

Bring Him Back Alive!

by Matt Forbeck

It's a warm summer evening, just about perfect. A cool breeze blusters in from the northwest, carrying the promise of the encroaching autumn with it, but at the moment it brings you a welcome relief from the heat of the day.

After spending most of your summer delving into the deeps and dungeons beneath the land, you're just happy to be able to relax in the comforts of a world in which the sun sets and rises. For what seems like the first time in ages, you're not so worried about what might be lurking just around the corner or behind the next door as you are about the terrible prospect of draining dry the local tavern's stores.

You have just finished a marvelous dinner at the Stumble Inn. (The weathered wooden sign creaking over the door depicts a booted foot tripping over a lump of gold.) The innkeeper and his wife – Carbad and Kamalda, an honest pair of retired farmers as weatherbeaten as their place's sign – have hauled out their very best for you. They know that you are restless to be on your way and that they aren't bound to have the pleasure of your company for much longer.

Just as you are about to raise a toast to your deserving host, a rumped shape staggers through the inn's open door.

You reach for your weapon, startled at the intrusion, but before you can act, the figure crumples to the floor. The innkeeper dashes over and turns the stricken stranger onto his back. "Marcaeus!" he gasps, then looks back up at you, his face filled with dread.

You rush to the fallen man's side. He's alive, but barely so. He's literally been beaten within an inch of his life, and his right leg is twisted at a decidedly uncomfortable angle.

You roll the man over onto his back, and he groans loudly as the bones in his battered leg crunch together. His eyes flicker for a moment and then open wide. His gaze, clouded by his intense pain, fixes directly on you.

Just before he mercifully passes out, he reaches up and grabs you by the front of your shirt.

"My son," he whispers through his battered lips, "they've got my son!"

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Requires the use of the **Dungeons & Dragons® Player's Handbook, Third Edition**, published by **Wizards of the Coast®**

Bring Him Back Alive is a d20 System adventure booster designed for 4-8 characters levels 1-4. It can be played as a stand-alone adventure or dropped into any ongoing campaign setting.



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How to Use This Product

This adventure is designed to be easily dropped into your existing *Third-Edition D&D* campaign. It can be run in a single session, and it makes for an excellent evening's gaming. To prepare yourself to run it, you should read it completely at least once to familiarize yourself with the material. You may wish to photocopy the map in the center of the book for ease of use as well. The text on the back of the book can be read to your players to introduce them to the adventure. After that, you're ready to begin. Good luck!

Dungeons and Dragons®

This module requires the use of the *Dungeons and Dragons® Player's Handbook, Third Edition*, published by Wizards of the Coast.® You won't be able to run this adventure without it.



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DM Background

Bring Him Back Alive! is an adventure designed for a group of four to eight heroes of levels 1-4. After reading the Player Background (found on the back of the outside cover), read the module at least once to familiarize yourself with the various encounters before proceeding to play.

The mites are a race of tiny humanoids who live in the ruins under an ancient keep in the wilderness. They are a fairly primitive people, not having progressed much further along the lines of social evolution than hunting and gathering. They are immortal, and their needs are few, so they haven't bothered to develop the ways and means of the more "sophisticated" races.

Also, they're all bred to be followers. Well, almost all of them. In fact, the mites had a king up until recently – the only mite who was capable of leading the others – but he was killed in a tragic hunting accident.

The mites knew that this was a problem. They needed a leader, and there weren't any to be had. In fact, no one could really remember there ever being more than one king mite around at a time.

That's when they turned to Kamalda, their shaman.

As shamans go, Kamalda is no great shakes, although she's picked up some tricks over the years. Most of these are in the shape of the spells she managed to rescue from the keep of the wizard that created the mites.

Kamalda is also the keeper of the mites' greatest treasure: the *mite-maker*, an amulet that changes the wearer into the race of the person that gave the amulet to the wearer. Better yet, it does something to the wearer's brain to make him think that he's always – at least secretly – been a member of that race and that there couldn't possibly be a reason to want to change back.

History of the Mites

The mites are a race of humanoids created by an ancient wizard to act as his loyal assistants. He created them with an inbred desire to follow his orders, and created the king mite when the mites grew too numerous for him to keep track of. Most of the mites have long since forgotten this fact, but Kamalda has kept her mind sharp and clear.

The immortal mites have long outlasted their old master and their original king. They've replaced their king once before. Kamalda grabbed the *mite-maker* from the wizard's castle after he died, and she used it to create the last mite king from a thief the mites caught poking around.



With the death of their latest king, the mites needed another. To that end, they waited along the main road into the nearest village and then ambushed the first tiny group of travelers that came along.

The ambush victims were two men – a wealthy merchant named Marcaeus and his adult son Lucente – who were quickly overcome by the sheer numbers of the mites. The son was bound and gagged and taken off to the mites' burrows, while the wealthy father was left alone and unconscious on the side of the road.

Chapter One: Help!

The action starts up here directly after the events described on the back cover of this booklet.

Give the heroes a moment or two to get themselves together. They may decide to search the area outside the inn for potential dangers, but the only things they find are their mounts and the innkeeper's ornery mule.

Carbad identifies Marcaeus as a wealthy merchant who regularly travels the road that passes by the inn. In fact, Marcaeus often spends the night in Carbad's inn. Usually, however, the merchant has his son Lucente with him. The fact that the young man is missing causes both Carbad and Karna much concern.

Carbad checks Marcaeus's purse and finds it full of 50 gold pieces. The merchant was known to not carry large amounts of cash on him, preferring instead to leave larger sums spread throughout banks in the cities he visited. Even so, apparently the motive of the attack was not robbery.

Marcaeus has seen better days. His face is battered and bruised, as is most of his body, which the heroes may discover if anyone bothers to check his wounds. Strangely, the vast bulk of the injuries seem to have been sustained on his legs.

The man is near to death. If any of the heroes uses some healing magic on him, Marcaeus revives almost immediately. Otherwise, he isn't lucid enough to speak until the following morning.

That Was No Robbery

When Marcaeus is well enough to talk, read the following to the heroes aloud. If they're not around, Carbad the innkeeper brings them to the man. Read the following to the players aloud:

Marcaeus sits up in his bed, thanking those around him for their help. He is quiet for a moment then until Carbad asks him what happened to him. At that, the man's face blanches as his eyes widen with fear.

"It was horrible," he says, his voice barely a whisper. Any hint of the merchant's natural joviality is gone.

"My son Lucente and I were riding along the road, just like we've done dozens of times before. Less than a mile from here, though, in the shadow of those old ruins, it all fell apart.

"One moment I'm riding along, and the next thing I know my horse throws me..."



I look up and see Lucente fighting these things for his life. He has his sword out, and he's laying about to his left and right, but there are just too many of them.

"I manage to struggle to my feet, and then they're on me as well. They were as short as a human child, but their skin was the color of black earth, and their eyes were as round and dark as those of some netherworldly beast.

"And they had spears.

"I fought back as best I could, struggling to get to my horse's body and recover my own blade. But it was no use. Before long, I was overcome. As I fell once again, I saw Lucente being dragged from his horse. I cried out his name as he disappeared from my view.

"Then I knew nothing.

"When I awoke on the road later, night had fully fallen, and Lucente and the devilish creatures were gone. And so were our horses. I staggered off in the direction of the nearest haven of which I knew, and eventually I ended up here."

An Offer Made

Once Marcaeus finishes his story, he tries to vault out of the bed to set to searching for his son, but his strength fails him. He looks to the heroes for help. He is prepared to offer them each 500 gold pieces – collectible in any nearby city – for the safe return of his son Lucente.

The only real clue that the heroes have to go on is that the attack happened "in the shadow of those old ruins." Marcaeus is, of course, referring to the ruins of the castle of the wizard that created the mites so long ago.

Assuming the heroes decide to accept Marcaeus's offer, they can set off right away – or as soon as dawn breaks. In a case like this, there's no time to waste.

The Legend

Marcaeus may not know much about the ruins that loom over the road he regularly rides along, but Carbad and Karna certainly do. Before the heroes can leave, either the innkeeper or his wife takes the heroes aside to let them know what they're in for:

"I'm sorry to say this, but you fine people – as talented as you obviously are – may already be too late to save Lucente. Legend has it that these mites were created centuries ago by the wizard who once lived in the castle. The real terror of the whole thing is that the wizard supposedly crafted his creations from the souls of the living who were foolish enough to stumble across his doorstep.

"The worst part of all this – for you at least – is that it may be too late for young Lucente. He may still be alive in those ruins, but if he is, he's sure to be in the form of a mite himself.

"It seems that these mites have their old wizard's power to make more of their own from the men that they kidnap on these roads..."



“So just you be careful, my friends. If you come across these infernal mites, you’d best be cautious with your swords. You never know if the one that you’ve come to rescue might not be in the form of the creature you’re fighting against.”

Troubleshooting

If the heroes balk at going after Lucente, Marcaeus is more than prepared to double his initial offer. After that, he starts to balk. He can’t place a price on his son’s life, but he doesn’t have much more than that available. He’s willing to offer the heroes continuing work as a guard for him if they like, and at a handsome salary, on top of the reward money.

If need be, Marcaeus actually falls on his knees and begs for help. At this point, Carbad himself goes out and straps on his sword, scowling at the heroes all the while. Even at his age, he can’t stand to see a man in such dire straits without lending him a hand, and he curses the heroes as cowards or cutthroats for refusing.

If the heroes still refuse to help, you could have the mites attack them as they pass on the road, but you may not want to bother. If the heroes really are that afraid of a little adventure, they should probably be left alone.

Chapter Two: Into the Lair of the Mites

In this chapter, the heroes make their way out to the ruins, find the entrance to the mites’ lair, and – with any luck – rescue Lucente. As the heroes reach each area, read the boxed text to them aloud.

The Road to Ruin

The road to where Lucente and Marcaeus were assaulted is easy, wide, and clear, and it runs east and west. Under Marcaeus’s directions, you head west into the forest. There are few travelers on the road, and none of them have much if anything to say to the heroes.

As you make way down the road, the ruins of the wizard’s castle heave into view atop a hillock a ways off to the northwest.

Soon you come to the area of the attack. The dust of the road still bears dark, sticky bloodstains. There are signs of a struggle at the edge of the road, where Lucente presumably made his stand. There’s blood everywhere, leading off into the woods.

The trail that the mites took back to the castle ruins should be obvious. There were 10 mites involved in the ambush, and they then dragged Lucente and the two still-bleeding horses the mile or so up the hill to the ruins. A blind man could follow this trail (Search, DC 5).

Even if the heroes don’t have any way to follow the trail, they should realize that the only real lead they have is the ruins, and they should eventually find their way there.



The Ruins

The ruins sit in a large circle about 50 yards wide. It’s obvious that this “castle” was in fact little more than a keep, a fortified home for a powerful wizard and perhaps a few friends, but little more. When compared with the castles of the leaders of the nearby nations or city-states, it pales in size.

Even then, it’s been a long time since there was enough of a building here that was even capable of keeping the rain off your head much less serving as a fortification against intruders. Most of the walls have tumbled down entirely, leaving only a few teetering tower of moss-covered stones that look like a good breeze might be able to bring them low.

Still, this is where the trail leads.

The trail ends as the heroes follow it onto the keep’s battered floor. The heroes will likely search for some kind of concealed door (Search, DC 10). Every time they succeed, roll 1d4 and consult the table below. Each time the heroes search again, add +1 for every time the heroes have searched before.

Roll	Result
1	A. Rats’ nest
2	B. Spider’s parlor
3	C. Cats’ lair
4	D. The chimney
5	E. Bee hive
6 or more	F. The trap door

A. Rats’ Nest

You peer over a suspicious-looking rock and spy a hole leading down into the darkness beneath the keep. You nose your way in closer to get a better look, and you suddenly realize that the darkness is looking back.

The heroes have disturbed a nest of dire rats. The three beasts rabidly attack as soon as any hero gets within a foot of the opening to their underground warren.

Dire Rat (3): CR 1/3. SZ S (animal); HD 1d8+1; hp 8, 5, 4; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30, climb 40, climb 20; AC 14 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +1 natural); Atk: bite +4 (1d4); SA disease (Fort save, DC 12, incubation 1d3 days, damage 1d3 temporary Dexterity and 1d3 temporary Constitution); SQ scent; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 10, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 4; AL N. Skills: Climb +11, Hide +11, Move Silently +1. Feats: Weapon Finesse (bite).



Monstrous Spider: CR 1/2. SZ S (vermin); HD 1d8; hp 6; Init +3; Spd 30, climb 20; AC 14 (+1 size, +3 Dex); Atk: bite +4 (1d4+2, plus poison); SA poison (DC 11, 1d3 Str), web (Escape DC 18, Break DC 24, hp 4); SQ vermin; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +0; Str 7, Dex 17, Con 10, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 2; AL N. Skills: Climb +10, Hide +14, Jump -2, Spot +7. Feats: Weapon Finesse (bite).

B. Spider's Parlor

There's a bit of an overhang left attached to a crumbling wall here, just enough to give you an idea of where the ceiling of the once-room you're standing in must have begun. As you peer up under the ceiling remnant, you notice a large, thick web flapping gently in the breeze.

Most heroes are going to be on guard for a spider leaping down on to them from above, but they're looking in the wrong direction. There's a monstrous spider here all right, but it's of the trapdoor variety. If the heroes don't manage to find the spider's hiding hole (Search, DC 20) below them, the spider surprises them as it bursts from beneath an innocent looking piece of sod.

C. Cat's Lair

It seems like all sorts of wildlife are living in these ruins, taking whatever shelter they can find from the elements. But apparently not all of the creatures are technically of the wild variety. As you poke around in a pile of rubble, you spy a battle-scarred cat with its back up against a wall. As you get closer, you notice that the poor thing smells like it's been rolling around in rotting meat. It hisses as you approach.

This zombie cat was once the familiar of the old wizard who lived in this keep. It died before its master did, but the wizard couldn't bear the thought of life without his cherished pet. He called on the dark forces of necromancy to grant some semblance of life to the creature. Although the wizard is long gone, the cat still follows its master's final orders: to protect the place from any humanoid intruders.

D. The Chimney

You notice a thin trail of smoke coming from the top of one of the larger remnants of the old keep, about 10 feet from the ground.

Cat Zombie: SZ T (undead); CR 1/6. HD 1/2d12+3; hp 6; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 20; AC 11 (+2 size, -1 Dex); Atk: 2 claws +4 (1d2-4), bite -1 (1d3-4); Face 2.5 ft. x 2.5 ft.; Reach 2.5 ft; SQ undead, partial actions only; SV Fort +0, Ref -1, Will +2; Str 9, Dex 8, Con -, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 1; AL N. Feat: Toughness.



Giant Bee: CR 1/2. SZ M (vermin); HD 3d8; hp 13; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 20, fly 80; AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 natural); Atk: sting +2 (1d4 and poison); SA poison (DC 13, 1d6 Con, bee leaves stinger in victim and then dies); SQ vermin; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +2; Str 11, Dex 14, Con 11, Int -, Wis 12, Cha 9; AL N. Skills: Intuit Direction +6, Spot +6.

Getting to the top of the rubble is simple enough (Climb, DC 10), and there the heroes find the source of the smoke: a narrow chimney hidden in the ruined wall. The chimney is only about nine inches wide, making it almost impossible for anyone to get down it. Even if this were possible, the tiny traveler would have to be lowered down nearly 100 feet down a smoke-filled chimney and into a roaring fire.

Anything dropped down the chimney may attract the attention of the mites in the main hall. The same goes if the chimney is blocked. If either of these happens, the guards in the guard hideaway (see #1) are sent up to investigate. If they find anything, they instantly use their telepathic ability to alert the rest of the mites, making it almost impossible for the heroes to catch them unawares, no matter the guards' fate.

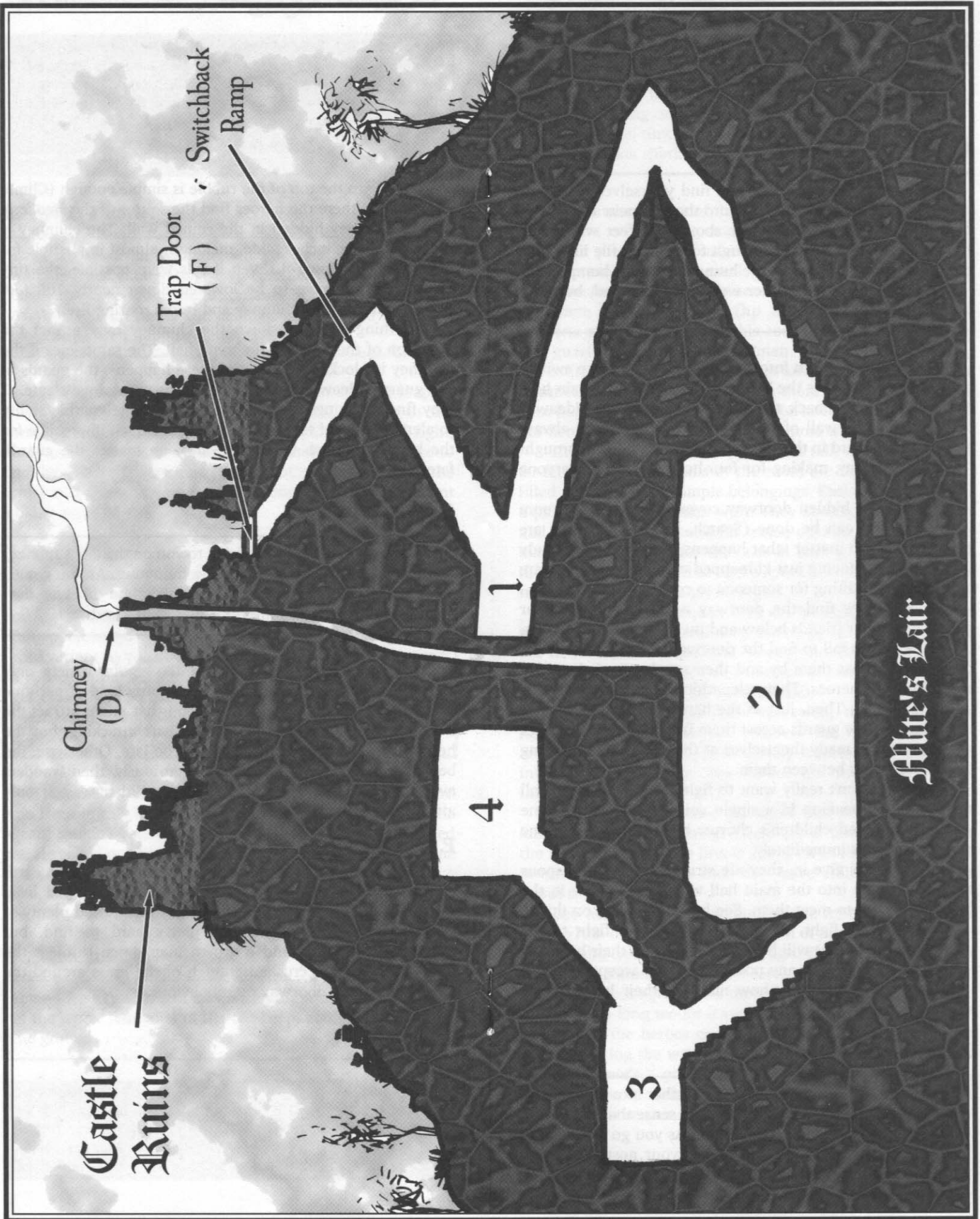
E. Wandering Bee

The sweet smell of flowers drifts to you on the late summer breeze, along with a strange, low humming. As you come around a large, tall chunk of the ruins, you discover the cause of the noise: a giant bee taller than any dwarf.

Giant bees are pretty much like the regular variety, only larger. If any of the heroes are wearing any kind of perfume or are carrying any kind of sweet food that might attract the bee, it flies straight at her. The bee isn't attacking, but the heroes may not realize that until it's too late. Otherwise, the bee simply sidles up to the heroes curiously, then wanders away after it finds them uninteresting. Either way, it only attacks if attacked.

E. The Trap Door

The entrance to the mites' lair goes down into the earth at a relatively steep but navigable angle. It's topped by a wooden door covered with a thick layer of dirt and plenty of overgrown grass. It's normally pretty hard to find, but dragging two horses and a grown man down through the doorway last night crushed enough of the grass around the area to make the doorway pretty obvious.



Castle
Ruins

Chimney
(D)

Trap Door
(F)

Switchback
Ramp

Elite's Lair



The Mites' Lair

There are no lights in the entire lair. The mites see just fine in the dark and don't need them.

1. The Guard Hideaway

Once through the hatchway, you find yourselves in a low and tight tunnel leading down into the darkness at a sharp angle. The passageway is only about four feet wide and seven feet tall – just wide enough for a single-file line and tall enough so that an average human shouldn't bump their head on the ceiling. In other words, it's cramped, but not too bad

The rampway down into the mites' lair has three switchbacks before it reaches the bulk of the mites in the main hall. At the second switchback, the mites have installed a hideaway for guards in the wall of the passageway. There are always two mites on guard in this hideaway. New guards are brought in six times a day, making for four-hour shifts for everyone on guard.

Finding the hidden doorway covering the guards' room is difficult, but can be done (Search, DC 20). Chances are excellent that no matter what happens, the guards are ready for the heroes. Having just kidnapped a young man, they are on high alert, waiting for someone to come after them.

If the heroes find the doorway and open it, the four guards alert their friends below and then immediately attack.

If the heroes fail to find the doorway, the guards wait for the heroes to pass them by and then sneak out of the room and follow the heroes. They telepathically alert their friends in the main hall. Then, just as the heroes are about to enter the main hall, the guards accost them from behind. The mites in the main hall ready themselves at the same time, trapping the heroes nicely between them.

The mites don't really want to fight, but they distrust all strangers. All speaking in a single voice at once, like some kind of demented children's chorus, they demand that the heroes surrender immediately.

If the heroes give in, they are stripped of their weapons and taken down into the main hall where every mite in the place comes out to meet them. See below for more on this.

If the heroes fight, the mites are ready to fight to the death, and the heroes will have their blood on their hands. If the heroes surrender at any point, the mites accept this with little comment, no matter how many of their kin lie dead about them.

2. The Main Hall

You make your way down the ramp, further into the depths beneath the old ruins, and you actually sense that the darkness up ahead is getting a bit lighter. As you go lower and lower, a faint scent of smoke reaches your nostrils, along with the smell of roasting meat...



You step into a large, high-ceilinged room, in the center of which stands a large fire which drafts up into a hollowed-out spot in the roof. Most of a half-cooked horse stands scorching on an unturned spit.

And several tiny, ebony-skinned, hairless people stare at you with black shark's eyes, their spears at the ready.

This is where most of the mites live, eat, and sleep when they're not out hunting and gathering food. Currently, the mites are preparing a feast with the flesh from Marcaeus's and Lucente's horses, a meal they hope to hold tonight to celebrate the arrival of their new king.

There are eight **mites (hp 3 each)** [see page 14 for complete statistics] living in this room. They, along with the two guards, the queen, the shaman, and the king, make up the entire tribe. If you like, you can lower or raise the number of mites in this room to prepare a more fitting challenge for your heroes. It is recommend that you have two to three mites per hero, but you can go with even more if you like.

The room's ceiling is fully 12 feet tall, while the floor is 60 feet square. The walls of the room are lined with shelves filled with the mites' simple belongings. Each of the mites has a pair of spears to attack with. They usually throw one first and then keep the second for melee combat. If there are too many mites up front for the ones in back to attack up close, the mites are not afraid to hurl a spear over the heads of their friends. Tall folk make great targets.

If the heroes surrender, they are brought here before the new king. Lucente is still a bit dazed by his transformation, but he refuses to believe that he was once recently a human. The only clue that the heroes have as to Lucente's true identity is that he is the tallest mite around.

If the heroes plead their case well, the mites relent. Kamalda, the mite shaman, removes the mite-maker from around Lucente's neck, immediately transforming him back into his human form. The heroes are then free to take Lucente and go.

Of course, convincing the mites that they don't need a king can take some doing. There are a few obvious tactics the heroes can use. The first is to appeal to the mites' sense of propriety, pointing out that they have stolen this innocent youth from his family.

The heroes can also argue that the mites hardly need a king to rule over them like some kind of puppet version of the wizard who created them so long ago. This logic appeals most strongly to Kamalda, always a forward-thinking mite. Queen Maralba argues against this though, until it's pointed out that the lack of a king would leave her firmly in charge.

Finally, the heroes can argue that the mites' actions are bound to bring the wrath of the locals down on them sooner or later. There's a good chance, for instance, that Marcaeus isn't going to be satisfied until he manages to recover either his son or his remains. This could mean the end of the mites' existence.



Kamalda: CR 2. SZ S (humanoid, wizard); HD 5d4; hp 14; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 20; AC 14 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +2 natural); Atk: dagger +2 (1d4); SA spells; SQ darkvision, tribal telepathy; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +4; Str 9, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 16, Wis 11, Cha 11; AL CG. Skills: Languages: Common, Elvish, Dwarvish, Draconian, Brew Potion +5, Hide +10, Listen +5, Move Silently +5, Spot +6. Spells: *charm person*, *detect magic*, *dispel magic*, *flare*, *invisibility*, *mage armor*, *nondetection*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*, *scare*, *sleep*, *spider climb*, and *web*. Equipment: *potion of charisma* (x3), *potion of intelligence* (x2), *oil of timeliness* (x2), *potion of truth* (x2), *potion of wisdom*.

3. The Shaman's Quarters

This small room is filled with all sorts of things: pots of ointments, vials of strange liquids, scorched crucibles, and the like. In one corner stands a tiny, perfectly-made bed. In another, a leatherbound book stands atop a polished podium. In the center of the room, the corpse of a halfling lies on a table, his body covered with hides.

This is the home of Kamalda, the formidable mite wizard. She messes around with creating potions, but she's not really all that successful.

Once alerted to the heroes' approach, Kamalda immediately heads for the main hall where she can support her fellow mites with her spells. These spells are all kept in her personal spellbook on the podium.

This is also where the body of the last king lies in state. His body is covered by rough-tanned hides, leaving only his head and feet exposed. This poor soul is a halfling that was caught snooping around the mites' lair 13 years ago and transformed into their king until his death.

The room is 10 feet by 10 feet wide, and beside the bed on which the body rests, there is a bed for Kamalda, as well as a low desk on which rests the shaman's open spellbook.

4. The Royal Chambers

This is the home of Queen Maralba and her new King Lucente. Treat the queen as if she was a normal mite, except she has 20 hit points and is wearing chain mail armor, which gives her an AC of 18.

Treat Lucente as if he was a normal mite, except he also wears chain mail armor for an AC of 18. The thing that makes Lucente stand out – other than the armor – is the fact that he's the tallest one in the group. This should hopefully help the heroes pick him out of the crowd and cause them to not harm him. Also, he wears the *mite-maker* amulet prominently around his neck. It is both his badge of office and his curse.

The Royal Couple: CR 2. SZ S (humanoid, fighter); HD 3d10; hp 20; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 20; AC 18 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +2 natural, +4 chain mail); Atk: short sword +3 (1d6); SQ darkvision, tribal telepathy; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 11, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 13; AL CG. Skills: Hide +10, Listen +5, Move Silently +5, Spot +5. Feats: Weapon Finesse (short sword).



This room is 40 feet long by 20 feet wide, and the ceiling is 10 feet tall. In the front part of the room, there are two gilded thrones (mite-sized) which are worth 1,000 gold pieces each. Behind that, there is the royal sitting area and the royal bed.

Epilogue

If the heroes fail, Lucente is doomed to spend his days as the king of the mites, until he dies and is replaced by another soul.

If the heroes manage to get their hands on Lucente and remove the amulet, he instantly returns to normal. When the heroes return Lucente to Marcaeus, the merchant makes good on his promise, giving the heroes each a handwritten check that they can cash at a bank in a nearby city. He also offers them jobs as his personal bodyguards. Either way, they can count on his undying gratitude and take heart in the fact that they have saved a young man from a life not his to live.

Random Road Encounters

The untamed wilderness between the tavern and the ruins can be a dangerous place. Every time the party travels along the road, roll 1d10 and consult the following table:

1. Wolves (2): CR 1. SZ M (animal); HD 2d8+4; hp 14; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 50; AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 natural); Atk: bite +3 melee (1d6+1); SA trip; SQ scent; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 13, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6; AL N. Skills: Hide +3, Listen +6, Move Silently +4, Spot +4, Wilderness Lore +1 (+5 when tracking by scent). Feats: Weapon Finesse (bite). These hungry beasts attack on sight.

2. Giant Fire Beetles (6): CR 1/3. SZ S (vermin); HD 1d8; hp 5; Init +0; Spd 30; AC 16 (+1 size, +5 natural); Atk: bite +1 melee (2d4); SQ vermin; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 10, Dex 11, Con 11, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 7; AL N. Skills: Climb +4, Listen +3, Spot 3. The heroes stumble across a nest that gets riled up and attack.

3. Stirges (4): CR 1/2. SZ T (beast); HD 1d10; hp 6; Init +4 (Dex); Spd 10, fly 40 (average); AC 16 (+2 size, +4 Dex); Atk: touch +6 melee (attach, 1d3–4); SA attach, blood drain; SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +1; Str 3, Dex 19, Con 10, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 6; AL N. Skills: Hide +14. Feats: Weapon Finesse (touch). These bumblebats are looking for food, and the heroes are likely candidates.

4. Grigs (2): CR 1. SZ T (fey); HD 1/2d6+1; hp 3; Init +4 (Dex); Spd 20, fly 40 (poor); AC 18 (+2 size, +4 Dex, +2 natural); Atk: dagger +6 melee (1d4–3); Face: 2.5 ft. by 2.5 ft.; Reach 0 ft.; SA spell-like abilities, fiddle; SQ SR 17; SV Fort +1, Ref +6, Will +3; Str 5, Dex 18, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 14; AL NG. Skills: Craft (any one) +4, Escape Artist +8, Hide +16, Jump +9, Listen +7, Move Silently +8 (+13 in forest), Perform (dance, sing) +6, Search +3, Spot +4. Feats: Dodge, Weapon Finesse (dagger). The grigs have a bet to see who can get the heroes to laugh the loudest – without using any words.

5-10. Nothing happens.

Mite

Small Humanoid

The mites are tiny humanoids, standing just 30 inches tall. They are all immortal. The mites are uniformly dark in color, leading some to speculate that they are somehow related to the dark elves. In fact, the flesh of the original mites was composed of compressed soil, which accounts for the dark-coffee color.

The mites are entirely hairless, and their eyes are a uniform black, like those of a shark. Even their teeth are dark, the color of old wood.

Mites have darkvision up to 60 feet. Also, they can telepathically communicate with each other – or at least any other mite created by the same wizard – at any range. Unless they have visitors, theirs is a society of silence broken only by the weird music that they play on their strange lyre-like instruments, which they break out at any thinly veiled excuse.

Mites were once fairly common, with many different wizards creating them by the dozen, but the secret of their construction has long since been lost. Over the years, most of the different groups or tribes of mites have vanished through simple attrition of their numbers.

Combat

Mites are perfectly aware that they don't stand up well against the larger races in a toe-to-toe attack. They rely on their smarts to stack the odds in their favor and to provide them with a means of escape should one prove necessary. If cornered, they fight to the death.



Hit Dice: 1d6 (3 hp)

Initiative: +1 (Dex)

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 14 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +2 natural)

Attacks: Halfspear

Damage: 1d6

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5ft.

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., tribal telepathy

Saves: Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +3

Abilities: Str 9, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 14, Wis 9, Cha 7

Skills: Hide +10, Listen +5,

Move Silently +5, Spot +4

Feats: Dodge

Climate/Terrain: Any land and underground

Organization: Gang (2-6) or tribe (10-100 mites, plus 1 queen of 5th level, 1 king of 5th level, and 1 shaman/wizard of 5th level)

Challenge Rating: 1/4

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Chaotic good

Advancement Range:

By character class.

Skills: Mites receive a +3 racial bonus to Hide checks. This adds to their +4 bonus to Hide checks for being small creatures. This is already figured into the profile above.

Mite Characters

Mite characters receive the following racial modifiers: +1 Str, +1 Dex, +2 Int, -3 Wis, -2 Cha.

Mites tend to be fighters or rogues, the only exception being the rare shaman/wizard, a mite crafted to act as the wizard's magical assistant. As magically animated creatures, mites have a strong magical aura that can be picked up by a *detect magic* spell. This is enough to mask the strength of the aura of the *mite-maker*.

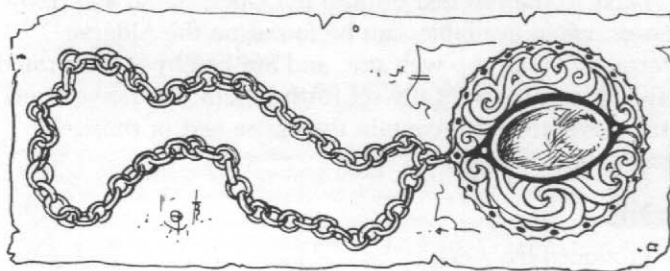
The Mite-Maker

Artifact

This magic item comes in the form of a small golden amulet on a golden chain. A translucent opal sits in the center of the amulet. When placed on the wearer by someone else, it transforms the wearer into a member of the giver's race. This works as if the giver had cast *polymorph other* on the wearer. Unwilling recipients can make a Will save (DC 15) to prevent this from happening.

The wearer looks pretty much like himself, only with all the traits of the giver's race instead of his own. The magic item also affects the wearer's mind, granting him knowledge of the race's traditional languages and customs, much as if he'd always been a member of that race. In fact, the wearer actually believes that he's always been a part of his new race – at least in his heart – and he has no desire to change back.

Caster Level: 8th; Prerequisites: Craft Wondrous Item, *polymorph other*; Market Price: 12,000 gp; Weight: 1 lb.





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