

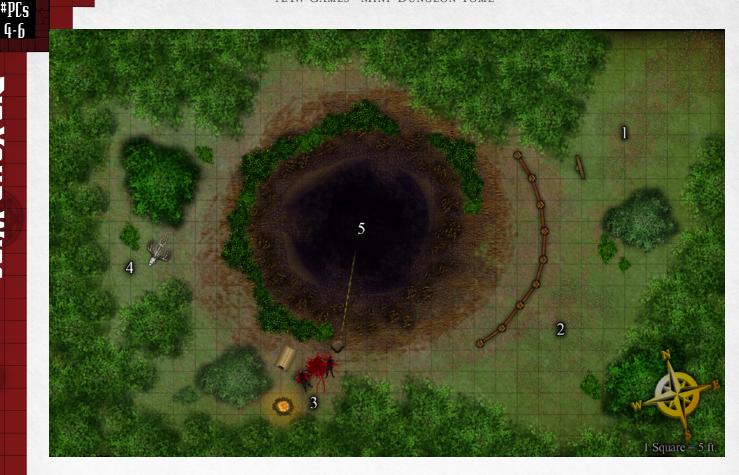






**PIT YOUR WITS** 

4-6



# **PIT YOUR WITS**

#### STEPHEN YEARDLEY

berrations-an unwelcome departure from what is normal, usual, or expected-have bizarre anatomies, strange abilities, alien mindsets, or any combination of the three. A merchant consortium hires the party to protect a small, well-established mine from a band of goblin raiders, but when the PCs arrive they are met with a disturbing sight. The mine's main building has been swallowed by a 30-footwide hole filled with inky darkness.

The site was hit by an elder thing's planar ship. The otherworldly energies produced by the impact wrecked the building and warped nearby creatures. Nothing weird is immediately visible, but strangeness abounds. Starfueltwisted flora and fauna are everywhere! Many of these aberrations are re-skinned versions of existing monsters, with Hit Points equal to 2d8 + their Constitution bonus.

#### 1. The Northeast Approach

#### Tom 5

If the PCs approach the site from the northeast, a glowing giant mantis (311) rushes them from the bushes. The mantis

has 12 Hit Points and is blinded. If the PCs defeat the giant mantis, award XP as if it were a level I creature.

Blasted by boiling starfuel, the wooden sign is scorched and pitted with tiny, twinkling holes. If the PCs touch or disturb the sign, it explodes like a burning hands rune (277).

# 2. The Southeast Approach

Fun 5

If the PCs approach from the southeast, they see the protective palisade that surrounds the mine.

As the PCs cross the open space, a creature slithers towards them. It's the unnaturally elongated body of a warped goblin (ball python; 317), its legs fused together and its arms melded into its torso. The goblin hisses as it approaches, but its eyes plead for release!

The vegetation near the end of the palisade has transformed into a snapping flytrap (317). It attacks anything that comes within 10 feet of it. The snapping flytrap has 14 Hit Points and a speed of o feet. If the PCs defeat the snapping flytrap, award XP as if it were a level I creature.

Tom 5

PUP

Moderate 2

# 3. The Mess Tent

The hideously distorted bodies of two humans lie beside a metal cylinder that pulses with a lime-colored aura.

The easternmost body appears to have been disemboweled. If the party approaches within 10 feet of the body, its **bloated**, **stinking intestines** (**sewer ooze**; **316**) pull themselves from the nearby bushes. Like the metal cylinder, the intestines glow sickly green.

The westernmost body is intact, but a long, blackened tongue protrudes from its open mouth. Three **giant centipedes** (299), also glowing green, feed on the corpse. The centipedes attack only if the PCs interrupt their feast.

The burning pit represents the cylinder's initial landing point. The pit bubbles and roils, spraying acid in a 5-foot radius every 1d3 rounds. Creatures in the area when the pit explodes take 2d6+5 acid damage (**DC 15 basic Reflex saving throw**).

The cylinder still gives off radiation. Every minute the PCs remain within 10 feet of the cylinder, they must succeed at a **DC 15 Fortitude saving throw** or become fatigued. The cylinder is steel covered with a thin layer of cold iron. With 10 minutes of work, the PCs can scrape the equivalent of one chunk of cold iron (worth 10 gp) off the cylinder.

#### 4. The Southwest Approach

If the PCs approach from the southwest, they encounter an emaciated **black dragon wyrmling** (**285**). The dragon's scales are falling off and its twisted wings are useless. In addition to being flightless, the dragon has only 20 Hit Points and can't use its Breath Weapon. Its warped jaws and horns remain dangerous, however. If the PCs defeat the wyrmling, award XP as if it were a level 2 creature.

# 5. The Pit

No one knows how many miners were in the building when the planar ship crashed, but the **gibbering mouther** (**308**) that emerges from the pit has eight mouths and speaks with eight different, human-sounding voices. The gibbering mouther has only 20 Hit Points, but it is the greatest threat here. If the PCs defeat the gibbering mouther, award XP as if it were a level 3 creature.

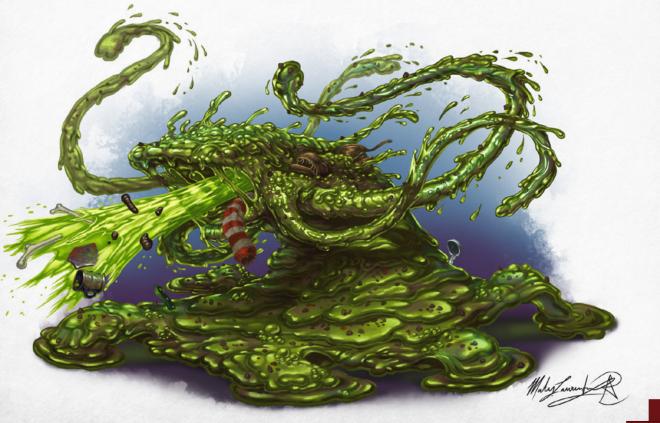
A shimmering beacon rises from the bottom of the 6ofoot pit, illuminating the crater with dim light. If the PCs peer into the crater, they discover at the bottom an elder thing holding a glowing crystal (the source of the beacon). As soon as the elder thing notices the PCs, it rises into the air on the column of light, disappearing amongst the stars faster than the eye can follow.

Roll on the following table every 1d4+4 rounds.

#### **Random Encounters**

d%	Result
01-40	Nothing
41-70	Id2 zombie shamblers (319)
71-90	1d2+1 goblin warriors (308)
91-00	Centipede swarm (299)

Stephen Yeardley



Trivial 2



# WE ALL START SOMEWHERE

STEPHEN YEARDLEY

ecades ago, adventurers drove the black dragon Hauskakasvi from her lair in the mountains above the town of Raakavras. The site is now overgrown with oak and elm. Fortune hunters emptied the lair long ago, although beginners sometimes still dare to enter the complex, hoping to find some treasure everyone else missed. The tribes of monstrous humanoids that normally haunt the mountainside have been particularly quiet of late, and recently the body of a well-known thief was discovered in the nearby woods, putting the locals' minds to rest as to the safety of their belongings. Raakayras is at peace.

#### Background

Shortly before she died, Hauskakasvi placed four of her eggs in vats filled with a unique, alchemical acid. When the eggs hatched, the acid preserved the wyrmlings, keeping them in a state of suspended animation. Recently, a thief by the name of Tyynijalka discovered the wyrmlings and used saltwort ash, a powerful alkali, to contaminate the vats. The ash killed three of the wyrmlings, but a fourth, named Pienilehti, awoke, slaughtered the rogue, and dumped his body in the nearby woods. Since then, Pienilehti has cleared the mountainside of other threats to his lair, inadvertently protecting the town of Raakayras in the process.

Note: The PCs must succeed at a DC 15 Perception check to notice the secret doors in Areas 2 through 5. Tyynijalka marked the doors in Areas 3 and 5, lowering the difficulty to notice them to DC 10. If the PCs push the doors in Areas 2 and 4 westwards, the doors open only in that direction for next 24 hours, while the doors in Areas 3 and 5 open only eastwards. Conversely, if the doors in Areas 2 and 4 are opened eastwards, then those in 3 and 5 move only westwards. All doors automatically close after 5 minutes, unless the PCs prop them open.

# 1. The Grand Stairs

Smashed and splintered wooden kegs litter the entryway. A layer of fine, white powder covers the barrels and steps. With

Moderate 1

a successful **DC 24 Crafting check** to Identify Alchemy, the PCs recognize the powder as an alchemical substance known as saltwort ash. With 10 minutes of work, the PCs can gather enough ash to create one use of the substance.

Between the first and second entry and the third and fourth entry is a black stone statue of a Medium-sized kobold wearing a hooded cloak. Each cloak is a **darkmantle** (**284**). Pienilehti tolerates the darkmantles' presence, as the creatures guard the entrance to his lair. Unless the PCs spot them, the darkmantles drop on the last character to enter the complex (**Initiative** Stealth +7).

### 2 & 3. The Antechambers

Moderate 1

Hauskakasvi stored her magical treasures in these two, nearly identical rooms. Three **animated statues** (297) shaped to resemble kobolds once protected the treasures, but only the eastern statue in each room remains functional. The statues animate and attack as soon as the party enters, but they don't pursue if the characters flee the chamber.

Symbols on the floor activate *magic mouth* spells that describe the treasures that once occupied the display stands. Sadly, all eight stands are now empty.

# 4 & 5. Lesser Ash Chambers

These identical rooms each contain a 3-foot-tall vat filled with a black wyrmling's body half-buried in greenish sludge (a combination of black dragon acid and saltwort ash). The sludge burns if touched, dealing I persistent acid damage.

# 6A. The Hall of Humility

# Severe 1

At the end of this short corridor, stairs ascend into a larger chamber. Walking up the stairs triggers two **scythe blades traps (295)**. Tyynijalka managed to avoid the traps and left a skull trap-marker at the base of the steps to denote their presence. The thief's mark lowers the difficulty of Perception checks to notice the traps to DC 18.

# 6B. Grand Ash Chamber

In the middle of the room is a vat filled with more sludge and another wyrmling body. In each corner of the room stands an empty, wooden display table. Along the west wall are four kobold statues. The face of each statue is draped with flesh peeled from an actual face. A successful **DC 15 Medicine check** reveals that the faces were all taken from their original skulls within the last few months. Starting with the southern statue, the faces are two bugbears, a ghoul, and a satyr. One of the bugbears wears a pearl and feather ear stud (worth 10 gp). At the base of the satyr statue lies a single pipe from a set of *lesser maestro's panpipes* (the rest of the pipes are found in **Area 9**).

# SALTWORT ASH

UNCOMMON I ALCHEMICAL I CONSUMABLE Price 45 gp Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk L Activate Interact

Activate V Interact

You activate the saltwort ash by pouring it from its container. The ash neutralizes an amount of acid up to 10-cubic-feet in volume, rendering it harmless. Alternately, you can sprinkle the ash on yourself or a creature within reach, granting the creature resistance 5 to acid damage for 1 hour.

# 7 & 8. The Silent Passages

Another of Tyynijalka's trap icons marks the floor tile directly inside of the room's east entrance. The central square in each room triggers a **rolling boulder** (**282**) hidden at the end of the long corridor to the east. All the other squares in the room trigger a **spear launcher** (**295**) hidden in the west wall and drops a **falling portcullis** (**279**) that blocks the nearest entrance to **Area 6B**.

At the eastern end of the north corridor lies a dropped sack containing a *lesser healing potion*.

# 9. The Cleansing Chamber

# Moderate 1

Severe 1

**Pienilehti (black dragon wyrmling, 285)** lives here. When the PCs arrive, the dragon perches atop a stone pedestal in the middle of an acid vat uncorrupted by Tyynijalka's magical alkali. The acid creates a cloud of caustic fog directly above the vat. Creatures are concealed while in the fog. A creature that touches the acid or fog takes 1d6 persistent acid damage.

Pienilehti is mostly lawful, with a streak of "selfish evil." However, the wyrmling effectively protects Raakayras by hunting down creatures that threaten his lair. Killing Pienilehti results in the rapid return of such creatures in the region, putting the town at peril and in need of protection. Pienilehti's initial attitude is unfriendly, but if the party improves his attitude to indifferent or better, the dragon lets the characters leave with their lives, assuming they provide him a tribute of treasure before they go.

The wooden stands in the corners display Pienilehti's horde: a pouch containing 90 sp, 200 cp, and an emerald ring worth 25 gp; an ingot of silver worth 100 gp; a +*I* dagger; and a set of broken *lesser maestro's panpipes*. If the PCs recover the panpipes' missing piece (in Area 6B), they can Repair the pipes with a successful DC 18 Crafting check.

PUP

ITEM 6

#### AAW GAMES • MINI-DUNGEON TOME



# LAIR OF THE MAD DRUID

Louis Agresta

The forest primeval. Brave settlers seeking better lives gather their families and venture beneath her branches. They walk her leaf-dappled aisles, violate her ancient green stillness. They fell trees, build homes, plow the earth, and...vanish.

The local magistrate, tired of discovering bloodsmeared doorways where she expected to find servile taxpayers, hires the party to investigate the disappearances. Of course, the magistrate fails to mention that human settlers recently massacred a tribe of gnomes in the very valley where her citizens now disappear, nor is she aware that one gnome, a mad druid determined to avenge his murdered kin, survived this slaughter.

The adventure begins when the PCs trigger a cavein that plummets them into the subterranean druidic stronghold the Mad Druid now occupies. The cave-in deposits the party in **Area 2**, piles stone and earth behind them, and blocks the exits from **Areas 1** and **2**.

#### 1. Ooze Chamber

A **gelatinous cube** (**307**) patrols this chamber and the attached hallway. If the PCs open the door, they find **Kevek Barnes**—the human settler who led the massacre of the Mad Druid's people—apparently floating in mid-air amid chunks of rubble, broken sword blades, and other inorganic material. Kevek's mouth is open in a silent scream as he struggles to escape the cube. Mere minutes before the PCs arrived, Kevek managed to escape the Mad Druid, but the gelatinous cube engulfed him as he made his way to the stronghold's exit. Treat Kevek as a **farmer (306**). He has 16 Hit Points remaining when the PCs discover him.

Low 2

The gelatinous cube attacks whoever opens the door, but first it waits to see if someone walks into it. The PCs must succeed on a **DC 23 Perception check** to notice the cube. Should the PCs pass the door to this room without opening it, the cube emerges in the middle of their marching order, with Kevek suspended inside it.

The Mad Druid has trained the cube to stay in the hallway attached to Area 1. It does not venture into Area 2 or Area 3.

rom 5

# 2. Memoriam

The neatly stacked bones of the Mad Druid's tribe line the walls of this room. A young boy weeps beside one of the piles, gently caressing the yellowing bones of the dead.

The "boy" is a CE **doppelganger** (**303**), one of the Mad Druid's allies. The doppelganger has adopted the appearance of a child of one of the recently murdered human settlers. Suspicious PCs can attempt a **DC 21 Perception check** to see through the doppelganger's disguise. Those who succeed sense something unnatural about the boy.

If approached, the doppelganger wipes his eyes and tells the tale of the gnomes' destruction at the hands of the human settlers. It attempts to convince the PCs of the righteousness of the Mad Druid's cause, but if the characters let slip that the magistrate employs them, the doppelganger shrieks "Murderers!" and attacks (**Initiative** Deception +II).

#### 3. By Madness Imprisoned

A locked wooden door (Hardness 10, HP 40, BT 20) blocks entrance to this room. Opening the door requires a **DC 15 Thievery check** to Pick a Lock or a **DC 20 Athletics check** to Force Open the door. Forcing open the door alerts the **naiad** (**312**) who resides in the well at the east end of the room. Once aware of the party's presence, the naiad rises from the well and asks the PCs who they are and why they have come here.

The naiad is a servant of the Mad Druid, but a reluctant one. Her initial attitude toward the party is indifferent, but if the PCs improve her attitude to at least friendly, she begs them to free her from the Mad Druid. "Grief deafens him to any cry but his own heart's wail," the naiad explains. "Lost is his love of life. He sacrifices the living to avenge the dead."

If the PCs agree to help her, the naiad reveals that her well, built by ancient druids, teleports anyone who submerges themselves to a fountain in the Mad Druid's meditation chamber (**Area 9**). The naiad assures the PCs that traveling via the fountain will allow the party to approach the Mad Druid undetected. She goes on to explain that a similar well exists elsewhere in the complex (**Area 4**).

### 4. Well Portal

A creature that submerges themselves in this 6-foot-deep well instantly teleports to the fountain in **Area 8**. The creature arrives to find themselves standing in ankle-deep water, but otherwise dry.

# 5. Stripped from the Dead

The Mad Druid tosses the belongings of murdered settlers here. If the PCs search through the piles of garden implements, farming tools, and sacks of grain, they can attempt a **DC 10 Perception check**. On a success, one of the characters discovers a +*1 longsword*. A tunnel to the south leads to the surface.

#### 6. Flooded Chamber

Dirty water seeps from beneath the door to this chamber, creating a two-inch-deep puddle in the hall. Another of the Mad Druid's allies, a **living waterfall** (**311**), attacks anyone who opens the door. Water streams in from the eastern tunnel, which leads to the surface near the shores of a freshwater lake.

# 7. North Fountain

Anyone who drinks from this fountain instantly teleports to the well in **Area 3**, arriving one foot below the water's surface.

# 8. South Fountain

Anyone who drinks from this fountain instantly teleports to the well in **Area 4**, arriving one foot below the water's surface.

# 9. Chamber of the Mad Druid

Extreme 2

Severe 2

The ceiling of this ancient chamber vaults to a 30-foot peak, where its long-dead architects affixed a permanent *light* spell that emits real sunlight. The chamber is divided into three concentric rings: the outer ring, which runs between the outside wall and the 10-foot-high hedges; the middle ring, between the hedges and the 5-foot-high water basins; and the inner ring, where the Mad Druid meditates beneath a 20-foot-tall beech tree.

A pair of **snapping flytraps** (**317**) lurks in the hedges directly across from the west entrance. The flytraps' job is to prevent intruders from reaching the inner ring. They ambush PCs who try to do so (**Initiative** Stealth +13). Combat with the flytrap alerts the Mad Druid to the presence of intruders.

Treat the **Mad Druid** as a CE **changeling exile** (**299**). As a gnome, the Mad Druid is Small and speaks Gnomish and Sylvan in addition to Common and Druidic. If the PCs arrive via the southern fountain (**Area 8**), they may be able to sneak up on the Druid as he meditates beneath the beech tree. As soon as he becomes aware of intruders in his sanctum, the Druid casts *shillelagh* on his staff. He then targets the characters with *produce flame* spells while the snapping flytraps hold the party at bay. Both the Mad Druid and the snapping flytraps fight to the death.

A PC who searches the area and makes a successful **DC 15 Perception check** discovers a *dagger of venom* hidden among the roots of the Mad Druid's beech tree. Louis Agresta



# **STOWAWAY ON THE SINGING SEA**

#### **JUSTIN ANDREW MASON**

ocal authorities hire the adventurers to sneak aboard The Last Song, a merchant ship. The vessel's owner, Elloise Drake, is rumored to live a double life as the nefarious pirate, Lady Wavedancer.

The officials of the port city of Tangran's Landing have arranged for a special shipment of "cargo" to be loaded onto The Last Song in advance of its next voyage. Instead of the fine silks said to be in the shipment, the adventurers are smuggled onboard. The PCs' mission is to listen for the sounds of The Last Song boarding another ship, then emerge from their hiding spot to investigate. If the PCs discover the crew of The Last Song committing an act of piracy, they are to present their documentation, arrest Elloise, and commandeer the ship.

The PCs are deputized by Thonkin Tellsmith, the sheriff of Tangran's Landing, and offered a payment of 500 gp for their efforts (payable upon their return). Before they are loaded into The Last Song's cargo hold, the adventurers

are given documentation that authorizes them not only to arrest Elloise, but to offer the rest of her crew immunity for their crimes, as well a reward of 5 gp each if they surrender the ship to the party.

Inside the PCs' crate are four weeks of rations and fresh water, bedrolls, a selection of books, one everburning torch, three lesser healing potions, one moderate antiplague elixir, and a bag of holding (to accommodate the necessities of being cooped up in a shipping container for several weeks). Each side of the crate has a hidden door that can be opened only from inside the crate.

Elloise Drake (CN naiad queen, 313) is a wealthy merchant of staggering beauty and cunning wit. She is also secretly the feared pirate known as Lady Wavedancer. If the party arrests Elloise, she relies on her silver tongue and considerable beauty to help her escape. She bargains with the PCs, offering a share of her vast fortune if they set her free.

7-G

**Strom Storman** (CN **hobgoblin general**, **310**) is the towering first mate of *The Last Song*. He also serves as Lady Wavedancer's personal bodyguard. Most of the ship's crew will not surrender if Strom is still alive. Strom may pretend to cooperate with the adventurers, but he secretly plans to murder them and release his captain. If Elloise dies, Strom goes berserk and attacks.

A crew of 20 (not including the captain and first mate) operates *The Last Song*. They are a varied lot of all ages, backgrounds, and genders. Treat the crew as **elite pirates**.

Assuming the PCs don't leave their shipping container, the first two weeks of the voyage are uneventful. On the fourteenth day, the ship suddenly changes course. Minutes later, the ship is rattled by the blast of its cannons. If the PCs emerge from their crate to investigate, they find themselves alone below deck (in **Area 5**). Above them, they hear muffled shouting followed by a volley of musket-fire.

If the PCs make their way above deck, they discover *The Last Song* drawn up alongside a much larger, but unarmed, merchant ship. *The Last Song* is flying black sails, and Lady Wavedancer waves her scimitar about, shouting orders at her crew as they board the merchant vessel. At her side stands the enormous Strom Storman.

The crew of the merchant ship does not resist as the pirates transfer their cargo over to *The Last Song*. The PCs can move about unnoticed by making a successful **DC 23 Stealth check** to Sneak. On a failure, Strom spots them and alerts Lady Wavedancer, who commands her crew to seize the party immediately.

At any point during the battle, a PC can use one action to sway the crew of *The Last Song* to their cause. The PC may attempt a **DC 23 Diplomacy check** to Request that the crew surrender. If the PCs produce the documents Sheriff Tellsmith gave them, they receive a +2 circumstance bonus to the check. However, if Strom Storman remains alive, treat the PC's degree of success as one step worse.

**Critical Success** All remaining crew members lay down their arms.

Success Half of the remaining crew surrender.

**Failure** A handful (roll 1d4) of the remaining crew surrender.

Critical Failure None of the crew surrender.

#### 1. Top Deck

The top deck of the ship bears two masts, as well as four heavy cannons and a cargo hatch on the starboard side.

# 2. Bow

Crates containing fresh oranges clutter the ship's bow.

# 3. The Wheel

Twin stone anchors flank the captain's wheel.

### 4. The Cutter

An open cutter is lashed to the ship's rails. The cutter is outfitted with oars and rigged with ropes so it can be lowered over the ship's port side.

#### 5. Cargo Hold

In addition to the party's crate, the hold contains a shipment of fine silks valued at roughly 2,500 gp, as well as enough rations and fresh water to last the crew for six weeks. If Elloise's true identity is revealed, the authorities of Tangran's Landing claim *The Last Song's* cargo for the city.

### 6. Galley

The crew gathers here to eat and relax. Wooden boxes nailed to the ends of the tables contain an assortment of cards, dice, and other gambling games.

#### 7, 8 & 9. Crew Quarters

Bunks and chests for personal effects fill out the crew's quarters.

#### 8A. Common Quarters

A PC who succeeds at a **DC 15 Perception check** to Search discovers a secret door in the wall behind the chests.

#### 8B. Hidden Compartment

Lady Wavedancer stores her black pirate sails here, as well as a collection of jewelry worth 150 gp.

#### 10. Captain's Quarters

Elloise keeps the sturdy wooden door (Hardness 10, HP 40, BT 20) to her room locked. Opening the door without the key requires a **DC 15 Thievery check** to Pick a Lock, or a **DC 20 Athletics check** to Force Open the door.

Nothing about the room suggests Elloise is anything but an honest merchant. The room contains the ship's manifest, navigational charts, and Elloise's personal effects. Subject to the GM's discretion, the ship's manifests and navigational charts might act as a 5th-level research challenge holding the seeds for further adventures, such as directions towards a legendary buried treasure, a sunken city, or a similarly fantastic locale.

D

JUSTIN ANDREW MASON

#### OGL

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