. Practice them outside of combat so you can use them effectively when under pressure.
- **TAKE OUT YOUR OPPONENT'S CONTROLLERS AND SUPPORT PERSONNEL** (see Rule #7) as quickly as you can. These guys offer mob control, area attacks, and healing. At the same time, protect yours.
- **STAY ON THE MOVE.** A stationary target is an easier target to hit. Keep moving, making sure to keep yourself as small a target as possible while moving.
- **PARRY AND BLOCK ATTACKS** if you're in melee combat. Parrying deflects an attack and changes the flow of the attack in close combat while blocking just absorbs the full strike from an attack. Shields are very good for blocking melee and most ranged attacks. Get a good shield. Hell, get two.
- **USE SHIELDS TO BASH ENEMIES.** A good shield bash can stun opponents. A great shield bash can knock them to the ground.

- **USE AREA ATTACKS.** A good area attack can soften up or disrupt large numbers of foes, making it easier to pick them off and increasing your odds of survival.
- **SMALLER TEAMS** of two to three party members targeting specific foes are a quick and easy way to take control of the field of combat.
- **PICK UP WEAPONS** dropped by opponents if you've lost yours. A battlefield is always a potential source of new weapons and ammunition.
- **RANKS (see Rule #37)** can be used to good effect if the enemy is coming directly towards you from the front or the rear, and you're in a narrow area.
- **USE CHOKE POINTS** to make enemies come at you through specific areas. This allows you to control their numbers as well as increase the chances to take them out. Stairs and small passageways are ideal for this.
- **PROTECT OTHER PARTY MEMBERS** that support you. If you're in the front rank of combat, make sure that nothing gets to those behind you. If you're at the rear, use ranged or area attacks to stop opponents reaching the front.
- **WHITTLE DOWN ENEMY NUMBERS** as quickly and as much as you can using stealth. Pick off stragglers. Use terrain and cover and concealment to reduce the number of potential attackers there are against your group.
- **ALWAYS LEAVE A WAY TO RETREAT FROM COMBAT** if you can. You don't want to be pushed against a wall with no escape. Shit gets nasty then.
- **DON'T SACRIFICE YOURSELF** for the remainder of the party. It sounds like a good idea, but once you're dead there's rarely any way back. It's much better to work with the party to keep as many of you alive as possible.
- **PIN OPPONENTS,** especially more powerful ones, down with ranged fire and magic. Keep firing to keep them occupied while taking down other weaker enemies at the same times.

- **FOCUS ATTACKS** to take out the weakest members of the other side first. The winning side usually has the greater numbers, and the more you reduce your opponent's numbers the less damage you take yourself. An alternative is to take out the biggest and baddest opponent in groups and hope that this cows the others into running away or surrendering.
- **TAKE THE HIGH GROUND** if you can as soon as you can. Attacking from above makes it easier to hit them and harder for them to hit you.
- **USE THE ENVIRONMENT** to hide behind and protect you. This makes it harder to see you and harder to hit you. Cover (barriers that stop you from being hit) and concealment (barriers that stop you from being seen or heard or smelled etc.) should be used as much as possible. If there isn't any, make some (see **Rules #46 and #47**). Do this as much as possible.
- **USE RANGED WEAPONS** to attack targets as they try to close the distance to you. Likewise, watch out for enemies using ranged weapons against you as you try to get to them. Sometimes a flurry of ranged attacks disrupts more than it does damage, and this can be helpful in sowing confusion.
- **ATTACK TARGETS FROM FLANKING POSITIONS** to get behind their shields and weapons. This is easy to do with the help of another party member, and often does additional damage.
- **KNOCK TARGETS TO THE GROUND.** This makes it difficult for them to escape as well as almost impossible for them to attack you effectively. If it happens to you, get on your feet again as quick as possible. Movement is life.
- **LOB OIL AND FIRE.** A well-aimed flask of oil and a lantern can often make quick work of groups of enemies clumped together (see **Rule #69**).
- **BE WARY OF FIRING INTO MELEE** as you'll have a greater chance of hitting something, including allies. If you're lucky you'll hit the bad guys more often

than you hit friends. Sometimes this is the only tactic left open to you. Be on the side firing.

- **EVERYONE IS A POTENTIAL MEATSHIELD.** Use allies and enemies to help protect you while you support each other. Dead bodies, although often heavy, can sometimes make more effective armor than metal plates or chainmail, especially if you put them between you and your attacker.
- **WATCH YOUR REAR.** There are two types of ambushes: those to the front and side, and those from behind. The ones from behind will be successful if you don't have a rearguard.
- **OPPONENTS ON BRIDGES AND LEDGES** are susceptible to being pushed off and falling. If you're lucky the fall will kill or disable them. Be careful not to follow them down.
- **EXTINGUISH LIGHTS** so your opponent can't see you. Only use this when it increases the odds in your favor, such as when your opponents can't see in darkness and you can, or else you'll have as much disadvantage as them. Enemies who can't see in the dark will have to attack blindly, increasing the chance they'll hit allies. Once in darkness, instantly returning light can sometimes blind, daze, or confuse enemies.
- **FIGHTING IN BODIES OF WATER** can be difficult, especially if encumbered by gear. However, it's a great way to take care of enemies by pushing them into water, or pulling them under until they drown. Watch out for creatures in the water.

46

PUT OBSTACLES BETWEEN YOU

Before engaging enemies, it may be a good idea to put some obstacles between you and them, or behind you if you need to retreat and need to slow down the enemy. This includes barriers made from dungeon materials, traps that can be activated as needed, doors and corridors that can be easily blocked (see **Rule #47 below**), statues and pillars

that can be dropped to also provide cover, and even setting up bridges or other walkways to collapse after you've used them. These sorts of steps can take time to prepare, and may be noisy to set up, but they are often the last line of defense you may have when you get swarmed by enemy forces. With enough thought and foresight, these become a way to take out enemies without too many losses on your side (but that's what the cleric is for, amiright?)

47 USE BLOCKADES

Blockades are ways to stop anyone or anything getting into or out of particular areas. In dungeons, you may encounter blockades by finding doors that are barricaded or blocked on one side while you're on the other, or corridors that can't be continued through because the walls or ceilings have collapsed. Blockades can be annoying, but they can also give you a tactical advantage when you need it.

- **THE SIMPLEST BLOCKADES** makes use of whatever is nearby to block others. Furniture, barrels, statues, and even dead bodies can be put to good use to stop doors from opening. The trick is making sure that you're blocking the side the door opens on.
- **WALLS AND CEILINGS** can make good blockades, as long as you bring them down properly. Explosives are an excellent way to do this but their use is dangerous (see **Rule #70**).
- **MAGICAL BLOCKADES** include spells that lock doors or portals shut, as well as force or elemental spells that create walls. Some elementals can pass through these.

Getting through blockades takes a little work, but with the right spells and adventuring equipment (see **Rule #28**), it shouldn't be too difficult.

THERE'S NO SHAME IN RUNNING

There is absolutely **NO** shame in running away from any combat. **EVER**. Running away has saved many a life (my own included more than once) although it's not often highlighted in the great sagas. Let me put it to you this way in an easy-to-understand way: better fled than dead (see **HOW TO OUTFRAN AN OWLBEAR** on **page 125** for more usage of this excellent combat tactic).

There are going to be some fights you get into that you have little chance of winning. You may be able to whittle down enemy forces a bit, but if you're about to run out of ammunition and magic and the other side isn't, running away is the smartest thing you can do.

Running away is a time-honored tradition among thieves, warriors, some knights, most politicians, and many other unsavory characters. Not that you need to be unsavory to run away, but those people typically tend to die from other things and not running away. Running away is the anti-death. Unless you have a bad heart, or you run towards something that aims to kill you. Be okay with running.

SURRENDER IF YOU MUST

You may find that the better course is to surrender to those you're fighting, especially if the odds are overwhelming. If you have useful information or skills, you can leverage these with your captors. Surrendering isn't giving up, but giving you more time to work out how to get out of the pickle you're in.

On the other side of things, you don't need to kill everything you come into contact with in a dungeon. You can try to subdue others or get them to surrender, allowing you to perhaps get important information, item, or help that you wouldn't have if you simply killed them.

REST UP WHEN SAFE TO DO SO

Resting up is important, especially after you've just slogged through a tiring area in a dungeon, or survived combat (those that don't survive will get plenty of rest).

- **NEVER REST IN THE OPEN** if you can help it. This makes it too easy for enemies to not only see you but attack you en masse.
- **CLOSE DOORS AND LOCK THEM.** Pin and block them otherwise, but know that any noise you make may draw a wandering monster (see **Rules #44 and #53**) or worse.
- **SET WATCHES.** The optimal time will depend on who is in the party, but two or four hour long watches are a good idea; elves and those without a need to sleep can be highly effective here. Work out the watch order ahead of time so that you don't have to wake others needlessly. Stay quiet during your watch so that you don't draw attention to yourself or your party. Note: if you awake and the person on watch is missing, this should concern you (see **Rule #6**).
- **SET BARRICADES AND PERIMETERS** around you. Not only will this protect you if attacked with ranged weapons, but it also allows you to slow down potential attackers trying to get to you.
- **SHORT RESTS OVER LONG.** This is especially true in areas filled with potential danger. Catching your breath for a few minutes before moving on will serve you better by keeping your attention active, your reflexes sharp, and your chance for survival higher. Longer rests make you want to take naps or become too relaxed. There are times when you'll need to take long rests, however.
- **MONITOR FATIGUE.** When the members of your party start showing signs of fatigue, you'll need to consider resting or moving on. Party members that are wounded become fatigued much easier.

- **AVOID EXHAUSTION.** When you become exhausted, you're in no shape to defend yourself from surprise attacks or wandering monsters. Not only that, but you also endanger the lives of others in the party. Don't allow yourself to become exhausted by making sure that you take care of fatigue before it turns into exhaustion.

51

HEAL UP REGULARLY

When adventuring you're going to get hurt. Expect it, and be prepared. The best way to do so is to know what your options for healing are.



NOT ALL FUNGI ARE
SAFE TO EAT.

MANY CAN POISON YOU,
AND KILL YOU.

OTHER'S CAN MAKE
YOU FEEL LIKE YOU
WANT TO DIE.

OR ARE A SIX-LEGGED
RAINBOW STAG RIDING
THROUGH THE
CLOUDLANDS
OF NARCOSA?

- **FIRST AID.** If you're lucky you'll have learned some first aid, at least enough to staunch bleeding and stop yourself and others from dying outright.
- **HERBS AND POULTICES** are a great way to provide immediate healing or save your skin (and others) when wounded.
- **CLERICS** in the party is an absolute must if you're going to be adventuring near undead – that gives you a two-for-one whammy of healing along with the ability to do some mean damage to them.
- **DRUIDS AND RANGERS** are excellent in a pinch when exploring natural dungeons such as caves, as they can often use mosses, fungi, and other items to create poultices. Some may also be able to offer magical healing.
- **PALADINS** can sometimes offer healing to the party.
- **MAGIC POTIONS AND ITEMS** should be stocked up on as often as possible. Better yet, have someone in your party be able to make these (which is always cheaper and more convenient to do) as needed.

It takes time to heal after being hurt. Depending on the type of wound that you've received, you may only be lightly disadvantaged or have your life threatened.

- **SCRATCHES** usually don't take long to heal, and rarely cause complications, unless you've been scratched by something that is diseased or has poisons or toxins that delivered during the scratching. You may not look pretty for a while, but you'll survive.
- **BRUISES** look worse than they really are. They can take several days to several weeks to heal fully, and the bruised area tends to be tender. Ripe for attack.
- **BROKEN BONES** take a lot more time to heal and may require being set and supported to allow movement. What's worse is that broken ribs can puncture internal organs and cause more damage, as well as internal bleeding. Broken spines immobilize you and make it difficult to continue dungeoneering, while broken necks are usually fatal. I suggest avoiding the last two on an ongoing basis.
- **OPEN WOUNDS** may be minor or major. Wounds act as entry points for diseases and a number of other creatures and monsters. These are best bandaged up and allowed to heal. The smell of blood from open wounds can often draw monsters or predators looking for an easy kill.
- **TEMPORARY BLINDNESS** usually clears up within a few hours, but can make survival challenging while it occurs; not being able to see opponents or danger makes it easier to die. It also forces reliance onto other senses like hearing and touch.
- **TEMPORARY DEAFNESS** removes one of your major senses when exploring dungeons but usually isn't as bad as blindness.
- **PARALYZATION** is usually temporary, but depending upon the source can last any amount of time. Some paralyzation doesn't cause any other damage by itself (such as spells or magic items) while others such as toxins and venoms from animals and other monsters cause physical damage.
- **ELEMENTAL DAMAGE** often leaves physical traces, including burns or frostbite, which can add insult to injury (literally!). Loss of use of limbs, or the loss of the limbs themselves, are often consequences. Avoid.

TOUGHEST ENEMIES, BEST LOOT

The bigger they are the harder they fall – you’ve heard that, right? What you’ve also probably heard is that they bigger the are the tougher they are. What you may not have heard is that the bigger and tougher they are the better the loot they tend to carry.

You can always immediately tell if a potential enemy has some great loot, because they’re probably using it against you or carrying it on their person. That magical or superior weapon or armor they have on? GREAT loot. The rings or amulets giving them access to high-level spells or abilities? GREAT loot. Got it? Now you just need to acquire it from them, which may be harder than you expect – luckily you have this book to help you (see **Rules #45, #54, and #55**).

You may get lucky and run into an enemy that has chosen to squirrel away their best loot in a secret hiding place that can only be accessed by use of secret doors, and perhaps even special switches or locks to hidden compartments. That’s why you should try to talk to them first (see **Rule #53**) rather than simply whomp on them and then have to search everywhere (see **Rule #38**) to find what they have. If you kill everything you come across in a dungeon, you may end up killing potential allies (see **Rule #74**). Dead opponents and allies can’t speak and tell you where their loot is (unless you raise them from the dead or speak to their ghosts to find that out.)

MONSTERS WANDER

Monsters and other creatures really do wander around in dungeons and they’ll kill you dead if you’re not prepared when you encounter them. Always be on the lookout for these critters in dungeons, as well as outside of them at the entrances and locales nearby. Wandering monsters are drawn by noise and smells, so anything you can do to reduce those helps. Some monsters set alarms and traps to catch the unwary, and are summoned by those being set off.

Wandering monsters have to come from somewhere, so if you haven't found it yet, they have a lair or their own base of operations (**see Rule #6**) somewhere within the dungeon. One or two wandering monsters of the same type isn't a usual cause for concern, but when there are several found along main concourses or corridors, there's a very good chance you're near their base. That's where you'll find the monsters that don't wander. Or at least don't wander far.

Sometimes the monsters in a dungeon level are weak, while some are more powerful than you expect. While weaker ones are easy to deal with and continue delving, harder ones may require you to leave and return when they're too tough to currently defeat, but be aware that things can change while you're away (**see Rule #14**).

Now, not every wandering monster wants to kill you; truthfully, the word "monster" is really a misnomer, and is mostly used to describe their general attributes and features. Some of these creatures are of good or neutral alignment and may, in fact, need help or have resources you can earn or purchase. The best way to know what type of wandering monster you've encountered is to try to parley with them. Try talking to them in the Common language at first. If they don't understand that, then you may need to switch to a natural shared language, or even their own language if you know it. Be careful when doing this though, as one wrong word choice or mispronunciation can change a potentially friendly encounter into an ages-long dispute, or simply one that lasts as long as one encounter.

If the monster attacks you immediately after you speak, you pretty much know its intentions and that it isn't interested in parleying with you. You should now prepare to defend yourself (**see Rule #45**) or run away (**see Rule #48**).

BEWARE SPECIAL MONSTERS

Some monsters have special abilities or attacks that can make them especially challenging to go up against. While these abilities often pretty awesome, they increasingly less so when they're directed at you:

- **POISON** is very common in a lot of monsters, particularly the giant strains of frogs, toads, lizards, snakes, and spiders that infest dungeons. Poisons can cause internal damage, burning away at blood and organs, or cause catatonia or paralysis among other effects. Some monsters spit poison while others provide it through their bites, or in stingers, horns, or other piercing body parts. Making sure that areas that can be struck by poison are covered, and try to take out poisoned enemies at range.
- **FEAR ATTACKS** cause the target to run away, often dropping what they're holding. A number of spirits and undead have this ability, especially the most powerful of them. Magic spells and magic items can help defend against these types of attacks.
- **PARALYSIS** should be avoided at all costs. If you're paralyzed, you'll be unable to defend yourself and you'll be a quick kill for whatever paralyzed you. Stay moving and to avoid being struck by paralyzing limbs or teeth.
- **BREATH ATTACKS** allow certain monsters to attack you at a distance. The most dangerous breath attacks include an elemental component such as fire, ice, or electricity. Dragons have these.
- **PETRIFICATION** can turn you into a fleshy unmoving statue or even an actual statue made of marble, rock, or some other hard material. This ability is limited to monsters like cockatrices and gorgons. Use mirrors or polished shields to avoid the deadly gaze of petrifiers, and then take them out.

- **SHAPECHANGING** is an ability that only a few creatures have. Wercreatures obviously have this ability, and they may pass it on to those they bite or scratch. Some other notable shapechangers are vampires and changelings, both of which are very annoying. Shapechangers often have different abilities in different forms, which is something to consider when attempting to defeating them.
- **SOUL DRAIN** is something I hope that you never encounter. Only a very few rare monsters have this close combat ability, thankfully. While being soul drained, you'll feel your very essence being stripped away, along with memories and experiences, and possibly portions of your personality. Victims of soul drain are weakened and susceptible to follow-up attacks. The best way to deal with a soul drainer is to run away, or lob lots and lots of fire and magic at it from a distance. Rarely do you get the drain back.

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MONSTERS CAN HAVE IMMUNITIES

Going along with special abilities, some monsters are immune to certain types of attack or damage. Elementals are generally immune to any damage from the same element they made from (**see page 122** for more information). Some undead and spirit creatures are immune to all but magical attacks (weapons or spells). Knowing what type of creature you're coming up against allows you to choose your weapon and protection loadout appropriately.

As you encounter more and more monsters, you'll start to get an idea of not only their immunities but also the best way to combat them. There are also a good number of people who have already encountered these creatures and have information that would be helpful. Planning the delve (**see Rule #8**) is much easier and less deadly if you can be prepared for the types of monsters that you're going to encounter. Having sets of pre-made kits (**see Rule #34**) can help with this.

Not every dungeon has been explored, and not every unknown creature has been discovered. There are many strange creatures yet to be discovered while dungeoneering. If you're looking to discover new and interesting and deadly creatures and monsters, exploring dungeons is a great approach. Many private zoos, scholars, and magic users are interested in finding unknown creatures to use (in whole or in part) for their own reasons. They typically pay well, if you're looking for an additional income stream.

Some of the creatures and monsters you'll encounter may be variants of others that exist in other dungeons. Dungeon ecologies (see **Rule #15**) shift and change based on the creatures that inhabit them, but the ecology also changes the creatures that live there over time. Some of these changes and differences may be small, but others may be vast. Some of the creatures you encounter may also be completely out of place (see **Rule #57**).

POTENTIALLY PROVIDES
A GREAT FEAST AS
WELL AS A WHOLE
LOT OF REWARD
MOOLAH.

IF YOU CAN KILL IT.

The good thing about discovering new creatures and monsters, apart from naming them, is that they present a challenge. You don't know what abilities or immunities (see **Rule #55**) they have, you don't know how they operate or what type of society (if any) they have. That's exciting! It's also deadly because you don't know exactly how to handle these unknown creatures, which puts all of your plans (see **Rule #8**) into jeopardy. The good news is that it gives you practice in following **Rule #9!**



SOME THINGS DON'T BELONG THERE

Following on from the previous rule, not everything in the dungeon is meant to be there. This includes:

- **CELESTIALS AND ANGELS** are linked to higher powers of Good. They tend to be sticklers for following rules, especially those against killing and liberating things from other people. They're often more trouble than they're worth usually. Unless you're close to dying. They're helpful then.
- **DEMONS AND DEVILS** have their own machinations and are usually allied with absolute evil. Not recommended, and avoid readily.
- **DRAGONS AND HYDRAS** are usually bad news, but that depends on the type and color of scales, as well as how many heads and abilities they have. Avoid most dragons and especially any dragon with five heads. Some can be great allies, but that's not guaranteed.
- **EXTRAPLANAR CREATURES** from another reality. The fact they're not normally meant to be is a giveaway.
- **ALIENS**, which are creatures that do and shouldn't exist. They don't make sense. Trying to work out what they are breaks brains (even the most learned and experienced ones). The good news is that there's usually a way to kill them.
- **TRULY WEIRD THINGS.** I mean REALLY weird things. Things that aren't even alien. You'll know them when you see/smell/taste them.



IF YOU SEE THIS ...

... DON'T EVEN
BOTHER
RUNNING!

Why are those things here? Who the hell knows?! Just know that you should avoid them in most cases unless you plan on ending up dead (and if you do that, **see Rule #75**).

Don't ask me why, but there always are. In. Every. Single. Dungeon. But this has allowed the proliferation of Rat On A Stick™ franchises throughout many dungeons. You may be eating rat, but at least you're getting rat of a consistent quality, rather than of dubious quality. In case of food shortage (see Rule #33), you can be assured of the availability of rats in most dungeons (whether or not they're provided by purveyors of rat meat).

Many of the rats you may encounter will be large, or even huge, and very possibly carrying one or more diseases. When encountering rats, it's always a good idea to try and keep them from biting you (a good approach for any monsters, creatures, or royalty you encounter at any time). Wearing armor and thick clothing helps with this. Moving fast helps too. I also find pushing others between you and the biter is also a good solution.



A GIANT RAT

A SMALL RAT TO A GIANT.

A POTENTIAL MOUNT
FOR A HALFLING, BOTH
IN AND OUT OF THE
DUNGEON.

I MAY OR MAY NOT BE
SPEAKING FROM PERSONAL
EXPERIENCE ON THIS.

In addition to rodents of normal and unusual size, you may also encounter wererats from time to time. These creatures either started life as some other creature or as a rat and through the power of lycanthropy (usually from a bite or a curse or eating some very dodgy Rat On A Stick™) can change between multiple forms: a rat form, a humanoid form, and their in-between form which makes them look like giant ratpeople. The most terrifying wererat I ever encountered was originally a troll that had feasted on a wererat and its rat army legion, catching lycanthropy from that. It took us over an hour and ten gallons of oil set on fire to kill that thing and the smell didn't leave our clothes for weeks.

EDITOR: The opinion regarding the "dodginess" of Rat On A Stick™ are sole ownership of the author.

Doors are generally there to create a semi-permanent movable barrier between two distinct locations. Open doors invite all sorts of trouble, while closed doors stop that same sort of trouble getting through. Sometimes the best plan with a door is to not keep it open but to close it behind you. Be aware of where any locks or handles are, and which way the door swings when opening – most only open one way, and that’s usually into a room. Turning handles doesn’t open doors automatically, and some doors get stuck so that you have to give them a hard push, sometimes using a great deal of strength. This is especially true for doors in wet environments, as the doors swell and expand. Some doors are jammed closed by metal spikes (which is also a great tactic to stop anything coming after you) or open in the same way so that they can’t close.

**A STANDARD DOOR**

GET USED TO SEEING THESE.

Locks on doors pose another set of problems. Unless you have the specific key for a lock, or a special lockpicking kit and the skill to use it, there’s a good chance you’ll have to destroy the lock to get the door open. Consider whether you really should smash the lock on a door before doing so; you may need to lock the door again later, especially if something on the other side of it is nasty and coming to get you. If you can’t lock the door again, try to barricade it shut while you make your hasty exit. Alternatively, magic spells can sometimes open doors that don’t want to be opened. Another great option is a mobile ratchet system that allows you to pull doors from their frame; for that, you’ll need rope, a ratchet, some spikes, and a hammer to drive one end of the rope into the floor or a wall.

Doors made of strong wood, or metal, or banded with metal can be used to shield you from elemental attacks or ranged weapons. I’ve even seen strong adventurers take doors off their hinges and use them as oversized tower shields as they

rush down the corridor towards enemies, clutching at the door and squashing their targets between door and walls.

Similarly, multiple doors in a corridor allow you to use the door frame to hide behind while creating a choke point to hurl ranged attacks down corridors. Just be sure to clear the rooms attached to the doors before starting your attack. The last thing you need is to be attacked on multiple fronts.

60 IDENTIFY LOOT QUICKLY

Most of the loot you'll come across is easy to identify and evaluate. You'll eventually get experienced enough to be able to eyeball how much something is worth and how much you can get for it at a settlement.

Some items, such as magic items, are more problematic. First, there's the problem of identifying an item as magic. The easiest way is to see if the item is in good condition or untarnished when you find it in circumstances that it should be. Next, you may want to just attempt to use it (**see page 130** on ways to potentially identify a magic item). The bad news with this is that the item may be cursed (**see Rule #67 and page 129**).

Another solution is to have a magic user with you that can identify things. Magic users have all sorts of useful spells, including the ability to identify magic items, invisible creatures, potential enemies, and more. If you don't have an active magic user in your party, having an item that can identify magic (and doesn't require being used by a magic user) can be a godsend. Some magic users hire themselves out to dungeoneers as specialists.

Magic is impressive and powerful. I can't cast any myself, but I've been in parties with some great (and some not-so-great-and-pretty-dead) magic users. The simplest magics can be just as powerful as the most ancient spells if they're used in the correct context. And especially sometimes if used in the incorrect context.

Spells basically break down into the following categories:

- **OFFENSIVE MAGICS** are almost mandatory, which is why you should always have a magic user and/or cleric traveling with you. Their ability to cast elemental spells, turn one object into another, lock doors and portals from being opened, and do incredible elemental damage to all and sundry cannot be overstated as important to have in your arsenal. The only problem with this type of magic is that it can be very dangerous if it backfires on you, so keep that in mind, and usually keep a little distance between you and spellslingers.
- **DEFENSIVE MAGICS** follow ABC – **Always Be Carrying** (see **Rule #28**). Defensives magics improve your ability to stay not dead, and they're easily put into objects that even non-magic users can use. Magic rings, necklaces, weapons, armor – all these things can include defensive spells such as magic shields, zones of protection from evil, healing spells, protection against disease, and on and on. The best offense at times is a strong defense, and defensive magics can keep you alive long enough to turn the tide of any situation. Healing magics fall into this category, including those that cure wounds, disease, and blindness and those that restore or regrow missing limbs.
- **PERCEPTUAL AND ILLUSIONARY MAGIC** can be incredibly useful, allowing you to confuse, blind, and completely mislead others by creating illusions or even turning things invisible. Illusions can work even better when applied to specific senses of

enemies (see **Rule #44**). Spells that manipulate light and darkness, sounds, and smells can be especially potent. A well-placed illusion or hallucination can often help reduce the odds in your favor without giving up other advantages you may have. While these magics are more useful outside of dungeons, they can also be lifesavers too. Found in too few magic items, alas.

- **SUMMONING AND DISPELLING MAGIC** allows for the calling of monsters, elementals, demons, ghosts, spirits, and all manner of other strange things. The most powerful spells can even summon godlings and gods (which can very often be A Bad Thing In Most Circumstances). Spells that cancel out magic or dispel, bind, or enslave others can also fall into this category. Know what you're dealing with when you work with spellcasters that utilize this magic: — the mind bondage spell is NOT what you think it is...
- **ENCHANTMENT** is the core of binding spells and special abilities into objects (either living or dead, made of flesh or not). There's some debate about whether curses (see **Rule #67**) are a form of enchantment magic; those debates are boring and take too long to get to the important parts of curses: how to remove them after you get them.
- **TRANSFORMATIONAL MAGIC** changes one thing to another. While magic users have been trying to turn lots of things into gold for millennia, most transformation magics can't do that. Instead, they allow sticks to change to snakes, living creatures to stone or chalk or metal and even allow individuals to change single or groups of creatures from one form to another (sheep seem to be an especially popular choice). Some spells can even purify or provide food and water, which is incredibly useful.
- **MISCELLANEOUS MAGICS** include spells to send messages, speak mind to mind, know what the weather is (not as useless in a dungeon as you may think it is), breathe underwater (see **Rule #71**), and speak with plants (you'd be surprised what they know).

Keep in mind that every potential spell you can sling at an opponent may end up being something that you and your party come up against. And magic tends to be loud and flashy, which is no good if you're trying to be sneaky.

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MAGIC CAN BE WEIRD

In certain dungeons, or certain parts of certain dungeons, magic may not work as expected. This is usually because there's either some anti-magic at work, some specific magic causing normal magic to go awry, or some crossover of the planes that causes magic to function differently. In these types of areas, magic should be used sparingly or not at all unless the exact effect on magic is known and understood. The last thing you want to do is attempt to cast a simple light spell and end up teleporting everyone into a mountain.

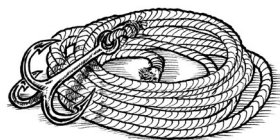
Some dungeons may also affect magical items' abilities, changing them, or making them more powerful or weaker.

63

ROPE AND KNOTS

One of the most important pieces of equipment you can buy is rope. Whether made from hemp or more expensive and hardy silk, rope has numerous ways it can be used, while dungeoneering including:

- **KNOTWORK** is an important skill, and not just for sailors. There are many different types of knots that can become useful while dungeoneering, including slipknots and quick-release knots. And you never know when you may need to make a hangman's noose.
- **ROPING AND LASSOING** individuals and objects is a handy skill to have. While in combat, being able to stop an opponent's attacks quickly by wrangling and tying them up can help save you and the party's



ROPE HAS MANY
EXCELLENT USES.

YOU CAN NEVER REALLY
HAVE TOO MUCH OF IT.

skin. It's also an effective way to work in concert with others to tie down some larger monsters and creatures, or to limit their options in combat.

- **LARGE KNOTS** on the end of a rope make an excellent improvised replacement for combat chains, while cutting small sections of rope and making large knots on either end makes a quick and dirty thrown weapon that can trip or even strangle enemies.
- **BINDING AND HOLDING** can be accomplished with plenty of good rope and some decent knots. This includes any other creatures who might otherwise give you difficulty, though watch out for those who may have the skill to escape from such a thing.
- **DOORS AND PORTALS** can be pulled open, or tied shut if you're on the right side of them.
- **CLIMBING SHEER SURFACES** (see **Rule #18**) is much easier with rope and a grappling hook. Tying knots into the rope makes it easier to ascend, while having no knots makes it easier to descend.
- **BELAYS** can help ensure that the party makes it safely over dangerous ground, particularly when climbing, by tying rope around each member. Just be ready to cut the rope if you need to save some or most of the party.
- **SWINGS** can be made to help you cross ravines and chasms, as long as there is something for the rope to attach to above, or be looped over.
- **SIMPLE BRIDGES** can be made if you have enough rope and time to make them, or you can simply throw rope across a chasm and tie it off and use it to travel across. The foolhardy and agile (and stupid) can attempt to make tightropes.

Ropes that have been broken or cut can be spliced together to repair them, while splicing also allows multiple ropes to be tied together to make longer ropes.

Magical rope is great, because it can often be commanded to knot itself or attach itself to things, and it doesn't come undone when using it. Cutting it is difficult or impossible, though. Some magical items create multiple magical ropes as needed. Seek these out if you can.

64

FORAGING AND RESUPPLYING

Unless you're lucky enough to run into another adventuring party who'll trade with you, you need to make sure that you're fully supplied when dungeoneering. There are no shops or stores underground, so if you don't bring something with you, you're going to have to find it on the way. You can always return to the outside of the dungeon but you lose time and resources if you do so, as well as run the risk of encountering wandering creatures.

Some sources of supplies include:

- **DEFEATED OPPONENTS** may be carrying their own set of supplies that you can liberate. When it's safe to do so, rifle the body and see what they're carrying. This action also has the benefit of identifying fakers so that you can finish the job properly. If push comes to shove, you can also, ah, eat long adventurer or long dungeon denizen if you must.
- **LICHENS AND MOSSES** can often easily be found on dungeon walls, floors, and ceilings. With some proper preparation, these can be turned into broths and teas that provide sustenance. They'll taste terrible and probably not kill you, and may just keep you going until you get real food.
- **SECRET CACHES** are a great way to get additional supplies, but first you have to find them. Thieves and other secretive types like to use special marks to mark their locations. Find out what the local thief mark for supplies is, and you may get lucky enough to find a secret cache while exploring.

Dogs are incredibly useful when dungeoneering. For a small amount of upkeep they not only provide you with offensive but also defensive capabilities – they'll watch over you while you rest and sleep, and attack opponents when given orders to do so. They have a keen sense of smell and hearing and can help reduce the amount of ambushes you'll suffer from.

It's always wise to choose dogs that are trained to work in confined spaces in the dark, and that have combat training. Some dogs are not suited for dungeoneering at all and will refuse to go underground. It's most often the smaller dogs that are comfortable underground, and when a horde of dachshunds or terriers attack it can be particularly demoralizing and may easily rout some opponents.

Dogs should be trained to follow orders and work with other animals, including other dogs and horses. Many trained war hounds are given specific training to work in tandem with owners and other pack animals, and to attack specific types of monsters or opponents. They're great at holding down or distracting opponents so that you can get the jump on them.

Challenges occur when you need to get the animals through difficult terrain such as pits or when ascending/descending when there are no stairs. Also, when a dog is frightened or overpowered, there's a good chance that they'll run in the opposite direction you wanted them to go, or make a lot of noise, which can attract unwanted attention.

If you do take dogs, makes sure to take all females or all males. Mixing and matching leads to, well, mixing and matching. While this is a fine way to continue to restock your dogs over time, it also means that some of them will not be available to use on a regular basis. Because puppies.

NO BODY PARTS IN STRANGE HOLES

You'd think this would go without saying, but you'd also be surprised how many people have done this only to have limbs cut off, or being pulled into a pocket dimension, or worse. Use a pole or something else first, or someone else's body, if you need to poke around inside something that could potentially lead to dismemberment. By someone else's body I mean a retainer, fellow party member, or even the body of a slain opponent that just happens to be nearby (a little trickier and messy, but still possible). In fact, it's better to just be completely careful and make sure that anything that looks like it doesn't belong gets properly scouted out (**see Rule #23**) and examined (**see Rule #38**) before you even attempt to interact with it. There's a reason I still have all my limbs and fingers.

When you delve into dungeons, you're going to go places and see things that you really shouldn't (and that I don't want to either). Most of these things are going to try to kill you. Think about it. If you're going after loot in a dungeon, the chances are that whoever owns the loot doesn't want you to liberate the loot from them, so they'll put up lots of defenses, such as pits (**see Rule #24**) and traps (**see Rule #25**), protect it with minions (**see Rule #39**), and in some cases breed and maintain pet monsters (**see Rules #53 and #56**) to help protect it. Now, in saying that, the tougher the challenge in getting the loot, the bigger the reward, right (**see Rule #52**)?

This rule also applies to many other situations and is not exclusive to dungeoneering. I don't think I really have to go into this further, do I? Those situations are between you and your deity.



YOU COULDN'T PAY
ME ENOUGH MONEY
TO PUT MY HAND
IN THAT MOUTH.

POSSIBLY.

MAKE ME AN OFFER.

EVERYTHING IS
OPEN TO NEGOTIATION.

OKAY, MOST THINGS.

BEWARE OF CURSES

Let me be completely forthright – curses suck big time, so avoid them with extreme prejudice. Sometimes you can't, because that nice shiny bauble or piece of loot you're grabbing for is actually infected with one or more nasty curses. Cursed items come in all shapes and sizes, and sometimes the curse doesn't kick in for a while. Cursed items tend to be quite powerful, and the more powerful an item is, the greater the chance it harbors a curse.

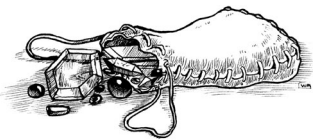
Have someone else pick up and use the item. This may sound cowardly, but it's actually a pretty clever tactic; if the item is cursed and the curse kicks off immediately, or within a short time, you dodged an arrow. A cursed arrow.

You can also wait to see if the item's curse activates after it comes into contact with magic, blood from someone or something gets on it, or after some time lapses.

CARRY MOSTLY GEMS

When exploring dungeons, there's a chance you'll end up finding lots of coinage. Carrying that coinage ends up not only being a chore, but it also reduces your stealthiness and sneakiness; there's nothing worse than having a wandering monster or a guard hearing the clink of money within purses and coin bags (see **Rule #44**). To solve this problem, convert your coinage into gems when you can (or get yourself one or more bags of holding). While you lose a little money due to transaction fees, you gain a number of benefits. For one, you can carry more money effectively as gems are lighter, more hardy, and less noisy than coins. This means you should be able to carry more of them. That's another benefit.

The same goes for if you find gems while adventuring; choose them over coins if you can. Rarely will the gems be fake glass replicas, but the real deal. However, it is possible that some gems could be cursed or magical, so be sure to



BAGS OF GEMS ARE THE
EASIEST WAY TO
CARRY MONEY AROUND.

ALSO, THE EASIEST
WAY TO GET RICH
PICKPOCKETING.

WHAT?

check for that when you find them. If you're not able to that, have someone else pick the gem up, just to be sure, such as a hireling (see **Rule #5**).

Most settlements will have some way for you to convert gems and coins back and forth. This isn't always the case, and you may have to travel to more metropolitan areas to convert the gems. There may be a fee or some haggling involved for each gem, and some gems may be more valuable than others in certain areas. To make sure that you don't get tricked, make sure you have someone in your party able to work out the rough value of any gems you encounter. That way you won't be surprised when you don't get as much as you expect.

Some magic users may use gems in spells, rituals, or in the creation of magic items. If they're in the party, consider having them accept gems as part of their share of the loot. (see **Rule #17**).

Gems, being shiny objects, are something that certain monsters may collect more of or desire, and can be useful in negotiations or parleying with them (see **Rule #53**).



BE CAREFUL WITH OIL AND FIRE

Using fire and oil together is a time-honored dungeoneering technique. Oil sticks to just about everything, seeps through clothing, and settles on the top of liquids like water, and creates a surface for open flames to attach to. Be careful to use flasks that are tough but can break when thrown on the ground or walls; glass or porcelain flasks are the best options. Some applications include:

- **THROWING OIL FLASKS** directly at opponents can cause them to be covered in the oil, which along with an open flame can be a fantastically terrifying way to dispatch of them. Especially if the oil is lit with a flaming arrow. For wider dispersal, aim the oil at

opponents' feet. It coats the floor as well as your opponent. This also allows you to enjoy the look of horror as flames lick across the floor and up your opponent's body. What?

- **ONCE AN OPPONENT** is on fire, lob more oil at them to keep the flames going, as well as spread it to those nearby.
- **TO INCREASE THE AREA** that oil covers, use water to help spread it – the oil will stay on top. Be careful not to dilute the oil too much or you'll ruin its effectiveness.
- **OIL AND FIRE** are an excellent way to create a barrier between you and opponents, which can help you get extra time to escape.
- **ADDING A RAG** into the oil jar that acts as a stopper allows you to create a throwable weapon that can be primed and thrown.
- **IN CONFINED SPACES** smoke from burning oil can help to choke up opponents as well as screw with their vision (unless they have special eyesight).

If you see opponents about to use oil, try to interrupt them and have the oil splash on them instead. A word of warning though: just as easily as you can use oil and fire against opponents, they can do just the same to you. Becoming crispy isn't a good way to go, and makes you smell like bacon. Mmmm, bacon.

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LIMIT EXPLOSIVES USAGE

First, using explosives tends to be a really bad idea, but there are people who are going to do it anyway. The only safe way to handle explosives safely is from a great distance, far away from the detonation scene, where things can't get thrown at you or fall on top of you. But if you're going to use explosives while dungeoneering, there are some things you should know. Really, really know. Really, really, really know.

An explosive blast in a small enclosed area is incredibly dangerous, not only because of the chance of bits of the explosive device shearing through your body and remodeling your face and other fleshy bits, but because there's always a shock wave that follows it. Dungeon corridors and rooms are enclosed spaces.

This means that when things explode, there's little space for the explosive blast to go anywhere except through any portals that are available. The bigger the room or corridor the better, and the blast will travel along that. Rooms with open doors help and explosive blasts can be channeled through them. Shaped explosives allow you to push the explosion in particular directions, but don't always work all of the time.

This shock wave spreads out from the center of the explosion and then rebounds off walls, ceilings, and doors. The more enclosed the space, the more powerfully the shockwave rebounds, which hurts a lot more. It also ends up doing damage those same walls, ceilings, and doors (which does not make it a good way to find secret doors), which leads to reducing the structural integrity of the dungeon. The secondary danger from explosions are cave-ins that block off exits as well as air. As any dwarf worth his metal will tell you, this is not a good way to die, and so should be avoided as much as possible. I try to avoid dying as much as possible. So far I've been very successful at it. So listen to what I'm saying.

On the other side of things (pun intended), if you've got a door between you and an incoming explosion, close the door as quickly as you can to protect yourself and increase the damage taken by others on the other side of the door (but try not to do this when members of your party are there, because them being dead complicates some things for you).



THIS IS A DISASTER
WAITING TO HAPPEN.

SERIOUSLY, DON'T DO THIS.

AT LEAST NOT IF I'M
IN THE ADVENTURING
PARTY WITH YOU.

Why would you ever go swimming in a dungeon? Some dungeons may contain large bodies of water that need to be traversed at one or more levels. Usually, these bodies of water are natural in origin, but they can be manufactured, often by the dungeon's original designer or anyone else that comes after that who wants to put waterworks into place. You could even be dungeoneering in actual waterworks under cities or vast complexes (see **Rules #1 and #11**).

Those that can't swim can be helped across by others who can. Intact barrels are also an option for smaller adventurers, while makeshift rafts can work for those who are larger.

Not all bodies of water are actually water and could contain acid or something even worse (what could be worse than acid, you ask? I'll let you find that out for yourself.) Testing the supposed water in some way before fully immersing yourself is recommended, preferably not using a body part. Ten-foot poles, small stones, and even coins can be used to determine what the liquid is. Basically, anything that you can bear to lose.

Bodies of water in dungeons are often home to complex ecologies of different species that live and breed their entire life cycle there without seeing the light of day. These are especially dangerous, as they think everything else that's in the water that's not them as food.

DON'T MAKE DEALS WITH ENEMIES

This should be relatively simple to understand without having to explain too deeply. No good comes from this sort of thing. Bad guys include demons, necromancers, evil wizards, cultists, and anyone else who would prefer to see you dead. You'd be surprised at how many adventurers forget this one, though. They live to rue it, but usually only for a short time.

Deals are made from positions of power and a desire to get more from the other person than you give away to them. That's where negotiations come into play. Rarely are those negotiations deadly and put one or more peoples' lives on the line (unless we're talking about an assassination contract etc.).

Deals with bad guys happen because either you have thoroughly whopped them and they don't have a way out, not even running away (see **Rule #48**) and they're willing to surrender (see **Rule #49**). The other case is when the boot is on the other foot, and they've got leverage on you. When they hold the cards and you're in danger, you'll probably try to do everything you can to survive and get out of the situation you're in. They'd try to do the same. Bad guys add an extra wrinkle, as they'll usually try to catch up with you at a later date by themselves or with help (see **Rules #4 and #39**) and finish you off or get revenge in some way. This happens pretty much. Every. Single. Time.

Now, I'm not saying that you should just kill them and be done with them if they try to negotiate with you. Okay, maybe I am saying that, but there may be exceptions, such as they're under a powerful curse or spell, or they can lead you to even more powerful and plentiful loot. Get the help you need, and then kill them. Just don't expect them to go silently or easily to their graves. Some even come back from their graves (see **page 121** for how to deal with liches).

So, what happens when you eventually don't make it out of a dungeon alive? Luckily, like most smart adventurers, you'll have prepared a will and last testament so that you can pass on your loot stash or be brought back to life. In the will you should include some basic instructions about how your body should be retrieved as well as stored between death and either burial or resurrection. A Do Not Resurrect or Reincarnate instruction can also be included as a rider on the will in case you don't want to come back or you want to limit the number of resurrections (because terrible things start happening when you get resurrected too often).

Prepayment of resurrection services is a smart idea, because as long as your body can make it back to the resurrection site of your choice, then you're already paid up and good to go. Of course, you have to worry about getting your body back, so make sure that your party knows that you want your body and that they're willing to retrieve it (**see Rules #4 and #5**). Retainers may be willing to return your body because it means they keep getting paid. That may sound callous and mercenary, but...yes, it is. Money talks.

If you need to create a will, a local Stonehand & Associates office can help you out, and get it registered with local government and religious institutions so that your last instructions are followed correctly. Their fees for this are very reasonable. A sample simple Last Will & Testament from them is presented here for you to examine, as well as a special coupon for first-time customers.



"YOU NORMALLY ONLY
LIVE ONCE, SO
MAKE IT COUNT!"

Stonehand & Associates

This coupon entitles the bearer to
ONE FREE CONSULTATION
and a **10 PERCENT DISCOUNT**
on their **FIRST LAST WILL & TESTAMENT.**

Gaswax Stonehand

Last Will & Testament

I, _____, resident of _____

, being of sound mind and body and not currently dead, declare this to be my final Will & Testament, over-riding any and all wills and codicils I have previously made.

I direct my executors to pay my enforceable unsecured debts and funeral expenses and final illness, and any expenses in administering my estate, if I am not resurrected. If I am reincarnated, my executors are directed to identify and notify my new self of my old self and estate and transfer all assets and wealth to it.

If I am not resurrected or reincarnated, my estate is bequeathed as follows:

I appoint _____
as Executor of this Last Will and Testament, so help me _____

Signed and declared by _____ on _____

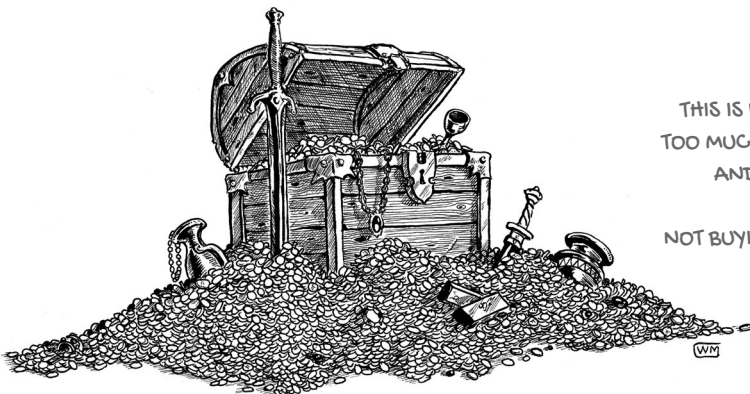
Do Not Resurrect

Do Not Reincarnate

While the primary goal of dungeon delving is to find long-forgotten loot and treasure, you should consider that unless you have a plan for carrying out all of the treasure you find, you're only going to be able to take a few things with you (unless you have one or more bags of holding, or can open a portal back to your base of operations). Hirelings help with this, as they can do the back-breaking work of carrying your swag; the prospect of a tip from the hoards you collect may have them showing interest in doing this. Alternatively, magic users often have some handy spells or magic items that create floating platforms or interdimensional spaces where you can store loot.

Keep in mind that the more loot and treasure you have, the slower you're probably going to be coming back out of the dungeon. A solution to this is to leave treasure where you find it and recover it on the way back out, like supply caches. The two major flaws with this are that monsters or other adventurers may pick up your loot before you get a chance to reclaim it, or that you may find yourself forced out of the dungeon by a different exit. Marking where treasure is on maps can help you return to it, but it also helps others find it should they acquire your map.

Loot and treasure can often be used to help distract enemies. A large handful of coins or some of the less valuable and bulkier items are sometimes good ways to draw attention away from as you're fleeing. While the enemy is picking up the loot, pepper them with arrows (see **Rule #42**) or oil and fire (see **Rule #69**).



THIS IS WAY, WAY
TOO MUCH TREASURE
AND LOOT.

NOT BUYING IT, HUH?

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GO BEYOND YOUR SKILL SET

You never know what you can do until you try it. Most adventurers have a very specific set of skills that they continually rely on. There's a time for specialization and a time for expanding beyond that. Dungeoneering demands both.

This rule also applies to situations when you encounter puzzles or other challenges. Sometimes thinking outside of the box can help you solve problems that don't seem to have a logical solution. You just need to be careful not to think yourself into a grave or coffin. Take precautions when trying new things, and learn from your mistakes. Or have other people make the mistakes on your behalf.

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DON'T ALWAYS BE A MURDERHOBO

But it does help at times. Don't feel guilty about it, especially if you make it out of dangerous situations with most of your parts still intact (all of them preferably, and working). Killing things and taking their stuff is a time-honored practice amongst every species. And being honest, sometimes it just takes too long to do any sort of diplomacy apart from that dispensed with weapons and magics.

Know that you're not going to be the only group of murderhobos out there though, and there's an increasing chance that you may run into others the more dungeons you explore. Because they've got the same ideas as you.

Murderhobos are what keep other murderhobos in check.



THIS IS THE FACE OF
A MURDERHOBO.

NO, SERIOUSLY.

ONLY A MOTHER COULD
LOVE THAT FACE.

OR SOMEONE WHO
IS PAID IN GOLD.

BEWARE DUNGEON SQUIRRELS

You may laugh, but these little vicious bastards can cause no end of trouble. Like the common tree squirrel and ground squirrel, these are vermin and should you come across any you should not hesitate to kill them completely, utterly, and irrevocably on sight. You'll easily recognize them by their scaly, fur-less bodies, lack of chittering noises, long pointed tails, and their strange attraction to shiny objects. Because they're small and fast, fishing nets are the best thing to catch them with, and they're best eaten warm after cooking over a slow flame. They don't taste great but with some seasoning they can do in a pinch if you run out of real food (see **Rule #33**) or have trouble foraging (see **Rule #64**). They should be a last resort, though. Really. Trust me on this.

Non-dungeon squirrels aren't worth the trouble in pursuing. The energy you'll expend to catch and cook them won't be worth the meager amount of meat they offer. On the other hand, non-dungeon squirrels are great for target practice, so if you have hirelings that you're considering turning into henchmen (see **Rule #5**), this is a cheap and easy way to see if they can make the grade.

KEEP THIS BOOK HANDY

This should go without saying, and I'm not just saying this because I want you to keep using this wondrous tome full of fantastic and useful information, but **KEEP THIS BOOK NEAR AND REFER TO IT OFTEN.**

It's going to take you a while to commit to memory a lot of the advice given in this book. It'll take even longer to apply it. Some advice you'll understand immediately and some you won't see the importance of until you really need to. Keeping the book handy allows you to be able to reference it (as long as you have the right light sources, see **Rule #22**). A good idea is to refer to it before you go into combat, because when you in combat it's already too late to help and you'll probably be a little too busy to read.



YET ANOTHER DUNGEON.
I THINK YOU GET IT BY NOW.
IF NOT, THERE'S NO HOPE FOR YOU.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ...

... ABOUT ASSASSINS

- Assassins are like thieves and rogues with a highly specialized skill set relating to offing others quietly without detection using weapons or other methods.
- Many assassins are quite mercenary, but most belong to an assassin's guild that has a strict code of conduct and etiquette relating to commissions. Some guilds specialize in particular types of assassination or particular targets.
- Assassins are skilled in the use of a number of different weapons, as each assassination has different parameters to complete. The right weapon for the right kill.
- Poison is one of the major tools of the trade of all assassins (assuming they live through the training).
- Some assassins are especially skilled in disguise and infiltration, making it easier for them to get close to their target.
- Traps are another major tool of assassins. This includes the identification, set up, and dismantling of traps. This makes them very handy when exploring trapped areas of dungeons (**see Rule #25**).
- Another skill that assassins possess is the ability to wait in silence for long periods of time, either casing a target or preparing to strike.
- Because of their cautious nature, assassins are hard to surprise. They also make excellent scouts.
- Assassins are typically strikers.

... ABOUT BADGERS

- Badgers come in various sizes, including large, giant, and dire.
- Badgers have enhanced hearing and smell, which can help alert them to danger.
- They're omnivores, which makes them easy to feed.
- They make excellent mounts for smaller humanoids, like, say a halfling who wants to be able to get out of trouble just as quickly as they get into it.
- An angry badger is a deadly badger.
- Badgers are cool (and ignore anyone who says different!)

... ABOUT BARBARIANS

- Barbarians, contrary to many beliefs, are not uncivilized. While they tend to live in uncivilized areas of the world, many of them are very sophisticated and intelligent.
- They tend to like wearing what they've killed, either as armor or as a trinket or trophy of some sort. You can tell how tough a barbarian generally is by who and what they wear.
- Many barbarians are berserkers, able to call upon an almost unholy rage that allows them to fight faster and longer than most. The most terrifying of these rages allow barbarians to change into other animals
- Barbarians are self-reliant and often solitary, but when they pledge their loyalty to a group, they'll uphold that. They'll also cut down anyone that isn't loyal.

- They make excellent hunters, foragers, and scouts in the wild. In dungeons they are often as skilled as rangers at tracking.
- The most powerful barbarians are the beastmasters, able to call wild animals to help when needed.
- Urban and enclosed areas tend to unsettle barbarians at first, but they can acclimate well to them. The same can't often be said in reverse, as most barbarians are unwelcome among most settlements.
- Barbarians tend to be strikers or protectors.

... ABOUT BARDS

- Bards are master orators and storytellers, with a large command of history and lore. A majority play music, but not all do. They inspire, lead, support, and influence others. They're also very annoying.
- Many are learned in multiple languages, both written and spoken, which makes them excellent liaisons and communicators.
- They are masters of legend and history, and make a point in collecting and gathering information. This makes them ideal at the task of gathering background for planned dungeon expeditions, as well as identifying important artifacts and loot when actually delving.
- Some have the ability to cast magic, while others' skill at controlling and inspiring others seems almost magic-like. The most powerful can almost command others to do their bidding without question.
- Bards tend to be controllers or support within a party.

... ABOUT CLERICS

- Clerics are often zealots when it comes to their religions. The only people more zealous than clerics are paladins. And not by much.
- They're martial and like to fight (in the name of their deities, although some may only use that as an excuse to fight). Most have restrictions on weapons or armor they can use, but others don't. This makes clerics almost as good as fighters, and with several added benefits when you get into a fray.
- Most clerics have the ability to heal themselves and others, or cast protection spells. This makes them essential during fights where you're underpowered against your opponents. It also makes them prime targets for your enemies' strikers.
- Many clerics belong to a specific order or suborder of a religion. This determines their philosophy, approach, and access to various powers. Rarely do clerics change deities, although it's not unheard of – this usually happens if a cleric switches between being good and evil views of the world.
- Not all clerics are created equal. This is mostly down to their personal experience and skills, as well as the deity they follow. Deities grant clerics access to powers, so it goes to say that the better quality deities have better quality clerics (although this may not hold true when discussing evil clerics and deities). Some clerics may follow multiple deities, but as deities typically are the jealous type, this doesn't happen too often.
- Clerics can lose their powers temporarily or even permanently. As a cleric's power comes as a boon from their deity, any amount of pissing off or annoying their deity may end up meaning that the cleric loses everything that makes them special. (Some deities may even be a little abusive when it comes to the strictness of this, or so I've heard).



A CLERIC

EVEN IF THEY CAN'T
USE BLADED WEAPONS
BECAUSE OF
STUPID RULES THEIR
DEITY GIVES THEM,
THEY CAN STILL
KICK ASS.

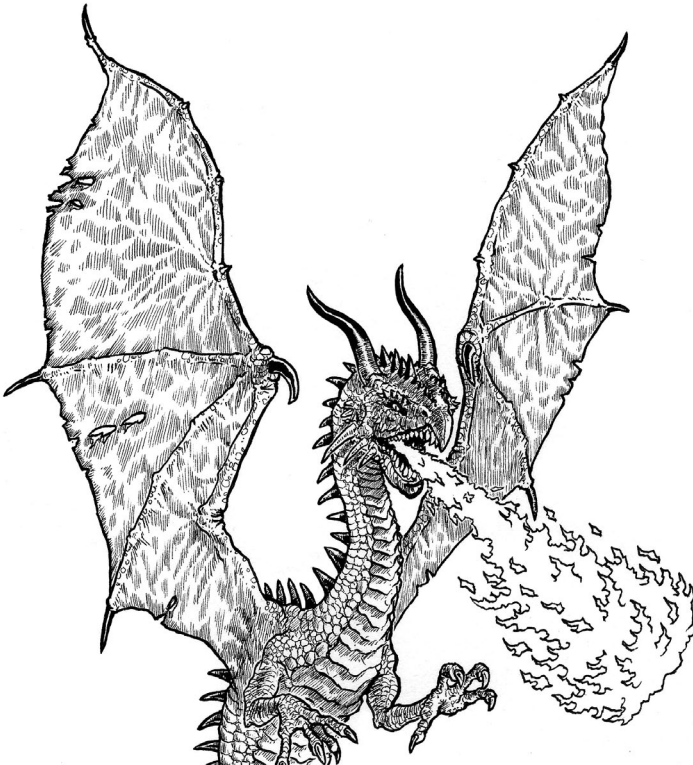
- The longer a cleric has been serving a deity, the more powerful they become as they prove their worth and value to the deity. This means getting access to better miracles and powers, but it also means that the deity's eye is a little more focused on the cleric. It would be a bad thing if deities just let their followers turn into powerful world changers but didn't hold them to standards or keep them in check.
- High-level clerics have access to powerful healing spells, such as resurrection and reincarnation. Make sure to befriend a few of these if you can.
- Clerics tend to be either protectors or support, though some (such as those who worship deities attached to violence) may be strikers.

... ABOUT DOORS

- Not all doors open inwards from corridors, but most do. You'll only know by trying to open them.
- Doors can be made of different materials including wood, stone, metal. Some weirder things they can be made of include wall-colored flesh, bones, actual flesh, and worse.
- Smashing the lock on a door makes the lock useless when you want to stop things chasing you, but it's a good way to jam the door so that it can't open.
- Many doors are hidden and secret. Those tend to lead to either danger, or loot, or both (and possibly dangerous loot). They're usually hard to find and only a few know of them, hence the "secret" in the name.
- Doors are usually locked for a reason. Sometimes several reasons. It may be to keep things out, or to keep things in (**see Rule #40**). Be sure you want to open doors before you do, because there's usually no turning back once you do.
- Doors that are marked with signs or symbols usually lead to danger. Tread carefully here.

... ABOUT DRAGONS

- There are a number of types of dragons, mostly classified by the color and types of skin. Most are chromatic (the colors of the rainbow) or metallic (gold, silver, brass, and others). There are exotic types such as dracolichs (undead) and spectral (ghostly).
- The older a dragon is the more powerful it is. Young dragons are generally weak at casting magic spells, while ancient dragons have access to a range of very powerful spells and abilities.
- Many dragons have the ability to change shape, with many enjoying humanoid shapes on a regular basis.
- Dragons like to hoard gold and treasure, especially unique items. What one dragon considers important is different from another dragon.
- Dragon scales are magical, and can be used in the creation of magical armor and weapons; from dragonscale armor that provides elemental, magical, and physical protection, to dragonscale arrows that can easily pierce other dragon armor, dragon scales



A DRAGON

JUST IN CASE
YOU DIDN'T
KNOW WHAT
ONE LOOKED LIKE.

UP CLOSE.

PERSONAL.

... ABOUT DRUIDS

- Like clerics, they get their powers from a deity, usually some sort of nature deity, or even from nature itself.
- Druids seek to maintain the balance inherent in nature, and often struggle with the encroachment of civilization on the natural world. For those that cannot find that balance, nature pushes back at them.
- Most druids remain neutral in their viewpoint of the world. Most, not all.
- Their armor and weaponry is made from natural materials that often are consecrated to their deity. Usually, these are of the same type as used by their deity, or symbolized by them.
- Druids typically belong to a specific order, with specific goals or responsibilities.
- Like thieves and rogues, druids have their own secret languages that they speak to each other in, and usually only to those in the same order. They also speak a number of additional languages common to the races that inhabit the areas they protect.
- They are the undisputed masters of natural knowledge, especially in the flora and fauna that they live near. They can easily identify safe and unsafe food and water, and can forage easily.
- Some druids have the ability to shapechange into animals, often one they have claimed as a totem. They relate to this animal and its behaviors, which becomes more pronounced as they become more powerful. The most powerful shapechangers can take on larger dire forms of their totem.
- Druids can cast nature-related spells as long as they are in balance with nature. While the spells they cast are more limited in scope than other magic users, they can be very useful when dungeoneering.
- Druids tend to be controllers or support.

... ABOUT DWARVES

- Every dwarf has a beard. Even the women, and children. Even dwarven undercats. Go figure.
- Some dwarves can that they can smell gold and other precious metals. I've seen this happen.
- Most are master smiths and can make and repair most armor and weapons. Handy while adventuring.
- Dwarves like to get up close and personal in combat. Do not be on the receiving end.
- They can drink others under, over, and through the table. They rarely seem to get drunk, no matter how much they drink, unless they drink dwarven spirits.
- Most are fighters, clerics, and thieves. And traders.

... ABOUT ELVES

- They're generally much longer-lived than other species, and this gives them a bit of an attitude towards the younger races. Assholes.
- All elves are experts at finding secret and hidden doors, even if they don't put much effort into it. They're also pretty smarmy about this too. Assholes.
- They're very solemn most of the time, which makes them very little fun at parties. Assholes.
- Although they'll never admit it, half of them are secretly meat eaters. I mean, who doesn't love bacon? Or orc, for that matter?
- Elves tend to be strikers or controllers.

... ABOUT FIGHTERS

- Fighters are skilled in using weapons and armor. Most fighters tend to specialize in a small number of weapons, although they can use a great number

in interesting and deadly ways. Their choice of arms and armor usually relates to the culture they were brought up in.

- Most specialize in one or two weapons and are expert users of those weapons, even as novices. They continually hone their skill until they become almost legendary at using them.
- No two fighters are the same. Some fight with melee weapons only, or with a melee weapon and shield, or with a melee weapon and ranged weapon. The combinations of weapons that they use makes them highly versatile. And deadly.
- Fighters can become so expert at killing that they can attack more often than most non-fighters. This makes them great at clearing away many minions and brutes (**see Rule #39**), but it also makes them deadly when they're attacking you.
- Part of a fighter's skill is in knowing what combination of weapons and armor works best against other weapons and armor. Listen to them when they talk.
- Fighters make excellent tacticians, and are often natural leaders.
- Fighters tend to be strikers or protectors.

... ABOUT GOBLINS

- They're usually small and smelly, and highly annoying. They don't taste good, no matter how you cook them.
- Their strength lies in their numbers, which they use to swarm and overwhelm opponents.
- Goblins are easily cowed by shows of strength. Leadership comes through beating up weaker goblins and boasting about it.
- A few have some magical ability. These are highly revered and feared, at least among goblins.
- They're fascinated by explosives. This can sometimes work to your advantage if you can surprise them

while they're doing things with the explosives (see Rule #70).

... ABOUT HALF-ORCS

- Half-orcs have one orc parent, and a parent from another race. This is normally human, but it's not unknown for dwarves and elves (and even halflings, I'm afraid) to be one of the parents.
- Depending on what the other parent is, half-orcs may or may not taste like bacon.
- Mothers of half-orcs who aren't orc tend to die in childbirth.
- Not all half-orcs are barbaric and prone to violence, but most tend to be. It seems to be something inherent in being part orc.
- One good way to set them off is to talk about their parentage.

... ABOUT HALFLINGS

- Halflings are awesome (I'm biased. Sue me).
- Contrary to popular belief, halflings are in fact very brave. They're also smart enough to bug out when things are too hot to handle (unlike some others).
- Halflings excel at thievery and burglary, and their small size helps them tremendously with this. This also becomes useful when escaping enemies – barrels are excellent for hiding and/or riding in.
- They love food, and are excellent meal and ration planners. If a halfling offers you food, they're being hospitable. If they offer you food more than once, they like you. Multiple times, there's possibly love involved.
- Halflings tend to be thieves, though some specialists are fighters.



A HALF-ORC

HALF AS UGLY AS AN ORC.

STILL BETTER LOOKING THAN
SOME PEOPLE I KNOW.

THAT OWE ME MONEY.

YES, LANNIS, THAT
WAS AIMED AT YOU.

PAY WHAT YOU OWE,
AND THIS COMMENT
GETS REMOVED FROM
THE BOOK.

... ABOUT HUMANS

- Humans are generally short-lived. This is down to a natural predisposition for short lives as well as a natural predisposition to stick their noses in matters that don't concern them. You'd think they'd learn by now.
- They're pretty much walking, talking rabbits, and are found everywhere in the world. Throw a stone, and you'll probably hit a human. (This tends to make them angry. Tetchy lot, really).
- They have an unhealthy attitude that makes them think that they're more special than anyone else when they're really not. Their real strength lies in their generality of abilities.
- Humans can be found in every profession, though most tend to be fighters, thieves, clerics, or magic users.

... ABOUT KNIGHTS

- Knights are typically bound to someone with power that is their lord or patron, although some knights belong to special religious or non-religious orders. They tithe to their patron/order and advance their agenda.
- Knights typically follow a strict moral code of conduct, not as strong as paladins, but strong enough that it can interfere with various slightly non-legal and non-moral approaches while dungeoneering.
- A large number of knights have some sort of noble blood in them. Knights start as squires and are sponsored and mentored by another knight.
- Knights are like paladins with connections and power in the real world but with little or no magical ability. They view the world through actions and deeds.

- Knights are masters of several weapons, including the lance. They are trained to fight in the heaviest armors, use shields, and are a force to be reckoned with in combat.
- They are masters of mounted combat, which can come in handy at times. They excel in combat on the battlefield.
- The presence of a knight in an adventuring party can often bolster them by inspiring party members while at the same time demoralizing opponents. They make strong leaders, and are normally very charismatic or imposing.
- Knights of renown and wealth eventually find themselves in positions of power and able to sponsor other knights as patrons.
- Knights tend to be strikers or protectors.

... ABOUT MAGIC USERS

- Magic users have access to a huge variety of spells and are incredibly powerful, eventually. Low-level magic users start pretty weak and squishy and only have a few tricks up their sleeves.
- They have a fascination with magic items and will do anything they can to acquire more of them. The more powerful the better. The more of them the better. Eventually, they'll start to rely on using these rather than their own abilities.
- Magic users crave knowledge and power, and are always looking for ways to increase not only the number of spells they can use, but the actual power of those spells. Sometimes this is dangerous.
- They're usually accompanied by a familiar, which is a small magical creature that looks like a normal creature but is magically linked to them, allowing them to see through their eyes, and cast spells through them, as well as providing some magical health. They're also usually the most annoying of creatures



A MAGIC USER

KNOW THEM BY THEIR CLOTHES, THEIR STAFFS, THEIR SPELLS, AND THEIR GENERALLY ATROCIOUS BEHAVIOR TOWARDS ANYONE THAT'S NOT A MAGIC USER.

I MAY HAVE HAD SOME BAD EXPERIENCES.

and always chattering and getting underfoot when you're trying to do your job. If a magic user's familiar dies, it sometimes can cause the magic user to under sort of magic shock, and it's a long time before they can get another. This is good news if you go up against a magic user, as you can use their familiar to hurt them and shut them down (or at least put them in a bad spot temporarily). The bad news is magic users can trade in or upgrade their familiar through some sort of magical program they have with the otherworld or something, and sometimes they end up with demons or pseudodragons or monsters as familiars. Don't try to mess with these creatures until you're tough enough to take them out.

- Some magic users specialize in a particular school of magic such as elementalism, illusionism, necromancy, or sorcery. The source of their power depends on what type of magic they want to cast.
- Most spells that magic users cast require the use of spoken words and/or gestures. Some spells require special components that are used up, or a special focus to activate the spell. To negate the ability of a magic user to cast spells, get rid of any of these.
- Magic users rarely have access to healing magics, though it's not unheard of.
- You'll rarely encounter a high-level magic user when dungeoneering as they tend to send their lackeys (usually lower level magic users or some sort of henchcreature) to deal in public for them.
- Magic users tend to be controllers, but can act as strikers or support too.

... ABOUT MAPS

- Good and accurate maps are hard to find. They're worth killing for. Multiple times.
- Always make sure you match the orientation of the map with where you're going. That way you don't

walk into a large hole that doesn't exist on the map where you think it does.

- Any map that says "Here Be Dragons!" may not actually be lying, depending on what part of the world, or dungeon, you're exploring.
- Some maps are all in one piece, while others may be in multiple parts that need to be joined together to make a full map. I hate those.
- Many maps use ciphers and secret codes to hide information. Some of these may be magical or need to be read in a particular location or in a particular type of light to reveal key information.
- Many mapmakers introduce errors into their maps, especially commercial maps or heavily duplicated ones. It lets them track down anyone who copies one of their maps without permission.
- Even a bad map can help save your life at times. Okay, so I'm lying. Maybe. Try it and see. Let me know.

... ABOUT MONKS

- Monks are not to be confused with the religious types who remain cloistered. They are traveling masters of unarmed combat that either serve others or who set out to become the best of the best.
- While monks prefer to fight unarmed, a large number specialize in fighting with one or more weapons, often related to differing martial styles of fighting.
- As experts of the body and mind, they are capable of tremendous feats of endurance and agility, often rivaling other specialists. They also show off.
- The most powerful monks can climb sheer walls and deflect arrows with their weapons and body.
- Monks can often feign death and then strike opponents at the most opportune time.

- Monks often as just as skilled as thieves and rogues at climbing, being stealthy, and breaking into things that other people own.
- Monks are typically strikers.

... ABOUT ORCS

- Orcs tend to be tribal, and are led by chieftains who have proven their worth by beating everyone else into submission.
- Many orcs are wily and smart (much more so than other goblinoids). Along with being experienced warriors, this makes them especially deadly.
- It's not unknown to hear of orc magic users that are not shamans. Orc priests are not only spellslingers but are also natural fighters, who fight for the glory of the evil gods they worship. Some orcs even dabble in sorcery and necromancy.
- No orc has ever sold pies, and certainly not in dungeons. And if they did, the pie would be poisoned.
- They taste like bacon. No, honestly. While human-as-food is often called long pig, orc is often called wrong pig. Ask around, and you'll find it's true. Mmmm, bacon.
- Orcs are split on the half-orcs (pardon the pun). Some accept them as orcish while others claim they aren't pure enough. This makes encounters between orcs and half-orcs very, very interesting.
- Orcs tend to be fighters or clerics. Some are even paladins.

AN ORC

REAL ORCS HAVE
BOAR-LIKE FACES.

AND TEND TO ALSO
HAVE BOAR-LIKE
TENDENCIES.



... ABOUT PALADINS

- Paladins are the most zealous of religious practitioners and are charged to be the holy protectors of their deity and their followers (or so they believe).
- Some are trained in many weapons while others specialize in weapons related to their deity.
- Like knights, they follow a strict code of conduct, but theirs relates to their deity's desires and whims.
- They often have an antagonistic relationship with clerics who follow the same deity as them.
- Many paladins have limited healing abilities, allowing them to make up for the lack of a cleric in an adventuring party.
- Paladins tend to see the world in black and white, rather than the many discrete shades of gray it really is. They're quick to label things "good" and "evil", which can be problematic at times, and a blessed relief at others.
- Powerful paladins develop some of the same abilities as clerics, such as the ability to turn the undead and cast a small number of spells.
- Paladins tend to be strikers or protectors, and sometimes support.

... ABOUT RANGERS

- Rangers are most comfortable in rural and wilderness areas, where their skills can be best utilized. Many rangers, though, find themselves at home in urban areas and even dungeons.
- Rangers are skilled combatants that use blade and bow to protect the lands they are sworn to watch over. Some rangers have an enmity for one or more races that are troublemakers in areas under their protection.



RANGER DANGER

MOST RANGERS ARE
VERY SKILLED
AT KILLING THINGS
UP CLOSE
AND AT RANGE.

- They are also excellent scouts, hunters, and trackers. They find their way through wilderness easily and find those that leave little indication of their passing. They are skilled at creating and disarming simple traps.
- Many rangers have the uncanny ability to detect and communicate with animals.
- Some rangers have animal companions that are incredibly clever and can work with the ranger to stealthily attack targets, or even work in concert with the ranger to take down.
- The typical ranger is more comfortable in their own company than in others, but can still be quite sociable. Apply alcohol to find this out.
- Rangers tend to be strikers or protectors.

... ABOUT ROGUES AND THIEVES



A ROGUE

THAT MAY OR MAY NOT
WEAR ROUGE.

NO JUDGING.

- Rogues and thieves are sneaky bastards and like to hide in shadows and move silently. Sometimes they use magically-enhanced items to help with this, but the best don't often need them. The best also don't look like thieves. Be wary of your purses and any valuables you have while they're around.
- They excel at close combat, where they can deliver stealthy attacks to enemy's weak spots as well as perform expert strikes from behind.
- Rogues and thieves make excellent scouts, especially in urban areas, where they can climb and get into almost anything. They are also useful in dungeons.
- Most rogues and thieves belong to a guild, which gives them access to resources within the area they operate, but also puts some limitations on what they can or can't do. If the guild says no go to something, and the guild member goes and does it, there's usually repercussions, up to and including death. The guilds are usually friendly to each other, but not always. There is honor among thieves, but it's a twisted type of honor.

- Most speak a special language called Thieves Cant, which uses a combination of gestures and finger-speaking to communicate. There are any number of regional variations of Cant.
- Many use Thieves Marks, special glyphs etched into wood or stone by normal or magical means that tag buildings and locations with specific meaning.
- Rogues and thieves tend to be strikers.

... ABOUT SETTLEMENTS

- Settlements are the first place you should consider setting up a base of operations in. They also make excellent places to retreat to.
- Not every settlement will have everything you need to adventure properly. You may need to purchase items from multiple settlements to be fully geared up for a dungeon delve.
- Prices for goods and services fluctuate wildly based on how scarce they are, so keep track of the prices of things you want.
- The larger the settlement the increased chance of other adventurers being there, possibly interested in beating you to dungeon loot (or beating you up when you have the dungeon loot, the cads!).
- Settlements often make great places to pick up hirelings. The fact they're poor and badly educated makes them excellent underpaid help. (see **Rule #5**).
- When selling loot to settlements, you may get 25-50% of the price the merchants sell it for. If you're really lucky, you'll get more (see **Rule #68**).
- Not every settlement will have an easy way to exchange gems. Smaller settlements may have a local tradesperson that can handle this, while larger settlements may have gem merchants or banks. They ALWAYS take a percentage.



GRAVEYARDS.

A PLACE TO GO
WHERE IT'S
DEAD QUIET.

OH, COME ON.

... ABOUT THE UNDEAD

- Undead are magical in nature; re-animating a body that doesn't have an active pulse requires this.
- Most undead are hard to kill (again). Some of them require special techniques or magic to destroy.
- Holy water generally does in a pinch for damaging undead. Higher level undead just get pissed off when you throw it at them.
- Some undead, such as liches, can create other undead, while others can transform into other creatures.
- A few special undead are immune to all but magical attacks. Another good reason to have magic weapons.
- Some very special undead can suck the soul right out of you, enough to kill you.
- Clerics are usually very useful against the undead, but not always. Depending on the vagaries of the clerics' luck, how well they're in favor with their deity, and the strength of undead encountered, they may not be effective.
- If you leave a party member body behind in an undead-infested area, there's a good chance they'll be recruited to the undead cause.

HOW TO ...

... ACTUALLY DESTROY A LICH

Liches are tough bastards. Usually, they're magic users that have messed around with necromancy and been able to transplant their soul into a phylactery, which is basically a magic jar that allows the soul to survive disconnected from the body. This allows liches to effectively gain immortality.

Now, liches are pretty smart, so they tend to put their phylacteries in hard-to-find-and-enter places, or they keep it very close to them. Either way, there's usually lots of deadly protection around it; magic traps, terrible beasties, spells, and worse are used to protect that phylactery. Not to mention the powers that liches wield as undead magic users. Liches are like cups of tea — the most powerful are the ones who have been steeping for a while.

To truly kill a lich, you need to do two things:

1. Destroy the phylactery that contains its soul, thereby causing the soul to become free and vulnerable, and
2. Destroy the actual lich itself.

The order in which you do this is very important. Do step 1, then step 2. Not the other way around. That doesn't work.

Destroying the lich without destroying the phylactery first just allows the lich to regenerate its body over time (or steal someone else's) and it really pisses them off. With the intense connection that a lich has to its phylactery if it gets destroyed the lich will know instantly.

A LICH

HATE!

HATE!

HATE!



... DEFEAT ELEMENTALS

You're going to run into elementals at some point, most likely because you've annoyed a powerful magic user that can summon them. Elementals are tough critters, summoned from the elemental plane, where they live and do their elemental thing until viciously yanked through to our reality. This generally makes them angry, which makes them more likely to whomp on you. The good news is that there are ways to shut them down (that sometimes work) so that you don't end up on fire, frozen, drowned, or otherwise dead.

- **FIRE AND LAVA ELEMENTALS** can be defeated by ice and water hitting them, especially in a torrent. The colder the better. When they're weak enough, you should be able to smash them apart.
- **WATER AND ICE ELEMENTALS** will attempt to freeze you and chill you to death. Earth can help slow them down as it disturbs their purity, while fire will make them boil up. Air can disrupt them somewhat.
- **EARTH ELEMENTALS** can take advantage of most dungeon environments and draw upon stone and earth to heal themselves and lob at you. Water can help tackle these by diminishing, weakening them, and spreading them out.
- **AIR ELEMENTALS** tend to be the most problematic, because they're always moving. Changing the temperature around them may cause them to speed up or slow down. Enclosing these elementals in an earthen or water prison usually does the trick, as does using fire to make them burn up.



ELEMENTALS

KNOW THEM.

USE THEM IF YOU CAN.

AVOID THEM
IF YOU CAN'T.

If none of these work, then run away (see **Rule #48**).

... FIND A GELATINOUS CUBE

One of the deadliest dungeon denizens, the gelatinous cube, should really be viewed as the dungeon's unpaid janitorial staff. No matter how the cube made it into the dungeon, once it's in there and until it is killed, it keeps moving and sucking up detritus in hallways. If you find an especially clean set of dungeon corridors or rooms, there may be (or have been) a gelatinous cube nearby. Or a mousekin apprentice sorcerer with no ability to control his magic yet.

There are two main ways to identify a gelatinous cube:

- **THE FIRST** is the unique SPLLLURCH sound the jelly-like creature makes as it proceeds through hallways and rooms, its gelatinous body sliding wetly across the ground, leaving slime trails as it goes. This sound can be heard much more easily the closer you are to it. If you hear it and then don't it's either stopped moving, or you're now inside it and your ears have been covered by it. Gross. Good luck getting out of that. I'd also suggest moving forward with your mouth closed as well, by the way, as a mouthful of gelatinous cube is just as nasty as it sounds. Sometimes a trail of wet slime can instead be an indicator of slugmen in the vicinity, so always carry bags of salt, which are much more effective than any other weapon against them, except insults about them being shell-less wonders or related to lawyers. There are some who claim to be experts in slimes and oozes. Be wary of these folk. Do not invite them to parties. They'll kill them faster than the Big Bad on Level 14 kills pretty much everything.
- **THE SECOND** way is to shine light down a corridor and see if there are objects floating in the middle of the corridor or room that should not be doing that for any reason whatsoever; especially things like adventurers (alive or dead), weapons, small animals, and furniture. These are usually the items that the cube has consumed on its travels and is currently

digesting, and as its body is transparent you can see them. This advice is useless if the cube has digested everything inside it already, though, but you should hopefully be able to detect the glistening exterior of the cube from the weak light given off by your flickering torch. If you're unsure, have a henchman or other party member run forward down the corridor. If they suddenly stop with a SPLOOOOCH sound, then there's a good chance there's a cube. This can be confirmed by watching them be slowly drawn into the center mass of the horrible creature.

... IDENTIFY A MIMIC

One of the most annoying things that can happen when you finally think you've found loot is for that loot to turn around and try to eat you. Mimics are clever things. I hate mimics. I REALLY hate mimics, so here's a few ways to deal with these annoying teeth-mouthed ingestors of adventurers:

- **BE AWARE** that not all mimics are stationary. Mimics have to be able to move from place to place to target their prey. Just because we don't see them move doesn't mean that they don't move. If a piece of furniture moves on its own it's either a mimic or it's been possessed by a spirit, or animated by a spell.
- **IF THERE'S A CHEST OR A CHAIR OR A TABLE** or some other piece of furniture in the center of the room by itself with nothing else around it, there's the possibility that it's a mimic. Throw something at it to see if it moves.
- **MIMICS** that are trying to be stealthy don't move, even if you throw stuff at them. Kicking them causes them to hit back, though, so set up a good swift kick, and be ready for combat.

If you're about to be swallowed by a mimic because it has its huge long tongue wrapped around you, attack the tongue so that the mimic drops you.

... OUTRUN AN OWLBEAR (OR OTHER LARGE VICIOUS BEASTIE)

So, there's a trick to this. You don't really need to outrun the owlbear — you just need to outrun someone slower than you that the owlbear can get to first! If you don't have any halflings or dwarves in the party, or any cripples, or you're the halfling/dwarf/cripple, then do the following:

- **AS THE OWLBEAR ATTACKS**, take a club or other large blunt weapon and hit someone else in your party across the knee with it. Then run as fast as you can in the direction the owlbear isn't coming. Don't use a bladed weapon as the blood will draw the owlbear down on you faster, and you'll be accused by any other members of your party in causing the death of [insert name here]. This can lead to general unpleasantness and the potential for you to have to find a new adventuring party.

- **ANOTHER GOOD TRICK** for outrunning owlbears is to always carry a full honey bee nest with you (sans bees but with honeycombs inside), or a large picnic basket. Most owlbears will stop chasing you if you throw either of these objects at them. (So I've been told. I prefer the stick/knee method myself as it's always worked for me.)



ZOMBIE OWLBEAR

NOT YOUR NORMAL
OWLBEAR, BUT EASIER TO DEFEND
AGAINST.

AS LONG AS YOU HAVE
A CLERIC IN THE PARTY.

YOU HAVE A CLERIC IN
THE PARTY, RIGHT?

... RAISE A PORTCULLIS OR STONE DOOR

These two things are perennial favorites of dungeon designers. They're usually always triggered by stepping on a weight plate or some other innocuous trigger. They'll either slam down quickly on you, or they'll slowly unwind on their cranks until they're in place. The former is more dangerous.

The obvious solution to solving these is to find some way to reset the portcullis or stone door. There's usually one located nearby on the side opposite the trigger, because it doesn't make any sense to allow these to come down and not go up again. Some may require finding the actual crank system and manually reset them.

If there's no way to reset the doors, you'll have to find some way to force them open. Here's a few suggestions:

- **USING BELTS OR GAUNTLETS** that provide massive strength will allow you to lift up most of these, as long as you can get a good grip on the door. Portcullises are easy to do this with, but stone doors are going to need some way for you to lift it a little so you can get your hands under the door.
- **RAW STRENGTH AND NUMBERS** can sometimes lift portcullises, if everyone works together.
- **USING SCIENCE** can help lift the door. If you can get a strong pole (preferably made of metal, or a wooden pole shod with metal), you may be able to lift the door. You'll need something for the pole to act as a lever on, such as a barrel, an anvil, or an armored dwarf. Place one end of the pole into a lower part of the portcullis grill, or where the stone door meets the floor. Push down on the pole on one side of the pivot, and the door or portcullis will hopefully lift enough for someone to get under and get to the reset switch.

... REVEAL AN INVISIBLE ENEMY

Invisibility is a great power or magical spell when you get to use it to your advantage, but it's pretty annoying when others use it against you. Some monsters and creatures have this special ability, so you should know how to deal with them:

- **A SPELL** that reveals the invisible is obviously very handy, although it doesn't always allow everyone to see what was previously unseen. In a pinch, using a magic detection spell on magical creatures can also work, but the caster will need to direct attacks for the others in the party. If you know what type of creature or monster is invisible, species detection spells can also work. Magic items that provide these spells can be very useful.
- **CARRYING BAGS OF FLOUR AND DUST** with you that you can throw at invisible creatures exposes them so that everyone can see them. Water and oil may also work on some; the added bonus of using oil is that you can set the thing on fire.
- **ONE WAY** to even the score with an invisible enemy is to remove light sources and plunge the area into darkness. In this way, their benefit from being invisible is lost because no-one can now see anyone else. This means fighting blind, but it raises the odds of you surviving (although your own allies may correct that).

If you're using invisibility spells or items that offer that, you now know how to avoid being revealed. Isn't that handy?

THINGS ...

... **NOT TO PICK UP IN A DUNGEON**

- **ANYTHING** that has the words “Take Me” or “Pick Me Up” on it. It’s a trap. You may not think it’s a trap because you’d be thinking that it’s too obvious to be a trap, but that’s what they’re banking on. Bastards.
- **DUCKS.** Of any sort. No matter how much they appeal to you. In any meaning of that word. Once you pick up a duck in a dungeon, you’ll never get rid of it, and it’ll turn up in the strangest places.
- **SINGLE COINS.** There’s absolutely no reason for a single coin to be sitting anywhere in a dungeon. It’s more likely part of a complex trap rather than a simple coin that fell out of a pocket or one that was used with a magical light spell. If you’re lucky it hasn’t passed through the insides of some dungeon denizen. Better to be safe than sorry and just ignore this. Maybe.

... **NOT TO PICK UP AND EAT IN A DUNGEON**

- **ANYTHING** that says “Eat me” or “Drink Me”. Seriously. Just don’t. Besides, that’s why you have hirelings and henchmen — to help out in situations like this. Let them test it. Just be prepared to increase their hazard pay or their loot percentages (assuming they survive, of course).
- **MUSHROOMS,** because there’s a good chance that it’s a relation to some myconidman that you’ll encounter later that will recognize that you’ve had a nice family member over for a meal (literally).
- **MOLDS AND JELLIES.** These are more likely to eat you. Especially if you can’t see them coming. Avoid.

- **DECOMPOSED FLESH.** There's a good chance the flesh will animate and attempt to kill you. While eating freshly dead things is good, while eating long dead things is reserved for royalty, evil sorcerers, and drunken dares.
- **ANYTHING "ON A STICK".** Unless you're buying it from an officially licensed On A Stick™ franchisee that can provide you with their license and a health department statement. Authenticity with foodstuffs presented on sticks is important.
- **ORC PIE.** No good will come of this. Even if you encounter an orc who freely gives you a pie, you really don't want to know what's in the pie. You know that mystery meat that's served at certain taverns? Where do you think they got the idea from in the first place? That's right – some orc in a dungeon, serving pie.

... **YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT CURSED ITEMS**

- **CURSES, ONCE GAINED,** are typically very hard to get rid of. Stay away from them. Seriously. Curses suck. They suck the big one.
- **SOME CURSES** can be transferred from one person to another, which is good if you're the giver, but not the receiver!
- **OFTEN YOU DON'T KNOW** if an item is cursed until you pick it up, or try to use it.
- **SOME CURSES ARE SUBTLE,** and those cursed doesn't even know that they're cursed.
- **CURSED ITEMS** tend to influence the cursed's mind and will so that they tend to use the cursed item over other non-cursed items.

- **MULTIPLE CURSES** on a party member is extremely dangerous (but usually fun to watch from the sidelines).
- **CLERICS AND OTHER MAGIC USERS** may be able to remove curses. Often, but not always. This type of service tends to be expensive.

... YOU SHOULD DO TO IDENTIFY A MAGIC ITEM AND WHAT IT DOES

- **ASK SOMEONE** what it's meant to do.
- **USE IT** in ways it was meant to be used.
- **USE IT** in ways it wasn't meant to be used.
- **CAST** an identification spell on it.
- **USE IT TOGETHER** with another magic item to see if they react to each other.
- **TAKE IT** to the magic store in the nearest settlement. (Because every settlement has one, right? Or at least some magic user who'll do the job for a hefty sum of money.)
- **READ** the instructions that come with it. You did keep those, right?
- **ASK IT** what it does, because magically-intelligent items will often just tell you, although they may require you to solve a riddle. If you're really unlucky, you'll get one of those items that just. Won't. Shut. Up.
- **ASK ONE** or more deities for help. If you're properly tithed up, you may get some help. (But I wouldn't count on it, unless you're a cleric on the good side of their deity.)
- **HAVE A PSYCHIC** read the item's aura. (What? Magic powers are all fine and good, but psychic powers of the mind can't exist? Please. There are more things in all the planes ...)
- **HAVE SOMEONE ELSE** do all of the above. (Which is pretty much the safest way to avoid cursed items, magic blowback, and transmutation magics).



SOMETIMES YOU WON'T
KNOW WHAT'S IN A BOTTLE
UNTIL SOMEONE (ELSE)
DRINKS IT.

CON: THEY GET THE
BENEFITS OF WHATEVER
WAS IN THE BOTTLE.

PRO: YOU DON'T
SUFFER ANY BAD STUFF
THAT HAPPENS
FROM DRINKING IT.

... YOU SHOULD NOT DO TO IDENTIFY A MAGIC ITEM AND WHAT IT DOES

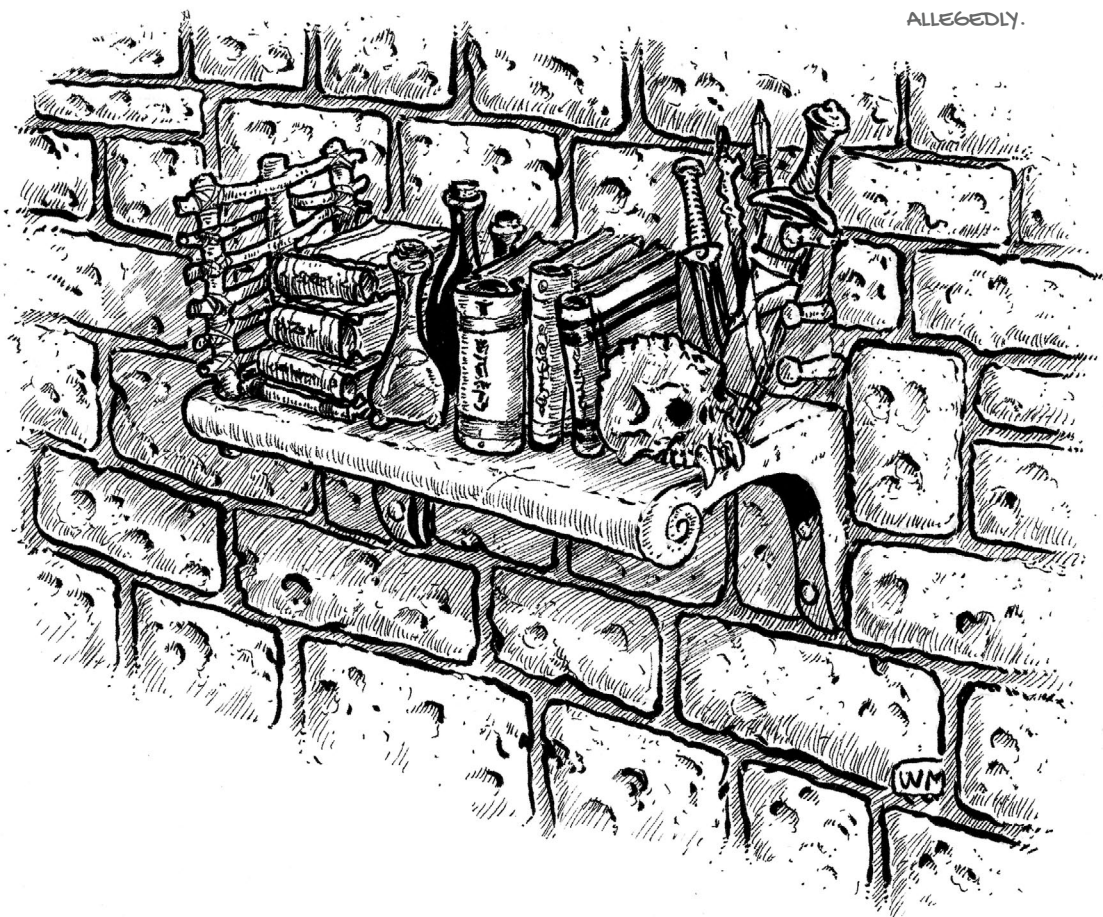
- **USE IT** as your last desperate act when everyone else in your party is dead and you're looking for a way out. The chances of the magic item being the solution to your immediate about-to-be-dead problem are between slim and probably non-existent.
- **EAT IT.** This never ends well. Licking also falls into this category. (For more info on things not to eat, see later).
- **GIVE IT** to an enemy, as a gift perhaps. If the item is magic, they may be able to trigger it, and then you're in deep trouble.

BE VERY CAREFUL WITH
WHAT YOU PICK UP FROM
A MAGIC USER'S
INVENTORY.

MAGIC ITEMS DON'T
COME WITH LABELS ON
THEM TELLING YOU
WHAT THEY DO.

UNLESS YOU BUY THE
DELUXE VERSIONS.

ALLEGEDLY.



TOP TEN ...

... ESSENTIAL BACKPACK ITEMS

1. Tinder and flint
2. Bandages
3. Iron spikes
4. Hammer and nails
5. Emergency rations
6. Garlic cloves or other herbs
7. Holy water
8. Rope (preferably silk)
9. Glass vials
10. Whetstone



SPELL SCROLLS ARE
WONDERFUL IF
YOU CAN USE THEM.

REMEMBER THAT CLERICS
AND MAGIC USERS CAST
DIFFERENT TYPES
OF MAGIC.

THEY USUALLY CAN'T
USE SPELLS MADE
FOR THE OTHER.

SCROLLS CAN ALSO
BE COPIED INTO
SPELL BOOKS TO
LEARN THEM.

SOME SCROLLS ARE
CURSED.

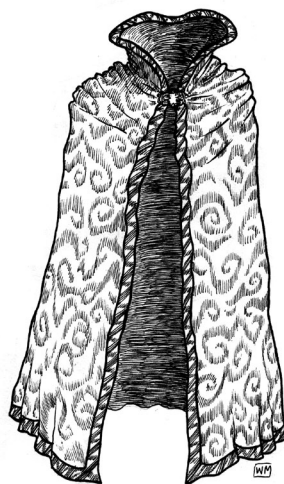
NO, I'M NOT
JOKING.

... ESSENTIAL MAGIC ITEMS

1. Gauntlets of Ogre Strength
2. Ring of Protection
3. Ring of Cat Lives
4. Staff of the Magi
5. Wand of Fireballs
6. Spell Scrolls
7. Bag of Holding
8. Wand of Cure Light Wounds
9. Eversmoking Bottle
10. The Baggage (to carry all the other magic items and all your loot)

... MOST COMMON MAGIC ITEMS

1. Potion of Healing
2. Spell scroll
3. Magic sword
4. Magic bow
5. Magic helm
6. Magic breastplate
7. Magic boots
8. Magic cloak
9. Cursed (anything)
10. Bag of Holding



MAGIC CLOAKS COME IN MANY SHAPES AND TYPES. NO TWO ARE EVER THE SAME.

CLOAKS THAT GRANT SILENCE OR INVISIBILITY ARE MUCH DESIRED.

MORE POWERFUL CLOAKS CAN BESTOW THEIR POWERS ONTO MULTIPLE TARGETS.

MANY CLOAKS LOOK GARISH.

BUT WHAT DO I KNOW? I WORK IN THE DARK AND GENERALLY DON'T LOOK AT MY REFLECTION OFTEN.

... PARTIES THAT NEVER MADE IT BACK

1. The Barrel Riders
2. The Saturday Nighters
3. Hunters of the Frog God
4. The Axes of Evil
5. The Building Inspectors
6. The Herpderp Heroes
7. Bronies For Danger!
8. The Barrowmazers
9. We're All Magic Users Here
10. The Ill-Prepared

... RAREST MAGIC ITEMS

1. Deck of Many Things
2. (Anything) of Wishes
3. Intelligent Item
4. Celestial Armor
5. Ring of Reincarnation
6. Crystal Ball
7. Headband of Intelligence
8. Belt of Giant Strength
9. Figurine of Wondrous Power
10. (Anything) of Polymorph

... THINGS ALWAYS FOUND IN DUNGEONS

1. Doors
2. Traps
3. Puzzles
4. Treasure and loot
5. Undead
6. Goblins and kobolds
7. Gelatinous cubes
8. Dead bodies
9. Altars
10. Giant animals (especially rats)

... THINGS FOUND IN MONSTER BELLIES

1. Coins (especially copper)
2. Yesterday's breakfast/lunch/dinner
3. Other adventurers
4. The remains of other adventurers
5. Weapons
6. Armor
7. Jewelry
8. Secret notes
9. Magic components
10. Roll again

... TYPES OF HAZARDS

1. Monsters (of any kind)
2. Pits
3. Traps
4. Gelatinous Cubes (and other jellies)
5. Molds
6. Pools/bodies of water
7. Illusions
8. Other adventuring parties
9. Puzzle rooms
10. Cave-ins or collapsing walls/floors

... TYPES OF PUZZLES

1. Rotating statue
2. Put object X into slot Y
3. Replace object X with object Y
4. Transposition puzzle
5. Riddle
6. Sequential puzzle
7. Maze
8. Line of sight puzzle
9. Lever sequence puzzle
10. Green (or other color) devil face

... TYPES OF TRAPS

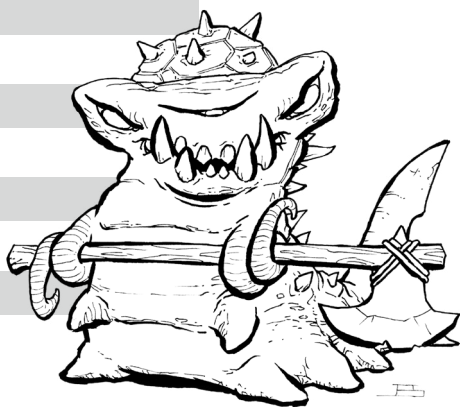
1. Ambush
2. Magic trigger
3. Item on top of another thing
4. Spell trap
5. Flagstone trap
6. Crushing walls
7. Pit
8. Poison
9. Ambush
10. Exploding things

... WAYS TO ENTER A DUNGEON

1. Through the front door (what could go wrong?)
2. Going down a well. Any well. Ever
3. Teleporting inside from outside (either intentionally or accidentally)
4. Using a two-way magic mirror
5. Through an secret door that can only be exposed by speaking in a particular language
6. Through a door that looks like a devil's face
7. Inside the belly of something that lives there
8. Through a secondary plane of existence
9. Shrinking to fit inside the pocket of a dungeon denizen and being carried in
10. Use magic to pass through walls (which works great as long as you can hold your breath when doing so)

... WEIRDEST DUNGEON DENIZENS

1. Flumphs
2. Pugmen
3. Slugmen
4. Choatmen
5. Eye horrors
6. Duckbunnies
7. Vegepgymies
8. Giant space rodents
9. Driders
10. Adventurers



A SLUGMAN

(SODIUMUS NOLIKEIUS)

MAX'S NOTES



More than 3 heads. Avoid, avoid, avoid.
Rumors place it in a dungeon in the
Darkenway.

SHOPPING LIST

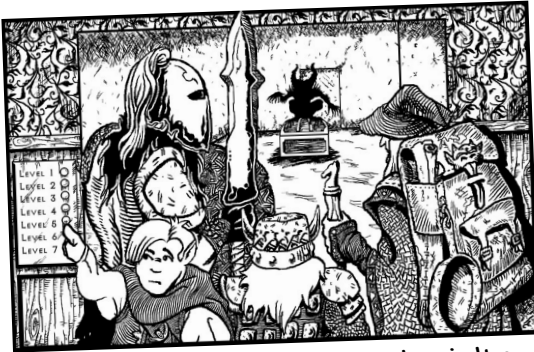
Mystic symbol of Tancretia
Dancing cat from Polm
Green devil face mask
Healing potions x 100
Rope
More rope
Even more rope
Dogs x 3
New torchbearer
Spare cleric x2
Disguise kit
Lockpicks
Exploding chickens
Magical armor

GREMLOCK
HUFFLEWRAITH
STANKEYE
CLEM
BUBBA

NERA'6 LBH PYRIRE 6B JBEX BH6 GUVF PLGURE?
TBBQ GUVAT V'Z HFVAT N OR66RE BAR VA 6UR
AB6RF LBH QBA'6 TR6 6B FRR!

NOTE TO SELF: Make sure Reincarnation Insurance is paid up by the 15th of Hostender. Also check with Gaswax regarding royalties from this book. I think he may be skimming me. If he's not, then I'm disappointed in him giving lawyers a bad name.

Red then blue.
Green then red.
Yellow then purple.
BOOM! YOU'RE DEAD!

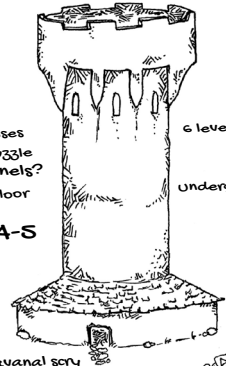


Dungeons need more elevators in them.
I'm tired of taking the stairs.

RED ROOK

maton defenses
clockwork gate puzzle
Tinmen sentinels?
magic lock on 3rd floor

1-5-?-9-?-4-5



have savanal sorry

Check with Clerics of Alcor if this is meant to do that. Pretty sure it's not.

I told Banak not to drink that
The only thing worse than a b.
can't play the lute is a polymo
spider bard who can't play th

At least I can't hear him sing.



Probably someone's pet once.
maybe still is. I hate zombies.



Avoid Santala. Still owe Misella 1000 gold pieces
from that last debacle.

Dammit, she put a bounty on my head.

NOTE TO SELF: Add disguise kit to shopping list.

YOUR NOTES



"MAX KNOWS WHAT HE'S TALKING ABOUT!

SEE THIS PERSON ON THE LEFT? THEY'RE ABOUT TO DIE VERY SOON IN A DUNGEON. ALL ALONE.

WHICH SUCKS FOR THEM!

IF ONLY THEY HAD READ ..."



GASWAX STONEHAND
LAWYER AND AGENT
TO MANY, MANY, MANY,
MANY, MANY, MANY,
MANY DUNGEONEERS



"HELLO? ANYTHING OUT THERE?"

THROUGH DUNGEONS DEEPER

A SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR DUNGEONEERS

AS WRITTEN BY A SURVIVOR



IBP 2044

PRICELESS