

Cliffhangers Presents

The Horror of Lannock Hill

Episode 1: Survivor

by Tom Kristensen



The Horror of Lannock Hill is a short adventure for four 10th-level characters. The party may consist of any mix of classes, although at least one member of the party should be capable of handling a difficult melee combat. The adventure is pretty straightforward, and it should provide a good challenge for characters from 8th to 10th level. It can be set in any campaign world.

Adventure Background

Ah, the joys of Chaos. Go anywhere, do anything, for any reason or no reason in particular. Such is the life of slaadi, especially, one gray slaad and his two blue slaadi minions. The three have made their way to a sleepy corner of the world to visit a little chaos, death, and destruction upon the locals because, quite frankly, that's what slaadi are good at.

Hooking the Characters

The characters are passing through a small town called Lannock Hill. Upon their arrival, there is a commotion of sorts. One of the monks from the local monastery has staggered into town, severely wounded and feverish. The locals are tending to his wounds in the common room at the inn, which is where a rather scared farmer guides the characters. The monk has several wounds, and a DC 25 Heal check reveals that he is suffering from the first stages of an infection. The disease is from the bite of a blue slaad, one of the creatures that invaded the monastery.

All anyone can get out of the injured fellow is that some "blue-skinned demons" attacked the monks two nights ago while everyone slept. He was bitten and hurled out the window of the upper level, landing in a thick bed of peat that cushioned his fall. The monk staggered off into the night, eventually collapsing in some bushes.

belongings of each monk. Nothing of great value is contained in any chest, mostly extra robes,

He awoke the next day and wandered aimlessly for a while until he managed to weave his way into town, purely by luck.

The Monastery

The monastery is a rather ordinary stone building, 60 feet long and 40 feet wide. It is not surrounded by any sort of wall, but rather an assortment of bushes, shrubs, and trees. (The monks are accomplished horticulturists.) There are also several fountains, pools, and ponds that the monks use for reflection and meditation (as well as the study of aquatic plants).

The lower level is divided in half by a thick wooden wall. The southern half, a large room, roughly 30 feet by 40 feet wide, serves as a dining area and meeting hall. Long, sturdy tables with simple benches on each side dominate the room. A raised podium rests in the center of this room, standing about two feet off of the floor. Passing through the archway in the north wall, you enter the kitchen, storage, and bathing area. Three large hearths and one brick oven are placed along the far wall. Shelves, crates, and barrels neatly line the walls, holding the usual assortment of foodstuffs and cooking supplies. Four massive barrels, roughly 4 feet high and 10 feet in diameter, are raised off the floor by squat stone blocks. This setup allows the monks to stash trays of hot coals underneath, keeping the baths quite warm. A 20 by 20 root cellar lies below, accessible by a narrow staircase.

The upper level is one large common room. Half of it is filled with desks, benches, chairs, and stools. The walls in the study half have built-in floor-to-ceiling bookshelves, most of them filled with tomes, on horticulture, poetry, and history. The other half of the room is the sleeping quarters, complete with simple wooden beds and an unlocked chest at the foot of each bed for the few personal underclothes, books, and a few knickknacks (religious icons, etc).

Of course now everything on both levels is broken, smashed, and scattered about by the invading slaadi.

The Cliffhanger

Urged on by the frightened townsfolk and the sight of the wounded monk, the characters can head off to investigate. The monastery stands on a low hill just outside of town. The double doors leading into the plain, two-story structure have been demolished, which allows the characters to see several bodies strewn about the main hall. They appear to have met rather violent ends....

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Episode 2: Blood and Guts

by Tom Kristensen



Adventure Background

In the previous installment, the characters encountered a wounded monk from a nearby monastery and went to see if they could determine what might have happened there.

Arriving at the Monastery

The characters can tell right off the bat that something is amiss in the compound. The main doors lie in ruin, smashed into so much kindling. Beyond the doorway, several bodies can be seen lying about.

Moving into the main hall, they can see torn and mangled bodies lying everywhere. It is a gruesome scene, one which offends the senses of even the most jaded adventurers. Blood is spattered on all surfaces (including the ceiling), and pieces of monks are scattered about or missing entirely. If the characters take the time to check, they can determine that most of the monks died in one of three ways: from massive bite wounds, torn apart by great claws, or cut to pieces by some manner of blade (the swordlike protrusions on the hands of the blue slaadi). The smell is just awful. The din of thousands of flies is audible, and they swarm up in angry, black clouds if disturbed.

As the party members enter the far half of the first floor (a kitchen/storage/bathing area), they are set upon by some bigger scavengers who have found their way in, drawn by the scent of food. The carrion crawlers swarm the party from all sides, with at least one dropping from the ceiling above. The odor that usually betrays a crawler's presence is masked by the nearly overwhelming stench of blood and death.

Creatures (EL 8): The carnage has lured a group of carrion crawlers from their nearby subterranean lairs. The monsters attack the

characters with mindless intensity, protecting their newly found food supply. The carrion crawlers are moving around in the kitchen area and are relatively easy to see. Anyone with a clear line of sight through the door can make a DC 10 Spot check to see the creatures moving among the wreckage, provided that they have adequate light or vision abilities such as darkvision.

Carrion Crawlers [5]: 22 hp each; see [Monster Manual](#), page 29.

Unless the area is covered by a *silence* spell or similar effect, the battle with the crawlers is likely to alert the trio of slaadi to the presence of the party, and they take appropriate measures such as hiding and casting defensive spells to get an advantage on the characters. The slaadi have Listen scores of +8, +8, and +12; to hear the battle they must make a DC 10 Listen check with a –3 penalty to the roll for distance from the battle.

The Cliffhanger

Having dispatched the carrion crawlers, you look up the dark stairs that lead to the second floor. Some bloody heaps, more bodies you're sure, litter the staircase. Rivulets of blood and gore ooze down the steps in a macabre waterfall of death. Faint scratching sounds can be heard -- could it be rats? More crawlers? Or the killers, still lurking about, waiting for a rescue party to walk into their trap?

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Episode 3: Leapin' Lizards

by Tom Kristensen



Adventure Background

In the previous installments, the party members encountered a wounded monk and went to the monastery to see if they could determine what might have happened there. Arriving at the compound, they are treated to a scene of massive carnage, and attacked by some scavenging carrion crawlers.

Note: The dynamics of the encounters in episodes three and four depend on whether or not the slaadi heard the characters fighting the carrion crawlers in episode two. The text below assumes that the slaadi heard the characters. If they did not, all three slaadi are busy destroying parts of the room. The characters can surprise the slaadi if they succeed at a Move Silently check opposed by each slaad's Listen check or if magically silenced.

Look Out Below!

Two blue slaadi, Xisstvan and Yurgl, wait for the party near the top of the stairs. When the characters have climbed about halfway up, the slaadi explode into action, launching themselves down the stairs, trying to grapple with the lead characters and hopefully knock everyone down. They then wade into the party, attacking the closest characters first. In the unlikely event that the blue slaadi succeed at a Hide check opposed by the Spot check of the first character to head up the stairs, they gain the benefits of a surprise round.

The blue slaadi look like thick-bodied, blue-skinned frogs who stand upright. They tower over most humanoids at 10 feet tall and have broad shoulders and virtually no neck. They easily weigh 800+ pounds. Their massively muscled bodies are covered in bumps, warts, knobs, and horns, and their hands and feet are tipped with black, razor-sharp claws. Two bony protrusions, shaped roughly like scimitar blades, extend from the back of each hand.

Xisstvan and Yurgl are totally fearless, and relish the chance to slay some puny beings who actually try to fight back. They chirp and croak back and forth to each other in Slaad, and if anyone can actually understand them, they boast of things like who will get the first kill, what parts they will keep for trophies, and don't these pathetic creatures realize the true might of the slaadi?

These blue slaadi do not attempt to summon reinforcements, as Z'xor has specifically instructed them not to. They fear him enough to actually follow his orders.

Blue Slaad (2); CR 8; Large outsider; HD 8d8+24; hp 60; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18 (touch 11, flat-footed 16); Atk +11 melee (2d6+4, 4 rakes); or +11 melee (2d8+6, bite); SA Disease, spell-like abilities, Summon Slaad; SQ acid resistance 5, cold resistance 5, electricity resistance 5, fast healing 5, fire resistance 5, outsider traits, sonic resistance 5; AL CN; SV Fort +9, Ref +8, Will +4; Str 19, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 6, Wis 6, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Climb +14, Hide –2, Jump +15, Listen +8, Move Silently +9, Spot +8; Denied, Dodge, Mobility .

Disease (Ex): Creatures bitten by a blue slaad must make a Fortitude save (DC 17) or be infected with a disease that transforms the victim over the next week into a red slaad.

Spell-like Abilities (Sp): At will -- *hold person*, *passwall*, *telekinesis*. 1/day -- three blue slaadi working together can produce a *chaos hammer* (DC 16) as if cast by a 15th-level sorcerer. 1/day -- summon another blue slaad with a 40% chance of success.

Acid Resistance (Ex): The creature ignores up to 5 points of acid damage each round.

Cold Resistance (Ex): The creature ignores up to 5 points of cold damage each round.

Electricity Resistance (Ex): The creature ignores up to 5 points of electricity damage each round.

Fast Healing (Ex): The creature regains 5 hit points per round. Fast healing does not restore hit points lost from starvation, thirst, or suffocation, and it does not allow a creature to regrow or reattach lost body parts.

Fire Resistance (Ex): The creature ignores up to (enter value from left) points of fire damage each round.

Outsider Traits: Darkvision 60 ft.; cannot be raised or resurrected (though a wish or miracle spell can restore life).

Sonic Resistance (Ex): The creature ignores up to 5 points of sonic damage each round.

The Cliffhanger

Having slain the fearsome blue slaadi who ambushed them on the stairs, the party cautiously ascends the staircase, and this time reaches the top without being bowled over.

Peering about in the darkened room, you can make out beds, chests, bodies...and a strange little light that wasn't there a second ago! It bursts into a wave of magical energy that washes over you...

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Episode 4: Warts and All

by Tom Kristensen



Adventure Background

In the previous installments, the party members encountered a wounded monk and went to the monastery to see if they could determine what might have happened there. Arriving at the compound, they were treated to a scene of massive carnage and attacked by some scavenging carrion crawlers. Dispatching the crawlers, the party attempted to enter the upper level, but was met by the ferocious attack of a pair of blue slaadi that came hurtling down the stairs and crashed headlong into the group. A furious melee ensued, with the characters emerging triumphant, if a bit bruised and bloodied.

Frogs -- I Hate Frogs!

Z'xor, the gray slaad who led the destruction of the monastery, stands in the back of the room in humanoid form, hiding in the shadows of the bookcases and overturned desks. If the slaadi heard the characters fighting the carrion crawlers in episode two, Z'xor has cast *invisibility* on himself and moved to the back of the room. Even if the characters can see invisible objects, detecting the stealthy slaad requires a Spot check opposed by Z'xor's Hide check.

Z'xor is aware of the character's arrival if they have already fought the blue slaadi. If a character sneaks into the room, Z'xor must make a Spot check opposed by the character's Hide check to see the intruder. Once Z'xor sees the characters, he casts *power word, blind* on as many characters as he can target at the top of the stairs. He then casts *deeper darkness* and plots his next move from the relative safety of darkness. Z'xor's preferred tactic is to remain hidden or invisible and cast *animate objects* on the furniture in the room.

He uses his spell-like abilities to attack the party from a distance. If pressed into melee by an obviously formidable group, Z'xor uses his +2

longsword defensively and tries to escape; he attempts to flee out one of the shattered windows by means of his *fly* ability. If escape is not possible, he will attempt to summon some red or blue slaadi allies and make his exit from the scene once the party is engaged with the newcomers.

If Z'xor escapes, he could always pop up in a future adventure -- every party needs some nasty antagonist to reappear from time to time, keeping them from becoming bored or complacent.

Once the characters have either defeated or driven off Z'xor, and taken the time to search the place, they will find little of value (aside from Z'xor's belongings) in the ruins of the monastery. Of course, sages and lore experts would find the collection of books, tomes, and scrolls to be of great interest, but it would require quite a few wagons to haul them away. And of course the local lord could always make an appearance and discourage the looting of the monastery if need be.

A DC 20 Search check reveals the one book useful to the party (and to the injured monk from episode one). It is titled *Creatures of Limbo*, a rather thorough treatise on the slaad race. A section under the blue slaadi chapter makes note of a transforming disease via the bite attack. This text provides a +2 circumstance bonus to Heal checks made to fight the disease's effects and alerts those who read it to the possibility of contracting the disease from the blue slaad.

Z'xor: gray slaad; CR 10; Medium-size outsider; HD 10d8+30; hp 75; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 22 (touch 11, flat-footed 21); Atk +14 melee (2d4+4, 2 claws), +12 melee (2d8+2, bite); or +16/+11 melee (1d8+8/19–20/x2, +2 longsword); SA Alternate Form, spell-like abilities, Summon slaad; SQ outsider traits; AL N; SV Fort +12, Ref +10, Will +11; Str 19, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Climb +15, Hide +14, Jump +17, Knowledge (arcana) +13, Listen +15, Move Silently +14, Search +15, Spot +15; Multiattack, Craft Wondrous Item, Craft Arms & Armor.

Possessions: +2 longsword, cloak of resistance +2, dusty rose ioun stone, chime of opening (50 charges), potion of bull's strength, potion of endurance, potion of cure serious wounds, gold necklace worth 450 gp.

Alternate Form (Su): A gray slaad can shift between its natural and any humanoid form at will as a standard action. A gray slaad remains in humanoid form indefinitely. The ability is otherwise similar to polymorph self cast by a 10th-level sorcerer.

Spell-like Abilities (Sp): (At will -- *animate objects, chaos hammer, deeper darkness, detect magic, dispel law, fly, identify, invisibility, lightning bolt, magic circle against law, see invisibility, shatter, power word blind.* These abilities are as the spells cast by a 15th-level sorcerer.)

Summon Slaad (Sp): Twice per day a gray slaad can attempt to summon 1-2 red slaadi or 1 blue slaad with a 40% chance of success or 1 green slaad with a 20% chance of success.

Outsider Traits: Darkvision 60 ft.; cannot be raised or resurrected (though a wish or miracle spell can restore life).

The Cliffhanger

With the slaadi vanquished or driven off, the characters can return to town to clean up and wash the stench of death away in a nice, hot bath - compliments of the house. If the party members have found and read the book *Creatures of Limbo* then they will know to cast *remove disease* or to treat the monk and others bitten by the blue slaadi, lest they turn into a red slaad and begin the carnage anew.

About the Author

Tom Kristensen is an editor on the **D&D** Worlds team at Wizards of the Coast. He lives on the east side of Lake Washington with his wife, daughter, and three cats. He has played **D&D**

for more than 20 years with the same group of guys, and he has an embarrassingly large collection of unpainted miniatures that he keeps promising his fellow gamers he'll paint -- one of these days.