

THE HARBINGER

by Ree Soesbee

The most dangerous foe is the enemy you once called friend... The small peaceful town of Brookvale lies in the sheltered forest curve of a wide river, protected from weather by the sweeping arms of massive elm trees. The town boasts a library, a cultural museum filled with historical exhibits, and the temple of Ghesse, the River-goddess. Over the mossy gate hangs the sign of the Royal Testament — the King's own favor. It is a gentle place, where goodly folk spend time in craft-halls and educating themselves through study. Under the watchful eye of an old wizard named Calendrus, the town has prospered and grown. Until now...

A dragon appeared within the forest, recently, ravaging outlying villages and destroying everything in its path. It shows no mercy, nor any interest in peace — it exists merely to kill and maim. Yet the marauding dragon's hide shines silver in the sunlight — a color that should stand for goodness and justice. Something must be terribly wrong to drive a good dragon to slaughter innocent peasantry... and the dragon is headed directly for Brookvale!

THE HARBINGER

by Ree Soesbee



For use with
DRAGONS
d20 Sourcebook
by AEG

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

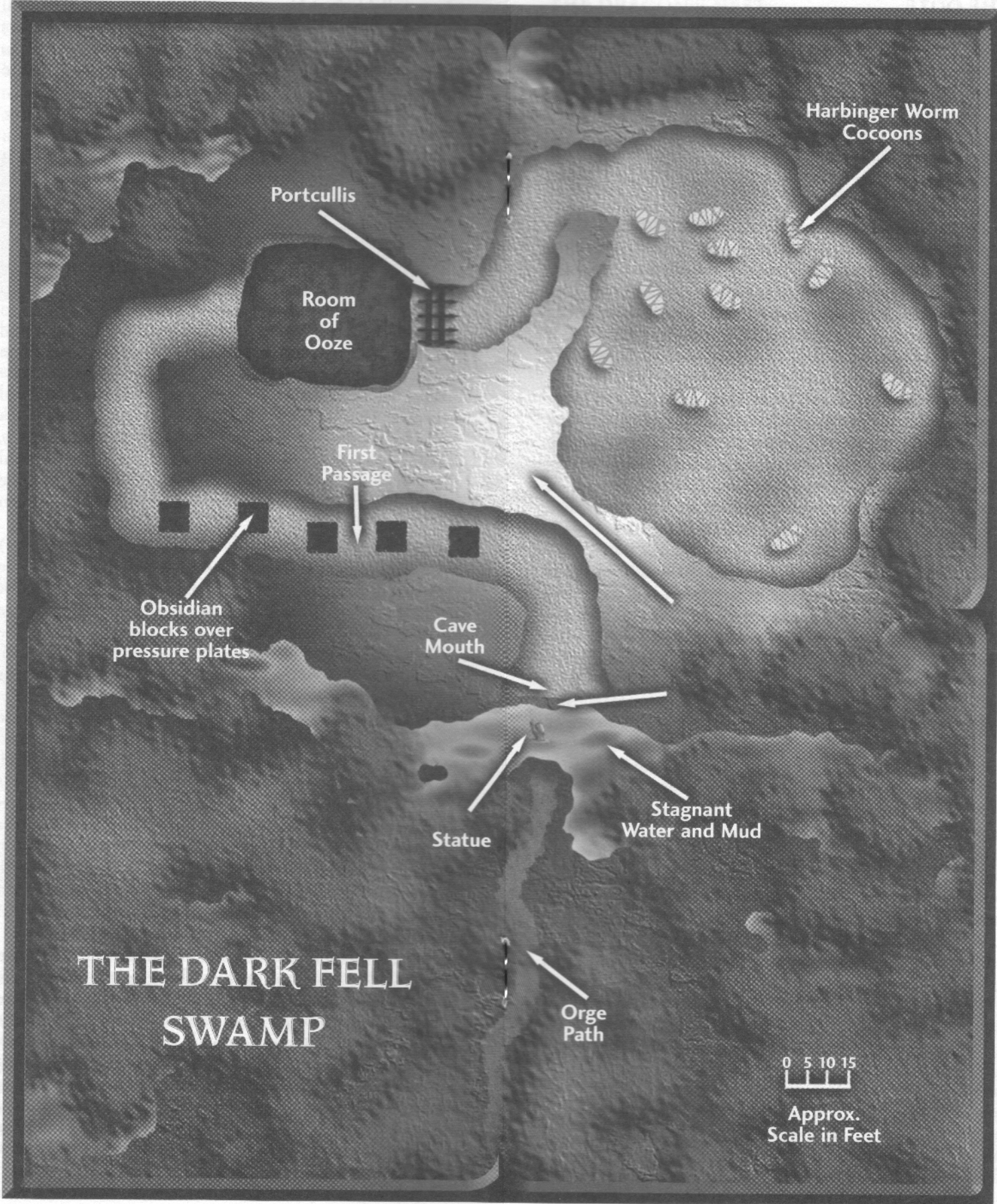
The Harbinger



7 29220 83040 1

AEG™

AEG™



* Permission to photocopy pages 8-9 is granted for personal use only.

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 just a single session and makes for an excellent evening's gaming. To prepare yourself to run the adventure, 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.

"LET'S GO KILL A DRAGON!"

LAST WORDS OF A CHARACTER
WHO REMEMBERS 2ND EDITION
DRAGONS

WINTER
2001

\$26.95

Product #8502



Illustration by Luis Vacquez, © 2001 AEG

208 pages of our favorite forces of nature. Dragons "make" fantasy. The king of beasts makes his triumphant appearance in this mammoth addition to the d20 line. Including rules for dragon hunters, dragon riders, aerial combat, new dragons, and thoroughly defining the 10 dragons that started it all, AEG's *Dragons* is a must-have for GMs and PCs alike.



GAME MASTER BACKGROUND

The town of Brookvale remained peaceful for many years. Carefully guided by the wizard Calendrus and his allies in the Temple of Ghesse, the town prospered into a haven for education, learning, and culture. Now, all of that is threatened by a rampaging dragon headed directly for the town.

- Silver dragons are peaceful, and love art and history. They would never ravage an innocent town, nor would they destroy a work of art or a museum — and there are both in Brookvale.
- Calendrus, the wizard, is not human. He is a silver dragon. In fact, Calendrus is the silver dragon that is about to attack the town of Brookvale. Due to a cunning plot by a black dragon, Calendrus' mind is not his own. As the pawn of an evil power, he is condemned to the role of puppet, forced to slaughter, maim, and destroy.
- Only the High Priestess of the Temple of Ghesse knows that Calendrus is a dragon, and she swore to secrecy before her goddess. She can't tell anyone the truth about his nature; even if she could, she doesn't know what drove Calendrus to attack the town.
- Calendrus' was taken over by a Harbinger Worm, a malevolent creature that invaded his body and turned the powerful dragon into a puppet. That worm grows while feasting on the dragon's heart, becoming more powerful each day. (He is now a Greater Harbinger).

Unless the worm is destroyed, the dragon razes Brookvale and its innocent residents (in one week's time). If Calendrus is killed in the process, then the town of Brookvale loses his protection. If the Harbinger Worm escapes the death of its host, it seeks another body, insuring that Brookvale is plagued by further evils. Hopefully, the players can piece together the clues about the worm, its nature, and how to defeat it without killing Calendrus. If they do, they have saved the town of Brookvale and gained the gratitude of a powerful silver dragon.

In the swamp down river from Brookvale, the black dragon Aaxhul plots to destroy all of the good dragons in the region. He sent Calendrus the 'gift' that infected the silver dragon's body with the Harbinger Worm, and he plans to do the same to all of the good dragons he can find. With Harbinger Worms controlling their actions, the good dragons will demolish cities and leading to dragon hunts by their frightened and confused allies.

Aaxhul is pleased with his plan, and is harvesting a crop of Harbinger Worms within his swamp. The Harbinger Worms don't hurt the black dragon as their semi-sentient minds understand that he is a friend and ally.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

Players should be familiar with Brookvale, either from actually residing there, visiting, or from local gossip in neighboring towns. They know the town is peaceful, cultured, and filled with good-hearted citizens. As GM, you may substitute any such town in your own game world for Brookvale — assuming there is a swamp nearby. The NPCs established in this adventure can be integrated seamlessly into existing campaigns. Once the PCs establish a background with Brookvale, tell them of the rampaging dragon. An attack is currently occurring and the peasantry, fleeing into the town of Brookvale to escape the dragon's wrath, begs the PCs for their aid.

FOREST HUTS

Outside the town of Brookvale are several small enclaves of huts where less-fortunate people live. Their homes are thatched, hidden among the sheltering oak trees of the forest — oaks that are now twisted with acid and covered with snow and ice. There are peasant women huddled under tree roots, clutching screaming babies. Here and there on the ground lie several bodies torn apart by the dragon's claws. Just above the trees you see a tremendous dragon, his scales shining silver in the sunlight. A cold spray radiates from the dragon's breath, and with the ice, black acid drips from his mouth and trickles down the scales of his neck. He holds two farmers in his claws.

Calendrus briefly engages the party. Manipulated by the Greater Harbinger, the dragon finished his devastation of the peasant huts, and retired deep into the forest to eat his prey. The PCs can try to rescue the peasants from the dragon, but he flees if in serious danger. Turn the PCs toward rescuing the peasantry from other dangers — dripping acid from tree limbs, collapsing trees or huts, and saving the lives of seriously injured woodsmen.

After the dragon retreats, the peasants show their gratitude. They consider dragons — regardless of color — to be terrible monstrosities, and want to see them wiped out, this one in particular. The peasants suggest that the PCs visit the nearby wizard's tower. The wizard, Calendrus, may know more about the dragon. They tell the PCs that Calendrus may also be able to help them butcher the 'evil creature.'

Calendrus (Silver Dragon): CR 10; SZ L (magical beast, earth); HD 12d10+72; hp 165, 143; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 45ft., fly 75ft. (average); AC 16 (+1 Dex, -1 size, +6 natural); Atks 2 Claws +16 Melee (1d4+5), 1 bite +14 melee (1d6+5), 1 gore +14 melee (1d6+6); SA Breath weapon (10d8, DC 23); SQ Damage Reduction 5/+1, freeze; AL CE; SV Fort +14, Ref +9, Will +6; Str 19, Dex 14, Con 22, Int 6, Wis 11, Cha 7. Skills: Hide +13, Listen +8, Spot +4. Feats: Multi-attack, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (claw, bite, gore).

THE WHITE TOWER

Calendrus' tower was once a gracefully curving white spire located in the heart of a beautiful forest grove. However, something terrible stands now where the beautiful tower was. The building lays shattered, with what used to be the top story crumbled around the spire's base. The tower itself is soiled, burned with acid and covered with ice.

If the PCs explore the tower, they find the dead bodies of Calendrus' servants. The tower's base still stands, and two stories of the building are relatively undisturbed. The upper level, where Calendrus kept his laboratory and his personal chambers, is in ruin. One wall is completely torn from the tower, leaving the upper story open to the sky. If the PCs search through the tower, they do not find Calendrus' body.

They do find several odd items for use in Calendrus' laboratory. By the wizard's bed in his private chambers, lays a small stone box lying open. The box is made of hematite, a blackish stone that shines silver in the light. Inside the box is a small golden lizard. The lizard opens on an almost invisible hinge (Search check, DC 23 to notice), but is empty inside save for a thin smear of greasy residue.

Calendrus' journal is locked in the upper drawer of his desk, within the laboratory. If the PCs search the desk, they may attempt a Pick Lock check (DC 22) or force the drawer (Strength check, DC 16). Calendrus' journal reveals several secrets about the wizard. Critical information reveals that Calendrus is actually a silver dragon. Astute PCs should be able to piece together that the attack on the tower was actually the dragon breaking free from the inside. If not, offer them Gather Information checks (DC 20) to realize this.

But why would the gentle and noble Calendrus go mad? Nothing in his journal indicates anger, he has no apparent enemies, and all of his journal writings hint that he cared deeply for Brookvale and its residents. Further research (Gather Information check, DC 20) hints that Imogen, the High Priestess of the Temple of Ghesse, knew Calendrus' secret.

TEMPLE OF GHESSE

Many of the refugees from the forest villages came to the Temple of Ghesse, seeking shelter. Through the pillared opening at the temple front, several of the River Goddess' acolytes tend to their peasants' wounds. The acolytes direct you to Imogen. She stands at the rear of the temple near the river dock, praying for the residents of Brookvale.

The priestess looks up from her prayers as the PCs approach. She welcomes them graciously, inviting them into her inner sanctum. She heard about the attack and is pleased that they were able to drive off the dragon. If the

PCs tell her that they know who Calendrus really is, she quietly asks them to keep this knowledge quiet. She smiles and admits that she too knows the dragon's true identity. Imogen is worried for Calendrus, believing that something horrible has happened. These actions are unexplainable.

Imogen was at Calendrus' tower yesterday eve, and knows that he received a package from someone called his 'southern brother'. A package, she says with a scowl, delivered by a hooded creature that could only have been an ogre. She did not see what was inside the package — he did not open it in her presence. But she describes it as a black stone box.

The Priestess of the River Goddess does her best to steer the characters from killing the dragon. She cares about Calendrus, and believes that there must be a way to undo whatever curse has befallen him. She heals the PCs' wounds, if they have any, and offers them a safe haven for the night. Before she can finish, the alarm bells begin to ring at Brookvale's gate.

The dragon approaches...

IN THE HEART OF THE BEAST

The attacking dragon descends on Brookvale without mercy. Silver wings shine in the sunlight, and acid drips from the dragon's mouth and claws as he breathes a stream of ice, destroying most of the town museum. The town guard launch volleys of arrows at him, but are quickly put down by another fearsome blast — this time, one of a snow and acid mixture. The guardsmen scream in agony as Calendrus swoops toward the temple.

During this fight, the dragon takes out as many innocents as possible, forcing the PCs to both attack Calendrus and rescue the screaming townsfolk. If the PCs deal 85 points of damage to Calendrus, his wings are damaged and he falls to the earth. Once Calendrus is on the ground and near death (25 hp), the dragon's breast scales burst open and a writhing mass of thick tapeworms spill out.

The Greater Harbinger is massive — at least fifty feet long, but intricately coiled upon itself in a spaghetti-like mass, and covered with numerous smaller, leech-like worms. When it falls upon the ground, the large worm writhes frantically, and attacks anyone nearby, seeking another host. Once the worm is out of Calendrus' body he becomes human again. (*refer to the New Monster entry at the end of this adventure for further details.*)

Tactics: The Worm has learned a little from the previous fight and attacks the weakest member (if possible), trying to break through its skin. If reduced to 20 hp, it attempts to flee using its dark skin to hide among the foliage.

Once the Harbinger Worm is dead, and all those who have been spontaneously infected by it are restored, Imogen rushes to Calendrus and heals him (as best she can). Calendrus is extremely weak, both from the fight and from his ordeal. He is consumed by guilt for his actions while under the control of the Worm.

When he can speak, he informs the PCs that the worm — then small, hidden within the black box — found its way into Calendrus' system while he slept. When he awoke, he was paralyzed within his own body, unable to control his actions. He was a complete puppet to the worm, and the worm had no thought other than to cause destruction and havoc.

Calendrus says that the worm was a "gift" from a black dragon that lives in the swamps to the south of Brookvale. The black dragon's name is Aaxhul, and Calendrus fears that he may send more 'gifts' to all of the dragons in the region. If these worms affect the other good dragons, many innocent people could be destroyed. Hunters or city guards defending their homeland will likely destroy them, leaving Aaxhul and others to take over the area. He must be stopped!

But Calendrus is far too weak to fight Aaxhul... too weak to even get out of bed. He begs the PCs to travel into to Dark Fell and stop Aaxhul.

THE DARK FELL

The Dark Fell is a thick, foul swamp located down river from Brookvale. The townspeople tell that ogres, hags, and all manner of terrible beasts inhabit it. Few who travel into the Fell, ever returned. Thick willow trees stand over stagnant pools of fetid water, as your small boat passes through thick mudpools and half-solid mire. The lantern barely shines in the gloom of this oppressive place. Yet, something stirs in the water...?

Encounter: The PCs must enter the Dark Fell in a shallow boat — there are no other ways 'in,' no matter what direction the PCs choose for their approach. The easiest way to enter the Fell is to go down-river from Brookvale, and simply let the river empty you out into the swamp. There are all sorts of creatures living in the swamp that could attack PCs as they travel into the deeper parts of the Dark Fell. Some of these are listed below, in case the GM wishes to have the party attacked — or in case the party is silly enough to get out of the boat.

- 1-3 Giant snake
- 4-6 Zombies and Skeletons (1-10)
- 7-8 Ogre
- 9 Shambling mound (1-2)
- 10 Giant Crocodile

ATTACKED BY OGRES!

Ahead, lies a small shantytown made of piled logs and stretched hides. Tremendously large individuals move around, apparently living in the "village". They are far larger than normal humanoids... as you get a bit closer you can place the creatures (and their stench). Ogres.

Encounter: There are 30 ogres (hp 26) in all at the camp (plus women and children). These ogres are minions of Aaxhul, viewing him as their chieftain and worshipping him as a near god. They know where his cave is, and how to approach it, but they aren't willing to parlay or give away the information. If the party intends to cajole the information from the ogres, they'll have to trick or force it out of the leaders. Prying information from a lesser ogre is confusing and partially incorrect.

If the PCs skirt the ogre camp and search the swamp on their own for the dragon, a wandering party of ogres attacks them immediately. During the attack, one of the ogres blows a horn to alert the village. If the ogres overcome the PCs, they take them into the ogre village to be used as sacrifices to Aaxhul, and later eaten. If the PCs defeat a significant amount (50%+), they surrender and an ogre leader points them in the right direction to Aaxhul.

Tactics: The ogres only fight if attacked, or they view the PCs as weak.

Ogres (30): CR 5; SZ L (giant); HD 4d8+8; hp 26; Init -1 (dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (-1 size, -1 Dex, +5 natural, +3 hide); Atks Huge great club +8 melee (2d6+7), huge long spear +1 (2d6+5) ranged; AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +0, Will+1; Str 21, Dex 8, Con 15, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 7.
Skills: Climb +4, Listen +2, Spot +2.

THE PATH INTO DARKNESS

The trail that leads to Aaxhul's caverns is not frequently traveled, and it appears as if the ogres have covered their tracks to keep the area hidden. Just in front of the dragon's cave, there is a large bronze statue half-submerged in the mire. The statue is a man holding aloft a shield with the sun blazoned on it, tarnished and covered in moss. The ground around the statue is thick with knee-deep muck, and the ogres refuse to go any closer to the cave than the edge of the clearing. Beyond the statue is a tremendous cave mouth, easily fifty feet high as it is wide. The smell coming from below is a horrible blend of sulfur and chlorine, burning your nostrils as you approach the statue.

Encounter: If the PCs take a careful look at the water, they notice that it is covered with small insects and floating bugs. The bugs look quiet, but if disturbed, rise up and attack (*see the spell insect swarm*). The only physical way across is to leap to the statue and catch it, not breaking the water line. Then, from the statue, the PCs can leap to the thin stone ledge at the front of the cave mouth. Any magic cast in the area arouses the bugs, and any wizard who starts a spell notes quickly that the insects and crawlers in the muck begin to rise with the chanting.

These insects are semi-sentient, guarding their "Master's" cave. They can not be killed by simple means, and therefore must be avoided. The area is gaseous, and torches and lanterns in the area sputter and flare up

uncontrollably from time to time. Large amounts of fire kill the insects enmasse, but the gas of the swamp ignites as well. The backfire deals a great amount of damage to the PCs (twice the normal amount). The gas does not ignite from magical fire.

THE FIRST PASSAGE

The cave spirals up slightly into a natural hillock of stone and peat moss. The walls are thick, with spurs of black rock shoring up much of the area. The cavern mouth opens up into a passage, dimly lit by small holes in the ceiling. The stench of chlorine and acid surrounds you, biting at your nose and making it difficult to breathe.

Before the PCs is a long corridor about fifty feet long and just over fifteen feet wide, carved out of the dirt and stone of the swamp hillock. The hillock is quite large, and the dragon seems to have hewed his lair out of its internal structure, shoring the ceiling of the cavern with black stone from other parts of the swamp. Swamps are nasty, rainy places, and in order to ventilate the internal chambers and allow for a certain amount of water flow, the roof of this passage has small air-holes spaced about fifteen feet apart.

Several pressure plates (Spot check, DC 13 to discover) cover the floor of the passage. Coated by algae and slime they are difficult to distinguish from the rest of the dirt floor. If a PC triggers one of these plates, a huge square block of granite falls from directly above to crush the unfortunate individual. If the PC fails a Ref save (DC 12), he is hit by the plummeting chunk of obsidian and takes 2d8 points of damage.

However, crushing the PCs with falling rocks isn't the main focus of the dragon's trap. Obsidian is a light and relatively fragile stone, and once it has struck the ground, it shatters into a thousand pieces — and the acid gas within the stone escapes. This acid is part viscous and part gas, and extremely deadly. Part of the acid seeps into the water on the floor, swiftly spreading out from the point of release. If this acid touches organic material, it eats through anything lighter than waxed leather in one round. When the acid touches flesh, it deals 1d8 points of damage per round until washed away by clear water or alcohol.

The gaseous smoke released from the shattered obsidian boulder hisses out in a thick bank of fog that spreads to an area of 10 ft. by 20 ft. (easily enough to fill the corridor from ceiling to floor for a ten feet portion of the passage). This cloud kills any creature with 1 HD or less (no save), and causes creatures with 2-4 HD to make Fortitude saving throws or be knocked unconscious; creatures remaining within the cloud continue to take 2d10 points of damage per round until they are dead. The cloud lasts for one hour.

There are six of these pressure plates scattered at intervals throughout the passage.

THE OOZE

Around a slight right-hand bend, you see a room approximately thirty feet square. There is a metal portcullis on the far side, blocking off a massive opening. Odd groupings of algae in grey and sickly green create strange patterns on the floor of the room. The algae on the floor bubbles slightly, floating on a thin sheen of water.

This room is far more than it seems. Although there appears to be a floor, the actual ground is five feet below the 'surface' that the PCs see before them. A massive gelatinous cube, topped with various algae, slime, and stagnant water, appears to be the 'surface' of the floor, beneath the algae. If the PCs poke at the floor, they find it squishy and somewhat soft. Touching the floor with a pole or other long item only reveals that the floor is solid beneath a few inches of water and slime. This solidity, however, is actually the top side of a gelatinous cube that lies under the water. The gelatinous cube is suspended in water, and covered by a thick film of algae and several floating grey oozes. The water fills all of the area of the room that is not occupied by the cube, and the oozes float lightly on top of the water, or crawl up the walls.

One particularly tremendous grey ooze has crawled out of the water, and clings to the wall. It blends with the stonework very well (there is little ambient light from this room, save for the small air holes in the ceiling far above), and is difficult to see or differentiate from the actual wall. The PCs must make a Spot check (DC 17) to notice this ooze and mark its location by looking carefully at the wall.

PCs who attempt to walk across the room take three steps before sinking into the gelatinous cube upon which they tread. PCs that leap over the cube, and do not land upon it, find themselves five feet deep in stagnant water. The grey ooze that clings to the wall above the water attacks anyone climbing across the walls or ceiling. Lighting a torch in the room ignites the local gases and cause massive damage to all in the area (4d8). However, only the ooze on the wall takes damage from this occurrence, as the cube on the floor is protected by the surrounding water.

The large portcullis on the far side of the room is locked and requires a key to open. The key is in one of the gelatinous cubes. The dragon has trained his cube to create a pseudopod when he calls to it, and the gelatinous cube reaches out to its master with the key when it hears such a call.

The PCs must kill the cube, find the key, and use it to unlock the portcullis. Without it, they must find another means to open the gate. The portcullis' lock requires a DC 12 to pick, but is trapped with a poison dart (DC 15 to notice and again to remove). If a PC is pricked by the dart, they must make a Fort save (DC 14) or lose 4 points of strength for the next five hours.

THE DRAGON'S NEST

Around a slight right-hand bend, you see a room approximately thirty feet square. There is a metal portcullis on the far side, blocking off a massive opening. Odd groupings of algae in yellow, sickly green and brown create strange patterns on the floor of the room, which bubble slightly through a thin film of water.

Encounter: Although the room does not contain Aaxhul, it is full of danger. Suspended on the ceiling are several Harbinger Worm sacs. Like silkworm cocoons, they are spun webbing, attached loosely to the ceiling and hanging down just within the darkness of the room. Sheltered by the darkness and the uneven texture of the ceiling, they cannot be seen from the door. Even from immediately below one of the sacs, they are hard to make out.

Allow Listen checks (DC 35), to see if the PCs hear a faint, skittering noise from above. If not, they are unaware of the sacs, but even if they hear the noise they may not be able to see them. Climbing up the sacs is not easy either, but provide the PCs an opportunity to investigate if they wish.

If the PCs walk beneath the sacs, the Harbinger worms fall from their silk pouches, aiming for the intruders. If a worm makes contact with a PC's flesh, it begins exerting control over the PC by use of the dominate person spell. The PC is allowed a Will save (DC 17). If the subject fails, the Harbinger Worm forces the PC to attack his companions. The victim, overtaken by the Harbinger Worm, is uses all physical or magical abilities or spells. The worm learns quickly, utilizing items that the PC knows how to use. The Harbinger, realizing that its Master's lair is threatened, uses every method at its (the PCs) disposal to defeat the PCs.

The goal of the worms is to wear down the PCs providing an edge for the actual dragon attack. The silk sacs are extremely vulnerable to fire, but so is the gas within the chamber.

FACING THE BLACK DRAGON

At some point near the end of the battle above, when the PCs start to believe that they have everything well in hand, Aaxhul returns to his cavern home. Read the following:

A terrible roar bellows from the opening behind you. A foreboding inky blackness that seems to move and swirl like silt water, suddenly fills the cavern mouth, and a dreadful, angry hissing echoes through the stone of the hillock. "So," the dragon snarls within his cloak of shadows, "You think to steal my gold? To destroy my pets? Now, you furless, crawling apes, for your impudence and arrogance... you shall die..."

Aaxhul, the black dragon, can't be subdued or easily defeated, and uses all of his abilities to fight the PCs. If he feels seriously outclassed, he seizes some of the Harbinger Worm sacs in his mouth, fleeing with them. However, so long as he can win, Aaxhul continues the attack.

Aaxhul (black dragon): CR 10; SZ L (magical beast, earth); HD 12d10+72; hp 165; Init +1; Spd 45 ft., fly 75 ft. (average); AC 16 (+1 Dex, -1 size, +6 natural); Atks 2 Claws +16 melee (1d4+5), bite +14 melee (1d6+5), gore +14 melee (1d6+6); SQ Damage Reduction 5/+1, freeze; AL CE; SV Fort +14, Ref +9, Will +6; Str 19, Dex 14, Con 22, Int 6, Wis 11, Cha 7. Skills: Hide +13, Listen +8, Spot +4. Feats: Multi-attack, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (claw, bite, gore).

Treasure: The black dragon's horde is scattered and takes many hours to count and organize. There are 2,032 gp, 5,681 sp, and 7,328 cp. There are many statues, jewelry and other pieces of art (too much to list here). If sold to a collector or jewelry expert, they could garner quite a bit. The dragon's acid breath and the acid that drips from his scales have melted most of the coins. Getting it out of the dragon's cavern and through the swamp should be a daunting task to the most determined adventurer. Some of the smaller statues and jewelry items can be pried loose, but that takes some effort.

There are a few magic items in the black dragon's horde, including one spellbook (level 1-3, containing 4 randomly determined spells) and a ring of water breathing, and a +2 great sword. A thorough search of the chamber reveals these items atop the slag heap, free from the melted pile (Aaxhul liked to take them out and peruse his horde's finer additions). A jeweled box at the top of a mountain of melted gold possesses the most unusual magic item in the horde. The box is locked (Pick Locks, DC 19) and cannot be opened violently without destroying the magic item inside.

Within the box is a *clockwork spider* made of silver and onyx, with a dark garnet hourglass built into its abdomen. It is currently 'keyed' to the dragon, Aaxhul.

NEW MAGIC ITEM

CLOCKWORK SPIDER

Shaped like a tarantula, the spider is larger than a grown man's hand, measuring approximately one foot long from the end of its forelegs to the end of its rear legs. Although it does not appear outwardly to be clockwork its mechanical movements quickly give away its nature.

It is a sentient magic item and 'keys' to the first person that touches it after its previous owner's death. When its owner dies, the spider 'resets' and awaits a new owner. Once the spider has keyed to an individual, it acts as a and gains all of the abilities of a true familiar, even though the spider may be 'keyed' to a non-magic using classed individual. Its master also gains the ability to *Spider Climb*, as the spell (qv), three times per week.

The spider has three openings within its body. The first is at the rear of its head, and can contain a small vial's worth of liquid. If the spider is supplied with poison in this location, its bite transmits the poison through its metal fangs as a normal spider. The second opening is at the rear of the spider's abdomen. If supplied with a potion of spider climbing, the spider can create 120 ft. of webbing from its spinnerets. The third opening is beneath the garnet hourglass, and is large enough to carry small blades (no more than 3 ft. long) or tightly folded scrolls or notes.

As mentioned, the spider is sentient and intelligent, though it is also obedient. Its natural alignment is Neutral Evil, though its owner unconsciously influences it if possessed for a significant amount of time. The spider only faintly radiates evil. It can only communicate with its owner via an empathic link, with feelings and pictures, but not actual words. This link is active out to one mile.

Clockwork Spider: CR 3; SZ T (magical earth); HD 1/2 the owner's total; hp 1/2 the owner's total; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 15 ft., climb 15 ft.; AC 14 (+2 size, +2 Dex); Atks Bite +1 melee (1d4); SQ Familiar; AL NE; SV Owner's Base Saves; Str 5, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 6, Wis 8, Cha 6. Skills: Balance +10, Climb +10, Hide +8, Listen +8, Spot +4, Move Silently +8. Feats: Spinnerets, Weapon Finesse (bite).

A clockwork spider's web is a sheet of sticky webbing designed for use as rope, and as a net. This 'netting attack' has a range increment of 5 feet, and is only effective against creatures of size S or smaller. (See the PHB for more information on net attacks.)

NEW MONSTER

HARBINGER WORM

A Harbinger Worm is a small flat worm, no more than a few inches long. Outwardly, it appears much like a tapeworm, with a thin, smooth body covered in sticky oil. The worm writhes in a manner that makes sentient creatures feel nauseous simply by looking at it, and appears to have a small swelling at the end most often termed the 'head' of the worm.

Harbinger worms are semi-sentient, able to comprehend simple tasks and understand general ideas. They are aware of their surroundings and 'see' through empathic means, smell, and hearing. They are aberrations, farmed and bred by the black dragon, Aaxhul, for their devastating mental abilities.

When a Harbinger Worm touches flesh, it immediately is absorbed into the creature, leaving behind only a sticky residue where it entered. It immediately burrows toward the creature's heart, where it finds food and begin to grow and reproduce. However, from the moment a Harbinger Worm enters its host, it attempts to control the host's actions. This requires the host to make a Will save (DC 17) in order to resist.

If the host does not successfully resist, the worm controls the host's actions. It absorbs information from the host's mind at an astonishing rate, and within 2 rounds is capable of performing any action that the host could perform. This includes casting spells memorized, using magic items or secret information, and even weapons skills. The host can do nothing except watch from within as the worm puppets him. The host is consciously aware of his every action, yet unable to speak, move, or stop any action from occurring.

A Harbinger Worm can only be removed from its victim in one of two ways. First, if the victim is brought to less than 1/10 of their total hit points in which case the worm attempts to flee before the host is destroyed. Flight from the inhabited body requires the worm to burrow out of the host body (doing 1d4 damage) and escape out of a gaping hole that it creates in the victim's chest.

The second way to force a Harbinger Worm out of a victim's body requires a spellcaster to engage the victim's mind (and thus, the Harbinger's mind) with a dominate person spell of his own, forcing the worm to leave the host body. A contest takes place, that involves saving throws from all involved parties.

Harbinger Worm: CR 3; SZ T (aberration); HD 2; hp 1/2 the owner's total; Init +1; Spd 15 ft., climb 15 ft.; AC 14 (+2 size, +2 dex); Atks Bite +1 melee (1d4); SQ As Familiar; AL NE; SV Use Owner's Base Saves; Str 5, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 6, Wis 8, Cha 6. Skills: Balance +10, Climb +10, Hide +8, Listen +8, Spot +4, Move Silently +8. Feats: Weapon Finesse (bite), Spinnerets.

GREATER HARBINGER

When a Harbinger Worm spends a great amount of time within the host body (2 to 3 days), it morphs into a far more dangerous creature. Feeding on the heart, blood, and will of its host, the Harbinger grows larger, gains greater abilities, and begins to manifest powers beyond those it possessed as a mere worm. A creature that has been inhabited by such a worm also begins to show obvious signs of its manifestation — acid drools from its mouth, its blood seems greenish and unhealthy, and the host's heartbeat is strained and labored from being constricted by the worm's coils.

If the host is lowered beneath 1/10 of its total hit points, the Greater Harbinger will attempt to flee as the lesser worms do. A gaping hole will tear open in the host's chest, and the writhing, ropy mass of the Greater Harbinger will leap forth from the host body. At this point, the Greater Harbinger will either enter combat or flee to seek another host.

The Greater Harbinger in this module is particularly large (they rarely have the opportunity to feast on dragon's blood and a dragon's will!) and therefore has particularly powerful statistics. A Greater Harbinger that has grown within a smaller creature, such as a humanoid, is smaller and has less hit points than the model given below;

all other statistics remain the same. The creature fights by lashing its body at its opponents in a twisted mass of slime-covered, ropy coils. These lashes are considered a Slashing weapon.

Further, a Greater Harbinger has already begun to reproduce within the host's body, and may have (1d10) Harbinger Worms attached to it when it exits the host. These lesser worms attempt to attach themselves to any available sentient life. See rules and mechanics for Harbinger Worms, above.

Greater Harbinger Worm: CR 7; SZ M (aberration); HD 5d8+4; hp 40; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 10 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +4 natural); Atks 2 Lashes +4 melee (2d6); SQ Acid, engulf, amorphous, *dominate*; AL CE; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +5; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 13. Skills: Climb +10, Listen +8, Spot +4. Feats: Weapon Finesse (lash).

Acid (Ex): The Greater Harbinger's slime-covered body is acidic, and contact with the acid coating that covers the Greater Harbinger causes great damage to any inorganic material that comes in contact with it. The Greater Harbinger's acid deals an additional 1d8 points on the initial round that a Greater Harbinger's strike hits an opponent, and a further 1d2 points of damage from each wound until the lash marks are cleaned with water. This acid causes minor scoring to inorganic materials, and eats through if given enough time.

Engulf (Ex): A Greater Harbinger engulfs a Medium-size or smaller opponent once it has established a successful grip (one hit). The opponent must succeed on a Reflex save (DC 14) or fall and be engulfed. On the next round, the Greater Harbinger gains a +4 to the DC save of its *dominate* attempt. An organic creature engulfed by the worm takes 2d8 damage per round from the acidic slime coating.

Amorphous (Ex): A Greater Harbinger is not subject to critical hits. It has no clear front or back, and therefore cannot be flanked.

Dominate (Su): A Greater Harbinger can control someone's mind as per the effects of the *dominate person* spell. The target is allowed a Will save (DC 18) Once the Greater Harbinger has established control, it no longer needs to give commands; the creature follows the Greater Harbinger's desires instinctively, defending the Greater Harbinger and performing its will. This Dominate is different than the unnatural control established by an inhabitant Harbinger Worm, and may be resisted as per the *dominate person* spell. Although clearly self-destructive actions are automatically resisted (kill yourself!), indirectly destructive actions may not be ignored (kill your friends!).

ALDERAC ENTERTAINMENT GROUP

Alderac Entertainment Group, Inc. (AEG) is an award-winning industry leader in the collectible card game, roleplaying game, and miniatures game categories. AEG develops and publishes popular game-based entertainment products, including: *Warlord: Saga of the Storm*, *Legend of the Five Rings*, *7th Sea*, *Doomtown*, *Farscape*, *Series Archer*, and the *Clan War* miniatures game. For more information on AEG, visit the company's website at www.alderac.com.

OPEN GAME CONTENT

All material in the module that is indented and printed in the sans serif typeface is Open Game Content, except for the proper names of NPC's, and may be used pursuant to the Open Game License. Material contained in the *New Monster*, *New Magic Item*, and *New Spell* sections is also Open Game Content. Illustrations on those pages are not Open Game Content and are owned solely by Alderac Entertainment Group, Inc. In addition, to the extent any material is derived wholly from the d20 SRD and/or the Dungeons and Dragons® Player's Handbook, Third Edition, such as spell names and magic items, that material is also designated as Open Game Content. All other content is designated as closed content, including but not limited to: NPC and Pre-generated character names, character background text, monster descriptions and all other module text not otherwise required to be Open Games Content.

Alderac Entertainment Group (AEG) reserves the right to publish addenda and/or modification to the designation of Open Game Content within this adventure on our web site if either by the unilateral action of AEG, by agreement of parties (including AEG) or by operation of law there is a change to the designation of Open Game Content.

LEGAL STUFF

Dungeons and Dragons® and Wizards of the Coast® are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast, and are used in accordance with the Open Game and d20 Licenses.

Links to the full text of both the Open Game and d20 licenses, when available, can be found on the Alderac Entertainment Group web site, and are hereby incorporated by this reference as if fully set forth herein. Future versions of this adventure will contain the entire text of those licenses, once finalized.

THE HARBINGER

Author: Mike Mearls

Art Director and Project Manager: jim pinto

Editor: Dave Lepore, jim pinto

Creative Director: Mark Jelfo

Graphic Design: Steve Hough

Illustration and Cartography: Cris Dornaus

Playtesting and Advice: the a-team

THE OPEN GAME LICENSE

The following text is the property of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. and is Copyright 2000 Wizards of the Coast, Inc ("Wizards"). All Rights Reserved.

- Definitions: (a) "Contributors" means the copyright and/or trademark owners who have contributed Open Game Content; (b) "Derivative Material" means copyrighted material including derivative works and translations (including into other computer languages), potation, modification, correction, addition, extension, upgrade, improvement, compilation, abridgment or other form in which an existing work may be recast, transformed or adapted; (c) "Distribute" means to reproduce, license, rent, lease, sell, broadcast, publicly display, transmit or otherwise distribute; (d) "Open Game Content" means the game mechanic and includes the methods, procedures, processes and routines to the extent such content does not embody the Product Identity and is an enhancement over the prior art and any additional content clearly identified as Open Game Content by the Contributor, and means any work covered by this License, including translations and derivative works under copyright law, but specifically excludes Product Identity. (e) "Product Identity" means product and product line names, logos and identifying marks including trade dress; artifacts; creatures characters; stories, storylines, plots, thematic elements, dialogue, incidents, language, artwork, symbols, designs, depictions, likenesses, formats, poses, concepts, themes and graphic, photographic and other visual or audio representations; names and descriptions of characters, spells, enchantments, personalities, teams, personas, likenesses and special abilities; places, locations, environments, creatures, equipment, magical or supernatural abilities or effects, logos, symbols, or graphic designs; and any other trademark or registered trademark clearly identified as Product identity by the owner of the Product Identity, and which specifically excludes the Open Game Content; (f) "Trademark" means the logos, names, mark, sign, motto, designs that are used by a Contributor to identify itself or its products or the associated products contributed to the Open Game License by the Contributor (g) "Use", "Used" or "Using" means to use, Distribute, copy, edit, format, modify, translate and otherwise create Derivative Material of Open Game Content. (h) "You" or "Your" means the licensee in terms of this agreement.
- The License: This License applies to any Open Game Content that contains a notice indicating that the Open Game Content may only be Used under and in terms of this License. You must affix such a notice to any Open Game Content that you Use. No terms may be added to or subtracted from this License except as described by the License itself. No other terms or conditions may be applied to any Open Game Content distributed using this License.
- Offer and Acceptance: By Using the Open Game Content You indicate Your acceptance of the terms of this License.
- Grant and Consideration: In consideration for agreeing to use this License, the Contributors grant You a perpetual, worldwide, royalty-free, non-exclusive license with the exact terms of this License to Use, the Open Game Content.
- Representation of Authority to Contribute: If You are contributing original material as Open Game Content, You represent that Your Contributions are Your original creation and/or You have sufficient rights to grant the rights conveyed by this License.
- Notice of License Copyright: You must update the COPYRIGHT NOTICE portion of this License to include the exact text of the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any Open Game Content You are copying, modifying or distributing, and You must add the title, the copyright date, and the copyright holder's name to the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any original Open Game Content you Distribute.
- Use of Product Identity: You agree not to Use any Product Identity, including as an indication as to compatibility, except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of each element of that Product Identity. You agree not to indicate compatibility or co-adaptability with any Trademark in conjunction with a work containing Open Game Content except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of such Trademark. The use of any Product Identity in Open Game Content does not constitute a challenge to the ownership of that Product Identity. The owner of any Product Identity used in Open Game Content shall retain all rights, title and interest in and to that Product Identity.
- Identification: If you distribute Open Game Content You must clearly indicate which portions of the work that you are distributing are Open Game Content.
- Updating the License: Wizards or its designated Agents may publish updated versions of this License. You may use any authorized version of this License to copy, modify and distribute any Open Game Content originally distributed under any version of this License.
- Copy of this License: You MUST include a copy of this License with every copy of the Open Game Content You Distribute.
- Use of Contributor Credits: You may not market or advertise the Open Game Content using the name of any Contributor unless You have written permission from the Contributor to do so.
- Inability to Comply: If it is impossible for You to comply with any of the terms of this License with respect to some or all of the Open Game Content due to statute, judicial order, or governmental regulation then You may not Use any Open Game Material so affected.
- Termination: This License will terminate automatically if You fail to comply with all terms herein and fail to cure such breach within 30 days of becoming aware of the breach. All sublicenses shall survive the termination of this License.
- Reformation: If any provision of this License is held to be unenforceable, such provision shall be reformed only to the extent necessary to make it enforceable.
- COPYRIGHT NOTICE
Open Game License v1.0 Copyright 2000, Wizards of the Coast, Inc.