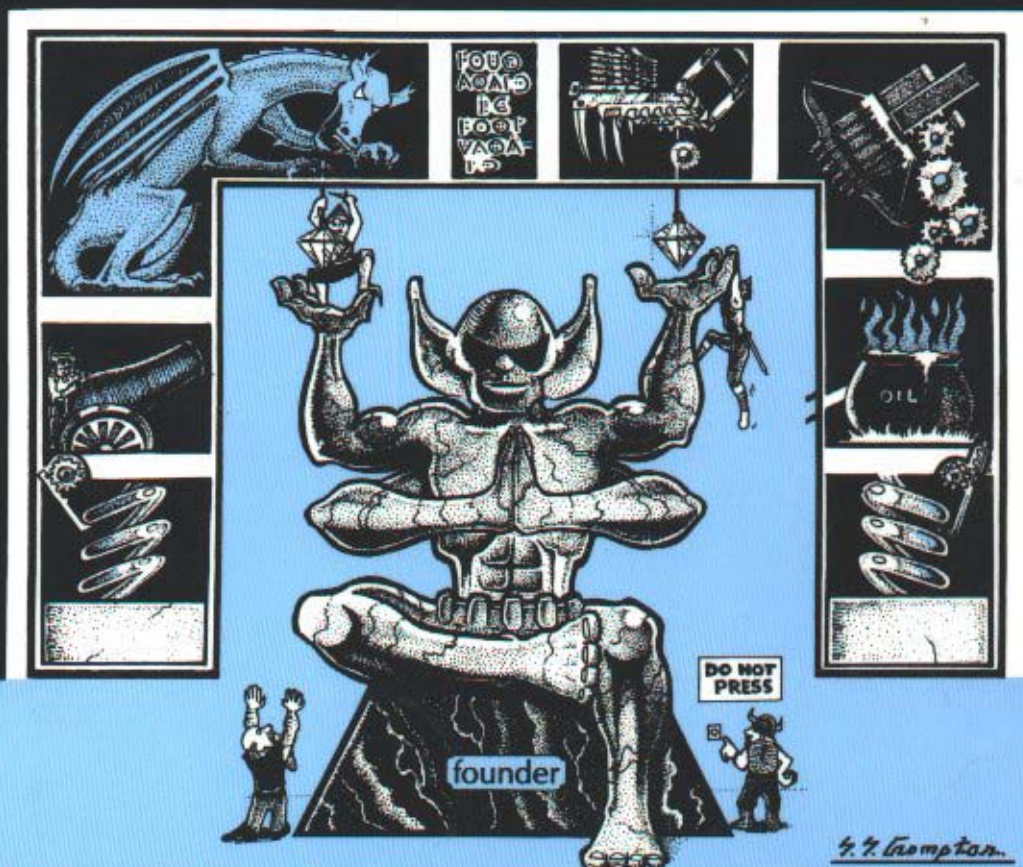


Grimtooth's

TRAPS FORE

a game-master's aid for
all role-playing systems



Even more traps
for use with any
role-playing system

WARNING:
"Death & Destruction
await you within
these hallowed pages.
MORTALS BEWARE!"
— Grimtooth



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All-System
Catalyst
Series

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A word from Grimtooth

Here, for your edification and delight, is another volume of traps. Each of these traps has a full description that would make its intricate workings obvious to even the most careless of readers. The skull rating located next to each trap is equally as simple - the more skulls you see, the deadlier the trap is.

This brings me to a nagging, painful problem that some of you seem to have when dealing with my previous books on traps. Many of you seem to think the traps are *too deadly*, as if such a thing were possible. Many of you continue to think this way, even after I carefully explained you could adjust and customize the traps yourself to dull or possibly whet the lethality of each offering.

At times I am left to wonder why I even bother to share my wisdom with you, when you so callously ignore it.

Any fool can kill adventurers with incredible ease, and perhaps my traps have merely given them new and more complex weapons. If this is true, it is a pity. I have found killing not nearly so much fun as terrifying.

The most delicate and vulnerable part of any delver cannot be armored, it cannot be strengthened by magic or regrown after drinking a potion. I speak of course of the character's ego. All too often it is forgotten and left unmarred by Dungeon Masters who scarcely deserve such an honored title. It is to the pursuit of ego shredding that this new volume of traps is dedicated.

Some of you have asked where my third book of traps is. To start this book off right, and show you how fragile egos actually are, I've forced one of my human aides to humble himself and reveal how HE blundered and lost my third tome. I hope you find it as informative as he finds it humiliating.

But enough of that. Please, sit back and prepare to discover the joys of inflicting ethereal as well as physical damage. Steel cuts well, but ridicule cuts deeper, and the scars, while invisible, hurt nonetheless. --Grimtooth

A [sic] Humiliating word from an Editor

Despite what Grimtooth said in his editorial, ah, I'm not really to blame for the third book vanishing like that. Um, I just drew the short straw and was forced to write this explanation and apology to you.

Back when we'd finished the third book, we were joking around and suggested that we send a couple of proof copies (pre-publication copies of the book) to certain foreign and domestic intelligence agencies. I thought we'd get letters back thanking us, and we could use them in advertising; you know, "The book with traps so horrible the FBI refused to buy it," kind of stuff. I thought it was a good idea, and with Grimtooth's begrudging blessing, I sent the books out.

Grimtooth went off on a well deserved vacation, we sent the book to press, and I waited for letters from the agencies. I didn't get letters: I got action.

Before we knew it, a US agency - acting illegally within the borders of the US, I might add - descended on our offices and took all our copies and files for the project. Then the printer called and said bunches of guys with funny accents hit him and took all the printed copies of the book, his plates, and the negatives! Inside an hour, all traces of the book were gone.

Needles to say, Grimtooth was not happy. He stormed around the offices and I said we could sue to get the books back, but he only glared at me and said he'd take action. Now, no one here believes that the release of a secret CIA guerrilla manual, and the death of a Soviet leader were more than coincidentally connected in time to the Traps fiasco, but Grimtooth has been grinning like a saber-toothed cat since then, and I guess your having this book in your hands proves he got some sort of a message across to the right people.

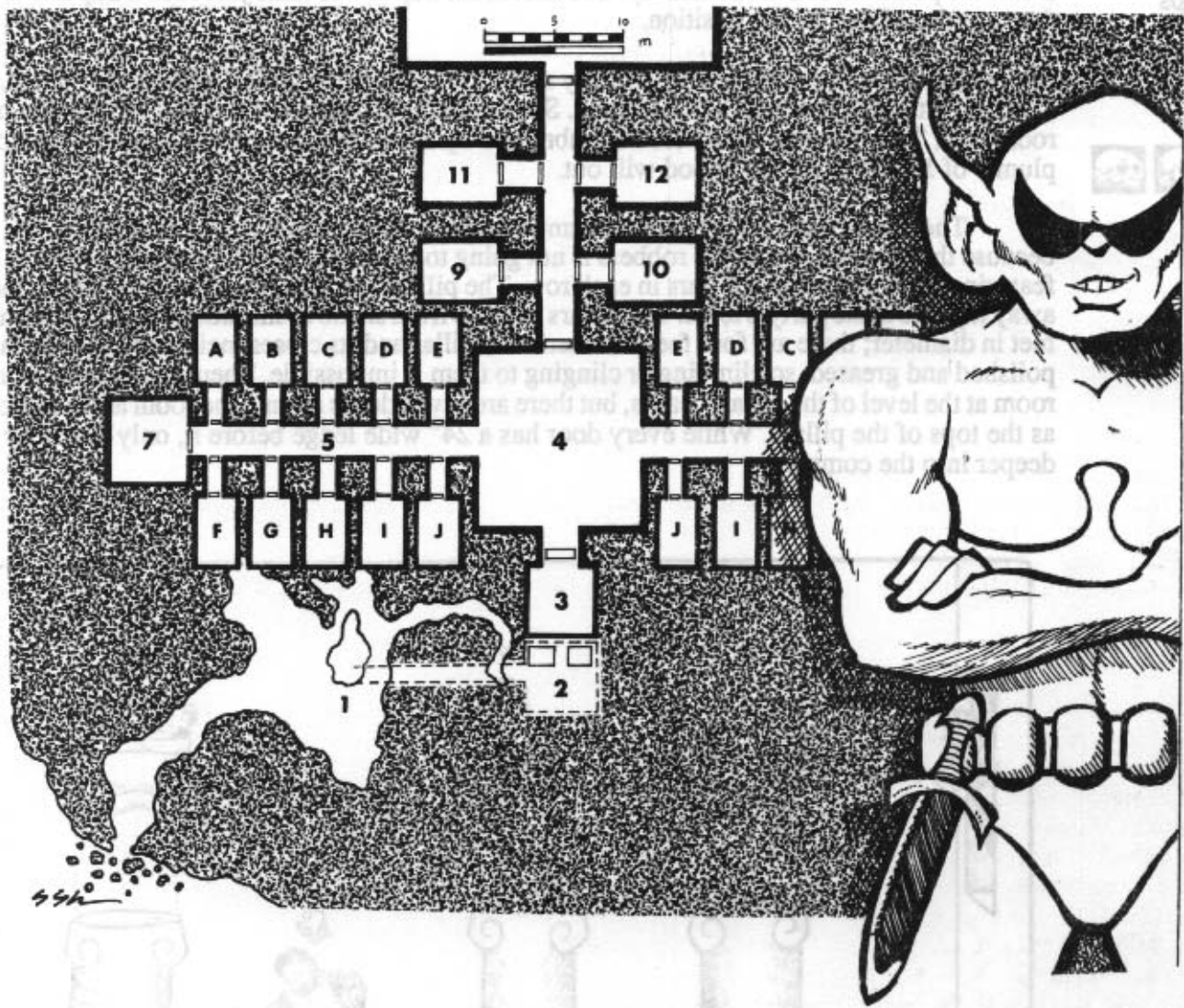
We have been informed that the third traps book will be declassified in the late 1990's so maybe we can get it to you after all. Until then, you'll just have to be content with the fine collection of traps right here. --Michael A Stackpole

A Message from the Publisher

The above was an amusing joke when we wrote it back in 1986. However, with the invasion of the Steve Jackson Games offices by the Secret Service this year, along with the confiscation of all copies of their planned GURPS Cyberpunk game book (under the claim that it was a 'handbook for computer crime'), suddenly the joke is less funny. It was just a joke. Honest. There was no third book of traps. And the above joke (printed in 1986) was not a psychic prediction by Flying Buffalo that such a raid was going to happen to someone in the game industry. And for that matter, the fact that in 1987 we printed a map for our World Wide Battle Plan play by mail game that shows Iraq and Kuwait as one country was also just a coincidence. Trust me on this. There is no world wide conspiracy, and I am definitely not part of it.

Flying Buffalo is not a front for the CIA. Nor the FBI. Or even the KGB. Really. Definitely!

-- Rick Loomis



Room Traps

I believe it was Napoleon's mother who first said, "Good things come in small packages," but she obviously had reason to lie. Many people view the height of creativity as being able to assemble a hideous engine of destruction and place it inside a tiny object; an object far too small to be able to cause any destruction at all. Those small minded individuals lack the imagination to be able to conceive of havoc on such a massive scale that only a room could contain it.

Room traps are the bread and butter, the meat and potatoes, of dungeons spiced with traps and trick to ensnare the unwary. The necessary complexity of an entire room that is a trap delights me no end. What delver can ever feel safe when he just knows death lurks beneath the polished floor, or while he expects the walls to open and mayhem undreamed of in his worst nightmares explodes all around him?





Room Traps

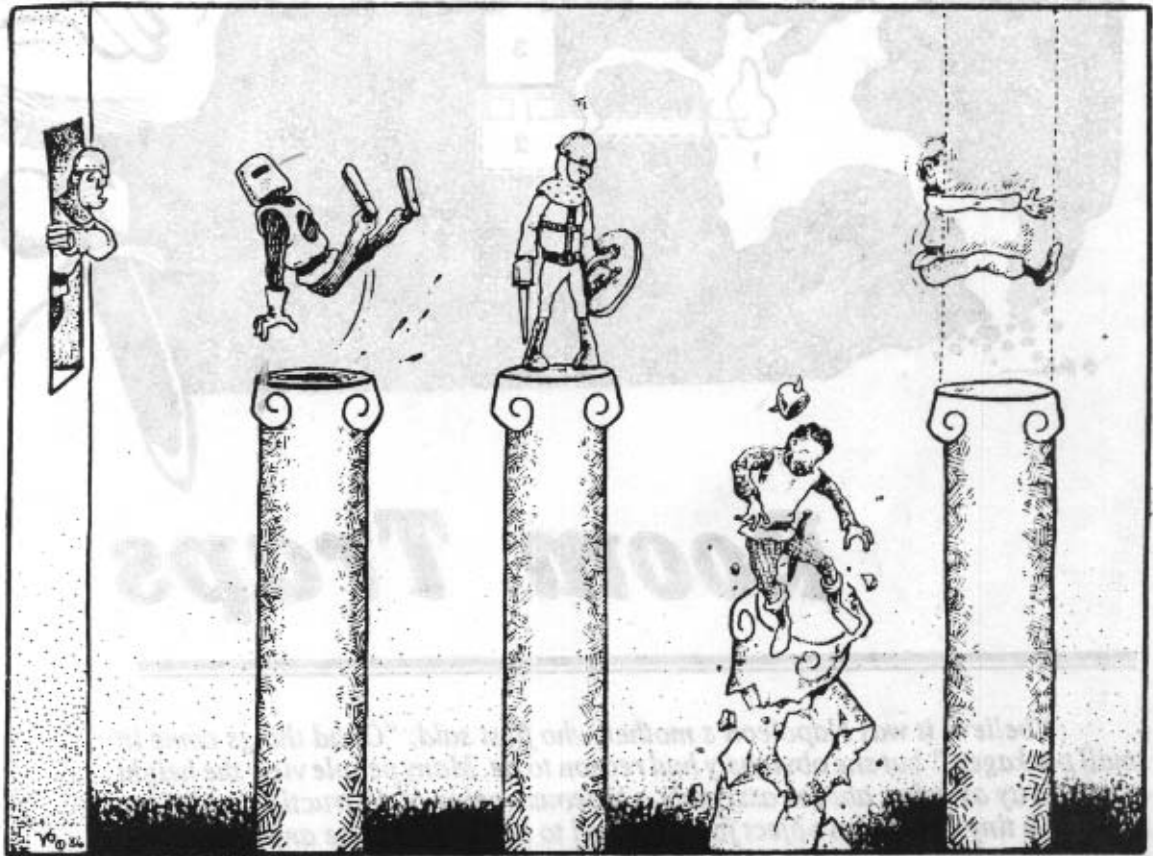
— NOTES —

Room traps are not simple devices to construct. They take time and careful planning to create. The ultimate room traps combine innocent surroundings with destructive capabilities that dwarf the potential of a modern army. The first room trap in this tome just such a trap and is more than worthy of its starting position.

Occasionally a trap is sent to me by someone passing himself off as “merely human.” But I can tell a trollish design when I see one. Such attempt at deception was the submission of this room trap, **The Peerless Pillar Room**, submitted by a troll-kin masquerading under the nom de plume of Mad Roy Cram. Blood will out.



The room of pillars is meant to hamper tomb robbers, and it is well to locate it in a tomb because the survival rate of the robbers is not going to be very high. The room is large and deep, featuring five rows of five pillars in each row. The pillars are 30' high, at least, and only the cut-away tops are at the party's level. The pillars that rise from shadow-shrouded depths are each three feet in diameter; there are four feet between each pillar and its closest neighbors. The pillars are polished and greased, so climbing or clinging to them is impossible. There are no exits from this room at the level of the pillars' bases, but there are seven doors around the room at the same level as the tops of the pillars. While every door has a 24" wide ledge before it, only one door leads deeper into the complex.



The appropriate task of jumping from one pillar-top to the next might seem simple. It is not. Any character in heavy armor will have difficulty with his or her momentum, and could tumble off the edge of any pillar if unlucky or clumsy. That, however, is likely to be the least of the possible problems. Roy has provided a sample of traps for the individual pillars, and with such inspiration, more can surely be invented as needed.



One pillar is made of fragile material that will crumble under 75 pounds of weight. A long fall. Another pillar, slightly similar, is hollow; its plaster top will break through with the sudden weight of a jumping character. The kicker to that pillar is that the solid circumference of the pillar is metal, with a sharpened edge to sever ropes and quick fingers. Another pillar actually extends all the way to the ceiling - it just doesn't look it. Glass or a magically invisible wall will correct the assumptions of the character who "jumped to his conclusion." Another surprise in store is the pillar with a top that has been well greased. My favorite of all is the two-pillar trap: playing "follow the leader" is deadly when jumping on one pillar sends the last one flying up into the ceiling, provided there's at least 75 pounds worth of delver standing on it.

And do not forget there are six sham doors; any or all of them could have nasty things hiding behind...!

Children's games have an underlying fiendishness that is usually attributed to the extraordinarily rotten or the homicidally insane. Ben Curtis has adapted the children's party game of Musical Chairs into the terribly twisted **Musical Squares**. Let the music begin...

The room with this trap has two doors - I recommend that it be an important point of transit between one area and another, just so the characters can come to appreciate your cleverness through repeated encounters and increasing familiarity. An area just inside the door has a pressure plate which detects the passage of individuals, and thereby "counts" the number in the party. (Characters who are flying at this time will only be making things worse for themselves, as you should realize as you read on.) Immediately after the last person enters the room, the door through which the party entered slams & locks.

Before them the characters now see a very large room with the only useful exit on the far (far, far) side of the room. There are numerous black squares, 3' on a side, at random places around the floor.

The trap is activated when someone touches one of the black squares. Since there is a collection of black squares immediately surrounding the doors, this is extremely likely.

A mild creaking groan from overhead should draw the delvers' attentions. Openings in the ceiling appear, directly corresponding to the black squares below. There may be more black squares than there are openings, since there are exactly as many openings as there are characters in the room (except for those who didn't activate the pressure plate upon entering.) One normal human-sized character will fit - safely - on a black square. If the characters hustle their buns to leap onto a square, they will be safe when the ceiling descends *en masse* one minute later. The hole in the ceiling above a





black square on the floor means the character on the square will not be crushed.

The ceiling retracts. Anyone who wasn't on a black square beneath a hole in the ceiling is now flatter than ... well, if his friends want to take him home for burial, they'd better have a putty knife to remove his remains.

Now, the fact that there were individuals on the black squares means the trap is still set. One minute later, the ceiling will come down again, perhaps with a slight warning click just to give the characters a chance to scramble for safety again. However...

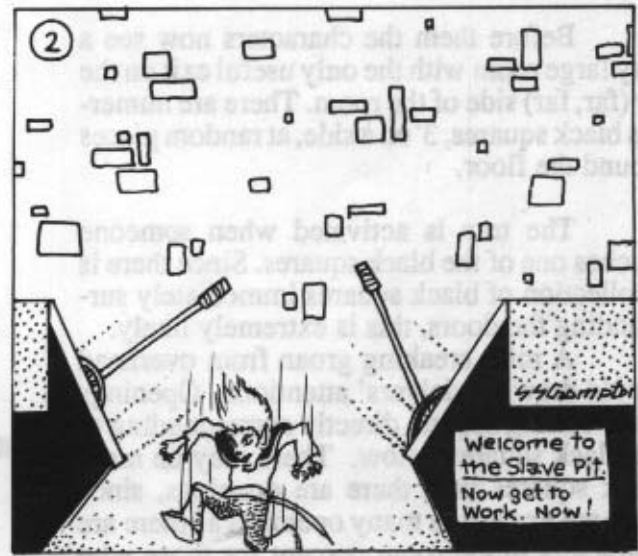
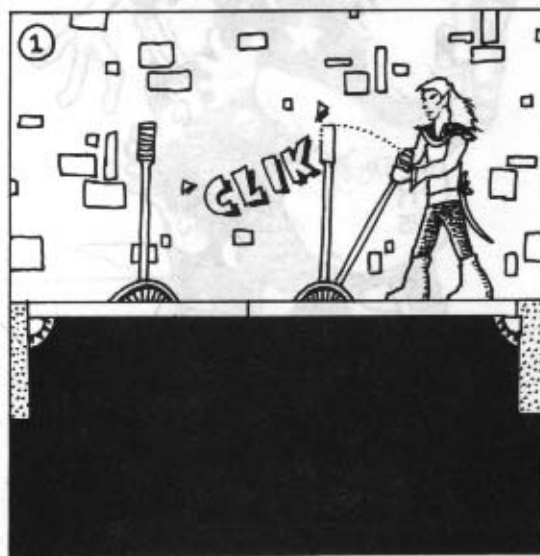
This time there is one less safe square than there was before.

This "unsafeness" can be relatively kind (a pit opens beneath the character's feet, and he or she plummets to be captured below in a slave holding pen) or the "unsafeness" can be thoroughly unkind (a pillar slams through the open area, crushing the in-hapless-itant of that square seconds after he or she thinks safety is assured). Either way, give them a moment to scream: it'll get the others excited.

If the room is large enough, it could take at least 2 or 3 slamming ceilings before the fastest sprinter can reach the other side. Rooms that large can be awkward, so covering the floor of a smaller room with a layer of sand over harder rock can slow the delvers down. Sand is devilishly hard to run fast in, and it is the logical result of a ceiling smashing down on rock over a long period of time. The painful result of getting caught off a black square would be *slightly* mediated, but probably not enough to keep body and soul together. Besides, sandy wounds are always a bother to keep clean.

Of course there are other ways to coerce the characters into remaining a little longer. Try dropping a little treasure down on each survivor's square. The treasure gets better and better the longer the characters remain and take their chances in the room. Or hide the exit door. That's always good for an extra round of scrambling.

Ben really can't leave well enough alone, either. The final "gag" in this room won't work more than once, but perhaps it will offer a place for the inventive to add small changes with each encounter. At the exit of the room are two levers, one on either wall well away from the door. Anyone curious or foolish enough to pull one of these levers finds they both do the same thing: the floor tilts away from the wall and dumps the characters down into the slave holding pits beneath the main floor.



Mike Stackpole, like Ben Curtis, has a fiendish fascination with Musical Chairs and the implications it has for a pack of delving characters. **Odd Man Out** offers characters a chance to show their greediest, most selfish sides - and a chance for the good-hearted (if any) to catch them at it. This is a room set to induce serious role -playing; give the players room and time to do so.



The characters are introduced to this room via a chute that seals up behind them. The rooms appears to have no exits, and ordinary searching will find nothing. Even magical searches will prove fruitless. On the wall are a series of pictographs which show: a copper coin with a hole in it, an unusual dagger, a key, a small rock, a peacock feather, an intricately knotted piece of rope, a small featureless box, a scroll, and a twig. At the end of this odd sequence of items are the words "is freedom."

In the center of the room is a large plain table. On the table the characters will find a number of copper coins with a hole. There are as many coins as there are characters - almost. Actually one character will find himself without a coin: if there are ten characters there are only nine coins on the table.

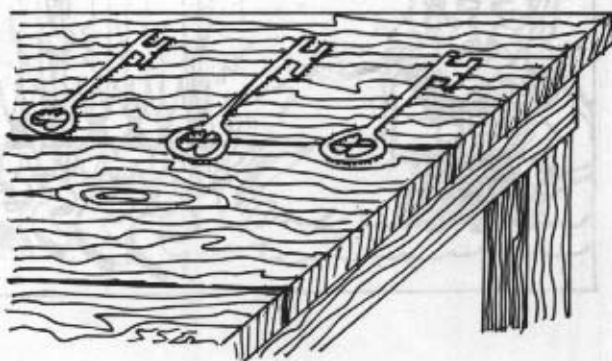
Eventually all the characters, but one, will take up a coin. After all, nothing else happens until all the coins are gone. When the last coin has been taken, all lights extinguish for a few seconds. When the room is lit again, the character without the coin is *gone*, and on the table are a number of unusual daggers... again, short by one of enough to go around.

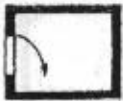
Ideally the dungeon master should provide enough unique *type* items so characters will be eliminated down to just one person - just one character should be able to acquire every single item shown on the wall. Thus, depending on the party size, the dungeon master will have to add or subtract from the total number of items. If there are only eight characters in the group, there should be only seven types of things.

The fact is, it only requires the key to leave the room. If the key is the second or third item offered, all the bad consequences that follow can be considered the delvers' own fault. When the keys are picked up and the room goes dark, a small, inconspicuous keyhole appears on one wall. Any key holder who finds it can use his or her key to open the portal and pass through to whatever else you have in mind. But if they searched the room at the beginning, are the characters likely to search it again after each companion is eliminated? Bluntly, no.

The characters will try all sorts of contortions to avoid being eliminated, from stabbing one another in the back (and you wondered why daggers were the second item to appear on the table), to two characters holding onto the same object. In the first case, shake your head and say tsk, tsk. In the latter case you could randomly decide which person holds the bigger half. Give no clue to anyone, victim or survivor, as to the fate of those who disappear.

The game masters' judgement must be called into play now. There may be individuals who stepped back and said "No, you take it, I'll pass." (Obviously a social deviant under the influence of mind-warping drugs.) There may be greedy, vicious characters who have slain their companions for their chance at the freedom offered. At the very worst, one character has hogged all the items, leaving any number of his friends standing around empty-handed. Aside from that, however, reward the generous and good-hearted (because they are easy marks you can get later) and chastise the mean and selfish. How to tell one from another? Chances are that the generous and self-effacing are the first





eliminated - via a special teleport they've joined those who run this room, watching the backstabbing and jockeying for those special treasures that seem to mean freedom - or death. In other words, the characters can watch their adventuring companions sink to their lowest level, or rise up to high ideals. It is sure to be an eye-opener!

If the characters still want to associate with their erstwhile companions, you can reunite them when the last one(s) exit the room. If everyone has been miserly, teleport the characters out to holding pens. Your local Circe can probably find some suitable animal form to house their wretched little minds, or you can put them to work in the potato farms on your bottommost level....

This next trap is another that can turn the most destructive forces inside a dungeon against each other. I refer, of course, to the adventurers themselves. The bizarrely diabolical Victor De Grande has designed a bizarrely diabolical room trap which he says has been **Serving Delves For Years**. I can just imagine...

The delvers fall into this room through any pit-and-chute arrangement the GM feels is suitable. The group should arrive not much the worse for the wear, and find themselves knee-deep in water. This wet room is bare to its metallic walls, floor and ceiling. The only feature is a beautiful chandelier hanging from the center of the ceiling. A minute after the characters drop in, a steel panel slides down over the chute by which they entered the room. Immediately thereafter, a steel panel slides up on the far wall, revealing an unfastened door set above the water level. The party is free to take this opportunity to walk out.

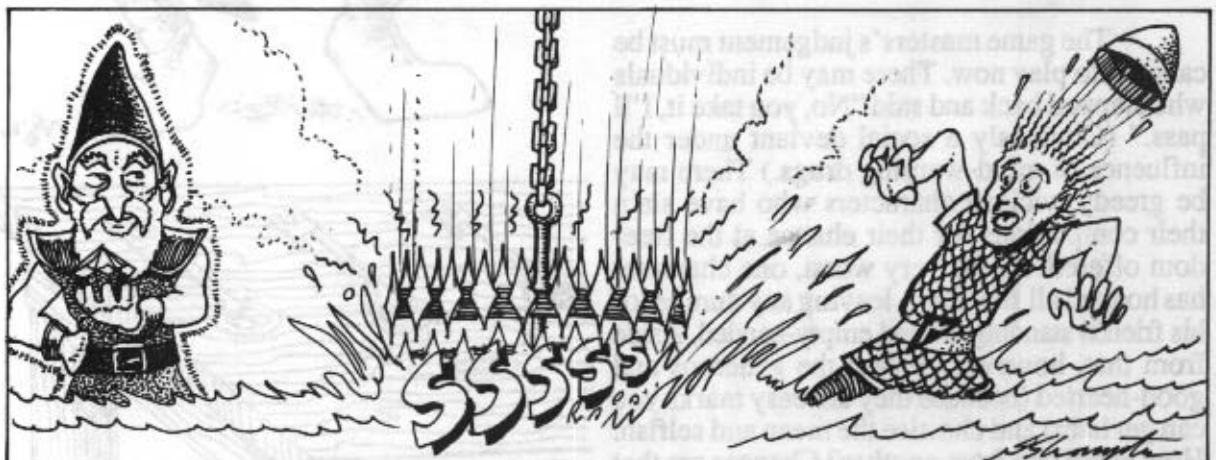
The one reason they might not leave instantly is that even casual study of the chandelier reveals it has a gorgeous diamond as its central finial. The diamond radiates a bit of magic, thus increasing its potential value. The usual tricks to knock such a thing loose are of no avail; only by grabbing and twisting it will the gem come free of its setting.

That's when the fun begins.

A steel panel slams across the far door and the chandelier crashes into the flooded floor. The metal walls and floor begin to heat up, raising the water to a rolling boil within three minutes. Everyone will feel rather uncomfortable as they start to cook - everyone, that is, but the person lucky enough to be holding that diamond in his hot little hands. The fortunate person will be totally immune to the heat, and will also be unable to imagine surrendering the gem without a fight. (Lest the heroes in fancy armor believe their ElfMart Blulite Special underwear will protect them, remind the foredoomed characters that their *lungs* may not be able to handle the searing steam.)

The room will remain heated, and the doors sealed, until all the water has boiled away or until there is only one person alive in the room. The cuisine brought out of this room is tasty and done to a turn. Even old dwarves come out juicy!

How to avoid the trap? By passing though the room without disturbing anything.



Intra-party violence has its appeal, but confusion can lead to squabbling just as easily. Mike McClymont has devised a convenient way to confuse those delvers who would rather keep a map than plunge their arms to the shoulders in heaps of gold. These people will find themselves in **The Double Trouble Trap**.

The adventurers wander into a brightly-lit room that seems fairly normal as dungeon rooms go - perhaps a treasure chest sits in the corner to serve as bait. Once the group is all in, the door shuts and all lights in the room extinguish at once. I favor a gust of dusty wind at the same moment, in order to get every character to shut his or her eyes just for a second.

During that brief moment, the characters are all teleported to a different room, otherwise identical to the one they left. The lights come back up, and it appears to the party that a particularly vicious monster or group of monsters has been teleported into their room, hungry for delver-filet. Assuming the characters can dispatch these guardians, they may loot the treasure and exit the room - only to become slowly aware that the room they left is not the same as the room they entered.

Since it is strictly a one-way teleport (deeper into the dungeon, I trust), the delvers' work will be cut out for them - or cut out of them - before they can return to the surface.

For another trap which is not just as it appears, we turn to Brent Jones' design. This one is targeted for those characters who want to plunge into more gold than they can imagine - even if they can imagine quite a lot!

Greed is the motive for many adventurers, and all of them harbor the secret dream of swimming in a sea of gold coins. **All That Glitters Is Not Gold** may fulfill that dream - and turn it into a nightmare.

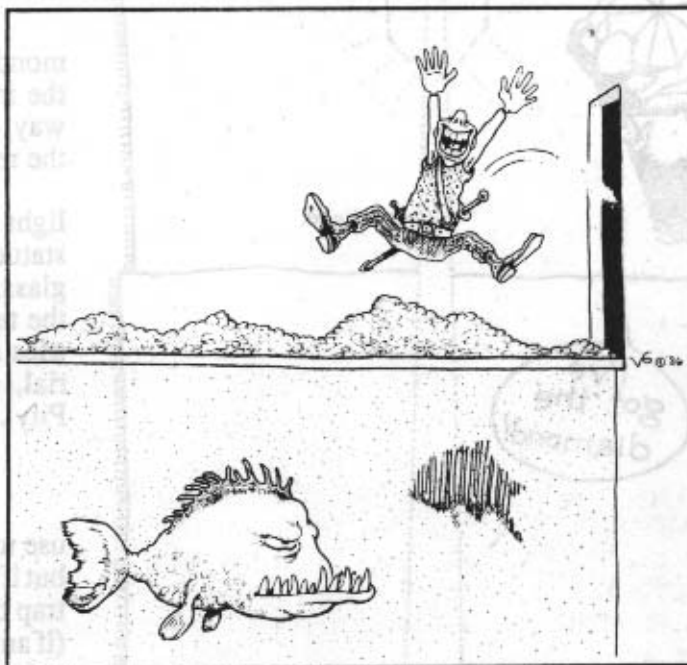
The trap is set in a room with a veritable carpet of gold coins in it. Most of the coins are wooden slugs painted to look like gold, with real coins sprinkled among them. The coins rest on a glass floor. The glass will sustain the weight

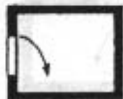
of the coins, and approximately another 75 pounds. The glass floor is over a pit 20' deep; the pit is filled with water and voracious finned nasties.

Adventurers who poke and prod with spears will find there is a floor there beneath the coins. Stepping into the room to scoop up coins will cause the delver to break through the glass and sink below. The wooden coins will float and give the impression that the adventurer has merely vanished into them. If the character cannot find the hole he fell through, he will drown or have to deal with the toothy fish trying to eat him. And when he goes looking for that hole in the glass, ah, don't forget those very sharp broken edges!

A good room trap is often replete with special effects. The next several traps all feature some special effects which, when combined with the party's childlike sense of wonder, produce some very deadly results.

Sunlight makes my skin itch, moonlight isn't bad but gemlight... it's second only to the glow of a burning village at midnight in my idea of pleasant illumination. Charles Manson offers this touch of **Gemlight** to shed some light on the consequences of greed. Sticky-fingered delvers are advised to take heed. This room trap makes a good cap-room for the very apex of a wizard's tower, though other locations will work as well.

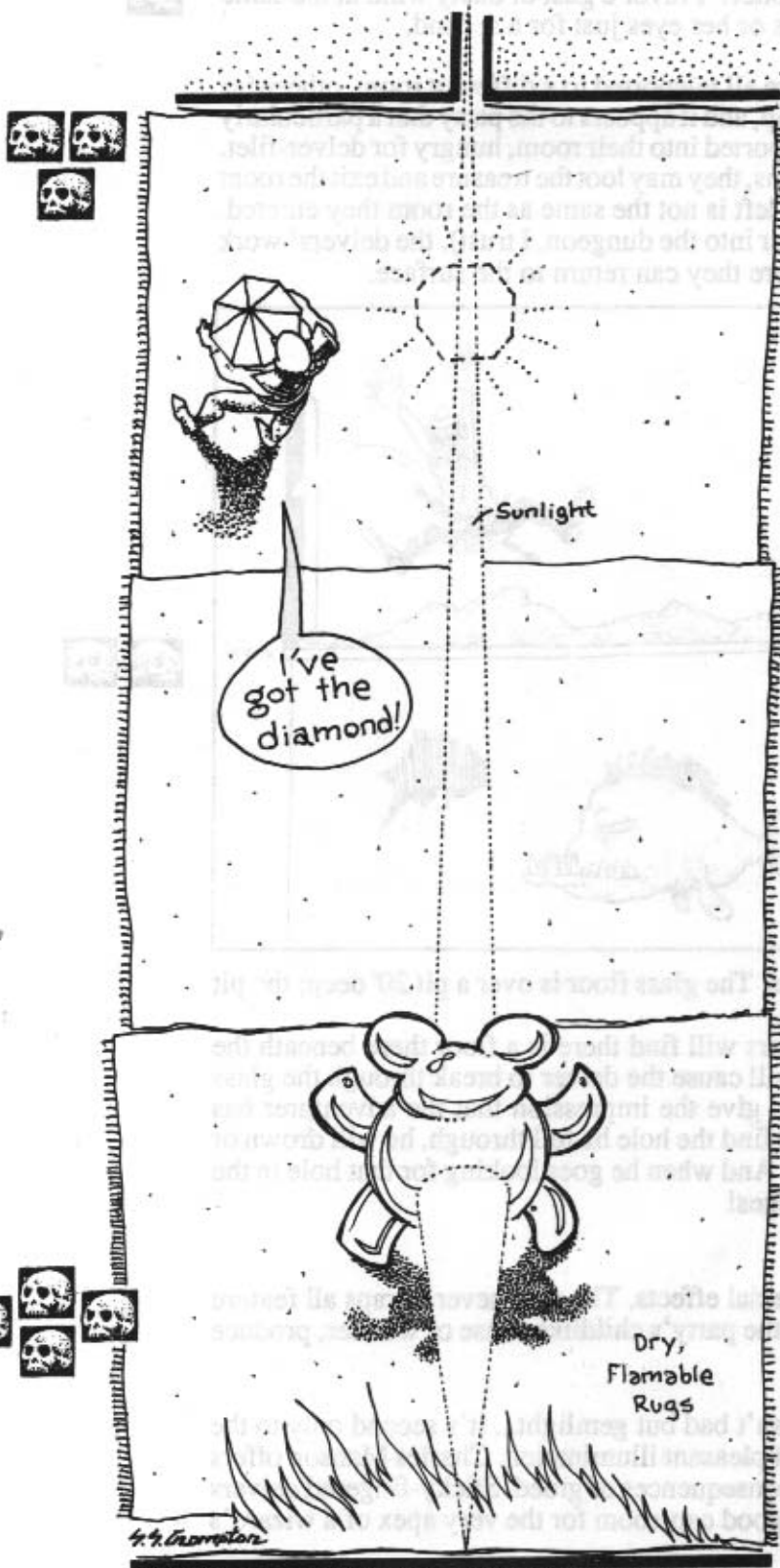




Room Traps

- NOTES -

The room is square, hung on every wall with floor to ceiling tapestries. In the center of the room is showcased an ornate piece of what looks like sculptured glass, exquisitely crafted. It can't be broken or removed. Its beauty is enhanced by the rainbow of colors that fill the room. This light comes from an enormous prismatically cut diamond suspended close to the wall, in front of a tiny parting of the draperies. The diamond sparkles more brilliantly than any leaded crystal prism, filling the room with color and light.



Close examination of the diamond and the wall behind it reveals that the diamond is suspended before a small hole. Sunlight enters through the hole, channeled there by magic no doubt, to keep light there at any time of the day. The sunlight strikes the prism and disperses to beautify the room and the lovely glasswork statue.

What delver can resist taking the diamond? Especially if he or she was frustrated by the intractability of the glass sculpture? Anyway, diamonds are easy to exchange for coin of the realm.

When the diamond is removed the sunlight spears into the room, striking the glass statue. Its curves are those of a magnifying glass, focusing an intense pinpoint of light on the tapestries on the far wall. Since the tapestries are made of a highly inflammable material, the room quickly becomes an inferno. Pity....

It's Amaze-ing is a room trap that will use up a substantial portion of your real estate, but if a character springs this elaborately simple trap of John Olsen's, neither he, she nor many (if any) of the characters' companions are likely to bother you in the future. They will curse and laud your diabolical cleverness as they gurgle their last.

Characters are relatively blasé about the mazes they occasionally encounter. This one is unlikely to excite, until later. It is only reached after the characters have traversed a very long flight of spiral stairs. At the bottom of the stairs is a cavern, low-ceilinged but quite wide and long. The cavern is filled with a maze constructed of very thick and sturdily-made brass and steel latticework dividing the stone walls every ten feet or so. This gives tantalizing glimpses of the depths beyond the next corner to lead the delvers on. If you like, add some small enclosures (but not complete rooms) with trapped treasure chests, unruly wandering monsters or other things to keep the adventurers occupied and unaware of the trouble they have dragged themselves into. Make sure anything you want to recover is waterproof.

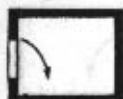


The exit of the maze leads to another circular flight of stairs, this one enclosed inside a tower. It rises only a third of the height the delvers climbed down on the original staircase and ends in a small room at the tower's top. The room has one section of wall made of clay.

The clay wall has three large scintillating gems set in it. The gems are not magical. In fact, although casual examination indicates they have considerable value, the gems are only finely cut glass and gem paste: convincing frauds. The scintillant glow is because there is a very large, clear lake on the other side of the wall. The water transmits shimmering sunlight to the gems, and the gems pass this glow onto the greedy delvers' eyes.

Some silly person will remove one of the gems, for the stones pry free easily. As soon as one gem is removed, the seal holding back the lake water is broken. The water will rush through, shredding the clay wall in seconds, and flow down the tower into the maze (sucking the characters after it on a bumpy ride down the stairs). If they climb back up, after the lake empties, they will discover a metal support lattice washed clean of clay by the water that prevents them from leaving through the dry lake bed.

The flooded condition of the maze - now the metal lattices make sense, no? - makes it impossible to traverse. Unless the characters quickly grow gills or can otherwise breathe water for the two or more hours it would take to get through the maze, they will remain for the rest of their pitiful and wet lives as your guest.



Room Traps

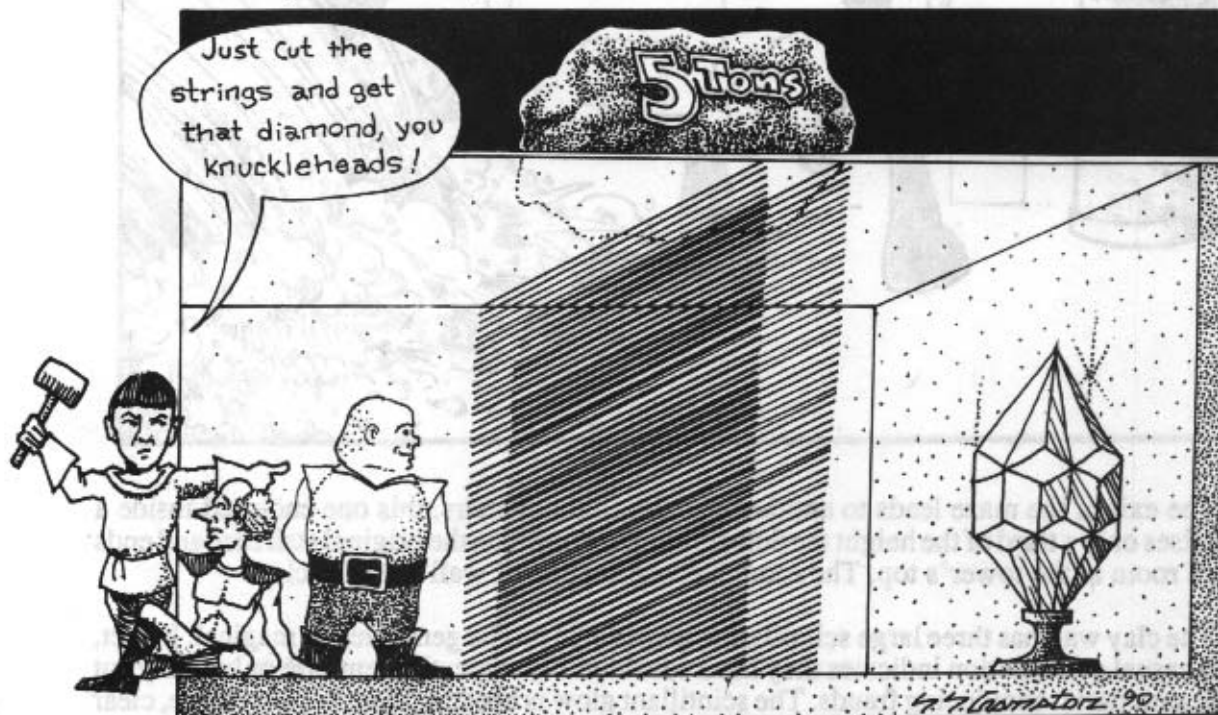
- NOTES -

Todd Shafritz is the party responsible for **No Strings Attached** - and a wild party it must have been, too.

The delvers enter a rectangular room from the only entrance. On the far side of the room is an enormous diamond of incredible value. The gem is easily 5' high. The only barrier between the delvers (now disgustingly drooling all over themselves, of course) and the diamond is a wall of a great many closely spaced, very taut strings. The strings disappear into tiny holes in the wall. The only magic to be sensed in the room is that which prevents the use of any spells of teleportation.

There is enough string to hold up a 5 ton boulder. The string passes through the wall, through a sequence of pulleys, and attaches to just such a boulder. Though it seems there are many strings, in reality there is only one string supporting the boulder's incredible weight. The boulder itself is attached to the slab of rock which serves as the ceiling over the main room by a heavy cable threaded through a sturdy pulley.

Cutting just a single string is as good as cutting them all. The boulder crashes to the ground beyond the walls of the room and pulls the ceiling slab to the side. Above the slab are many, many gallons of oil kept at near boiling temperature. (Building this trap near a friendly neighborhood lava vent for easy heating can save you thousands of gold pieces in utility charges.) Deep fried delvers, once they are shelled and cleaned, are excellent. An added joy is the look of terror frozen upon their faces when they watch that one string go whipping in and out of all the holes and they realize how big a mistake they just made.



Ed Heil says he's only 14, but the complex deviousness evidenced in his **Obvious Trap** leads me to wonder if he means "years" or "centuries." I'm inclined to assume the latter since convoluted thinking like this requires endless years of study or a memory spanning the last dozen incarnations.

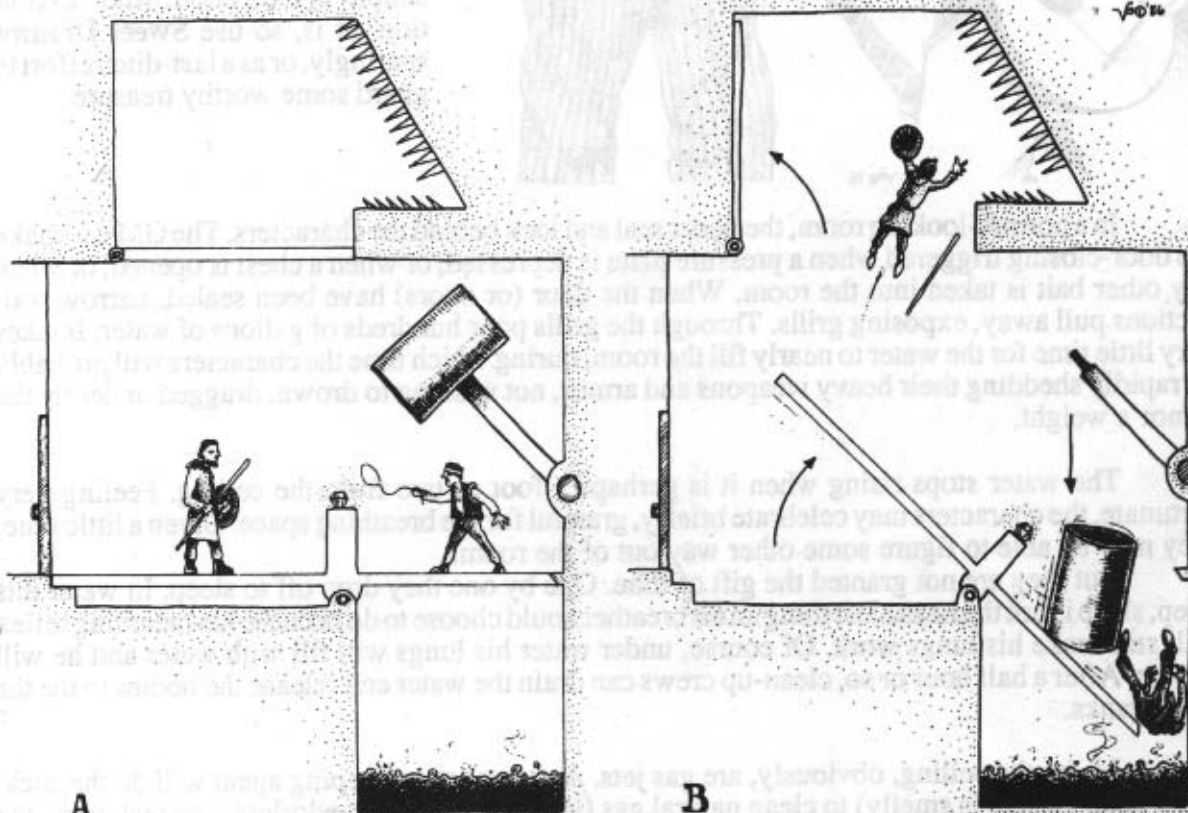
The party of characters enters a 10' x 10' room to find a fist-sized gem (or other desirable item) on a pedestal in the center of the room. Attached to the opposite wall is a gigantic hammer, positioned so that it is "obvious" that the hammer will crash down if anyone touches the gem. It will certainly shatter the treasure and thief alike into at least a trillion pieces.

Aha! think the clever delvers. *The dungeon master has forgotten that we can stand to one side and loop the gem from the pedestal with our rope!*



But there are unseen facts relevant to the situation. 1) The entire floor is a pivoting plate supported by a very strong spring. The balancing shaft runs from one side of the room to the other, directly under the pedestal. The weight of the party (unless truly monumental) is not enough to tilt the plate. 2) The back half of the ceiling is paper-thin and disguised to look like a normal ceiling. A trap door would work as well, but it must move easily and swiftly. Behind the false ceiling is a small room with spiked walls or hungry dungeon denizens willing to work fast for a bite to eat. 3) The front half of the main room has a deep shaft filled with something nasty. Dredge your imagination for whatever's suitable: lava, piranha, acid or Donny and Marie tapes!

When the gem is moved (by whatever means the delvers decide are prudent and safe) the hammer does not swing down. After enough of a delay for the delvers to think themselves safe and grab the gem (a whole second or two should be sufficient) the hammerhead falls to the floor... all several half-tons of it. This is enough to tilt the floor, with a vengeance. Anyone in the back half of the room is thrown up through the false ceiling and anyone in the front half nearest the hammer is dumped down into the shaft. If the hammerhead rolls after them, in addition to causing more damage as it falls, the floor will snap back up in position, trapping the characters.



Some adventurers make outrageous claims as to their main profession - they don't loot tombs and slay troglodytes, they're musicians. Todd Miller has designed a room trap which snares these would-be minstrels with a catchy special effect, and the result is **Music To My Ears**.



The bait to this trap is a beautifully crafted lute, decorated with gold inlay, studded with winking gems and equipped with platinum strings. Doubtlessly the characters faced sharp difficulties before coming to this place, and even in this room there some minor (and silent) obstacles to overcome before the would-be virtuoso could lay hands on this princely instrument.

One good strum across the platinum strings by the arrogant bardling, and the acoustics of the carefully-designed room will make him wish he'd never twanged a note of music in his life! "In tune" with the lute, the walls of the room amplify and distort the sound, creating good



vibrations that sound like hundreds of gongs resounding on either side of one's head. It will be several minutes before the lute's last reverberations die away. At that point not only will all the adventurers in the room be temporarily deafened, but all the tunnel inhabitants will know exactly where to find easy pickings. What else is the dinner gong for?

Todd has designed a second room trap which is both cunning and deadly, and astonishingly simple in execution. And "execution" it is, so use **Sweet Dreams** sparingly, or as a last-ditch effort to guard some worthy treasure.

In a normal-looking room, the doors seal and lock behind the characters. The GM can make the door-closing triggered when a pressure plate is depressed, or when a chest is opened, or when any other bait is taken into the room. When the door (or doors) have been sealed, narrow wall sections pull away, exposing grills. Through the grills pour hundreds of gallons of water. It takes very little time for the water to nearly fill the room, during which time the characters will probably be rapidly shedding their heavy weapons and armor, not wishing to drown, dragged under by the armor's weight.



The water stops rising when it is perhaps a foot or two from the ceiling. Feeling very fortunate, the characters may celebrate briefly, grateful for the breathing space. Given a little time, they may be able to figure some other way out of the room.

But they are not granted the gift of time. One by one they drop off to sleep. In water this deep, sleep is not the healthiest thing an air breather could choose to do because his breathing reflex will still make his lungs work. Of course, under water his lungs will fill with water and he will drown. After a half hour or so, clean-up crews can drain the water and release the bodies to the the shark tanks.

Up by the ceiling, obviously, are gas jets. Any vaporous sleeping agent will do the trick, from ether (which is smelly) to clean natural gas (which is colorless, odorless, and tasteless - the usual smell associated with natural gas is an additive for safety's sake).

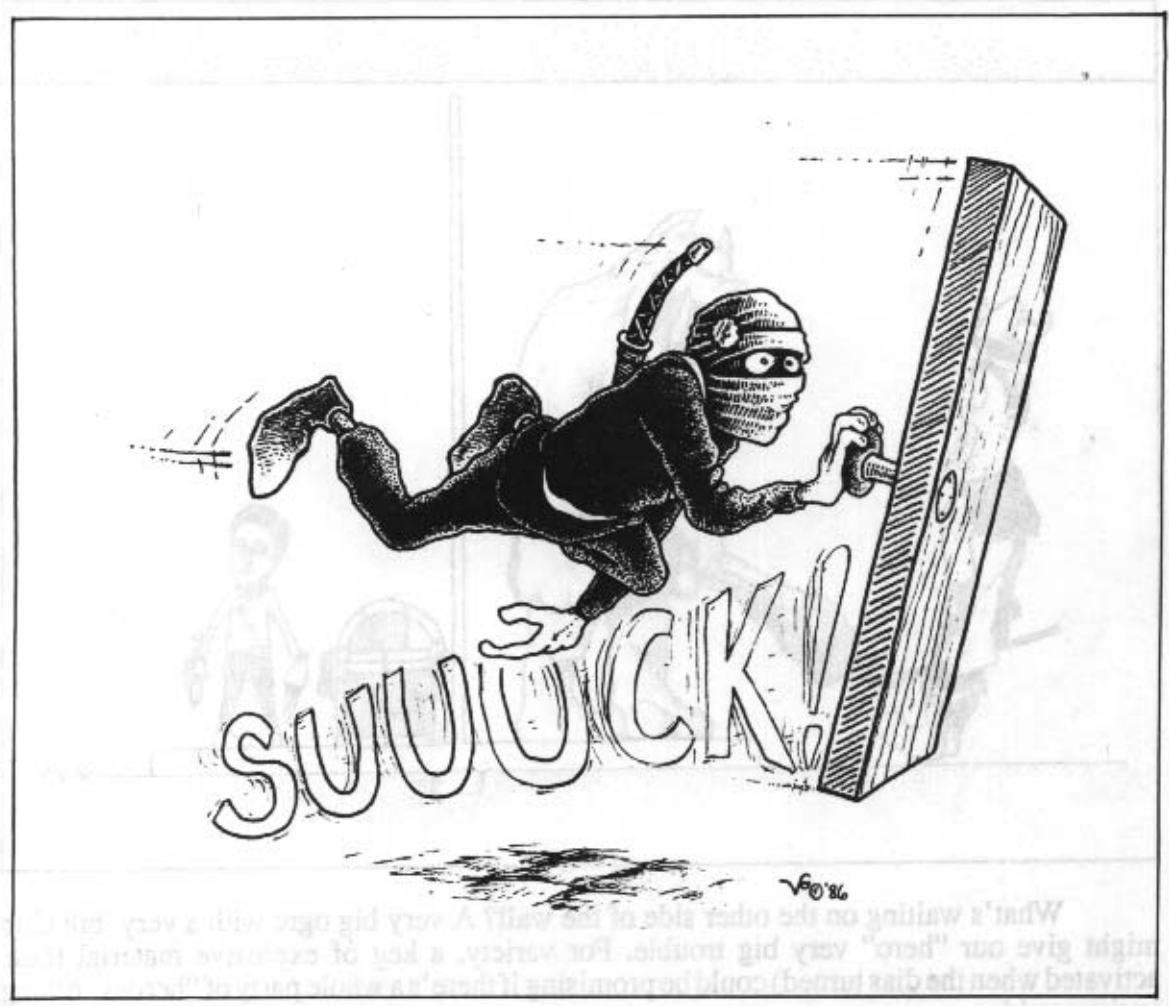




If you find this trap too deadly as a snare to slay the entire party, consider making this a pit trap. One person falls in, the pit seals at the top, and when the water enters from the bottom the result will be as dire. Or you can simply wait for the character to go unconscious and drag him out to awaken in your holding pens. Of course if you modify the trap so it only picks off pieces of the party you will have something truly ingenious for the survivors to look forward to...

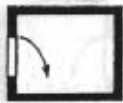
Dungeon keepers frequently go to an incredible amount of work, effort and brain-sweat to develop interesting and usual encounters for the fools who would traverse their meticulously designed halls. The next two traps are designed to separate the wimps from the heroes.

Maxwell Roberts has developed **The Vacuum Chamber** to catch those craven delvers who peek into a room and, if they fail to understand it instantly, nervously flee rather than explore. Here, if they take a peek, they're committed. Rubber walls are optional.



A vacuum pump is kept in working order by monsters with strong backs and weak minds (captured delvers for example); the pump sucks most of the air from this room. The room has only one door which opens inward. When the delvers cautiously release the strong spring-catch, the door flies in and the characters are drawn in after!

If the suction is unnaturally strong - dwarves at the pump - Maxwell offers his favorite encounter once the characters enter. The opposite wall is made of white phosphorus. The delvers are flung against the wall when they fly in and get covered with the stuff, if not actually embedded in the wall itself. As the room has suddenly filled with oxygenated air from the corridor beyond, the phosphorus bursts into flames...

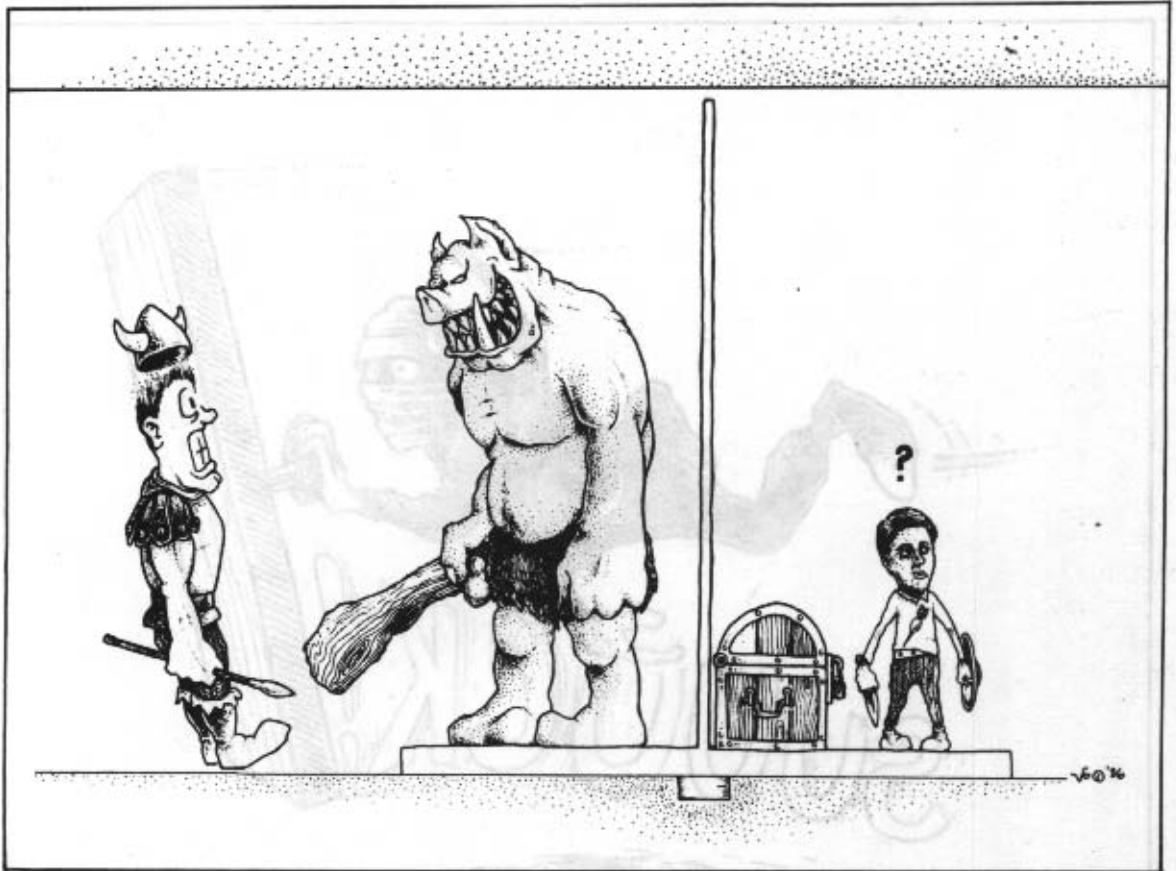


With **Wimp's Revenge**, Chris Alexander reminds us that not all who wear the title "hero" deserve it. Too often a smaller, weaker character (even stupider than his tormenter) is bullied into taking risks for which the "hero" takes the credit - and the goodies.

A 15' long corridor comes to an end in an open doorway that leads into a large room. The room is bare except for a large, ornate, enticing chest on a raised dais against the far wall.

True to his style, the "hero" will send in the wimp to investigate, while the "hero" remains a few feet outside the entrance where he or she can see what happens.

When the brave but bullied wimp touches the chest, the entire dias rotates, swapping the wimp and the chest for - what's waiting on the other side. At the same time as the dias rotates, a steel plate shuts off the corridor behind the "hero." This forces the character to prove whether or not he wears the title honestly. Of course, if the corridor is clear and the "hero" runs away, he leaves no doubt as to the veracity of the title!



What's waiting on the other side of the wall? A very big ogre with a very big club might give our "hero" very big trouble. For variety, a keg of explosive material (fuse activated when the dias turned) could be promising if there's a whole party of "heroes" hiding in the corridor.

What about the wimp and the chest? If you're kind hearted (fie!), put some legitimate treasure in the chest. However, an easy exit from the dungeon, even empty-handed, would probably be best.

In many species, one finds the female deadlier than the male. This is also true of humans, for females of the species are far nastier in their way of doing "business" when it comes to murder and mayhem. Like a black widow spider, Laurel Gouling lays a trap that forces characters to bide their time, or pay dearly for their impatience. In **The Delver Steam-O-Matic** the adventurers are presented with a "standard" dungeon room ten feet square. The solitary door shuts and seals with a slab of steel and stone once the delvers enter.



The characters should instantly note the floor on which they stand is unusual - it is made of thick glass and contains hundreds of holes three inches in diameter. Water is visible below the floor. Across the room from where the characters entered is a lever.

If the characters are content to wait patiently, doing nothing, the main door will open again of its own accord after one hour. If the characters play with the lever, they will not have a contented wait.

The lever opens the floor of the water pit below the glass, and dumps all that water on a live lava flow. An incredible amount of superhot steam is produced instantly and it greedily hisses into the room through the holes in the glass floor. I recommend adding a little salt to the water for flavoring; drawn butter is superior for those armored cretins who have been boiled like lobsters in their own shells.

And if the delvers do not trip the lever; well, the time they've wasted can be spent gathering a "dinner reception" for them when they leave through the only available door, the one they entered through.



Of course, most characters will avoid live steam like the plague, but the idea of a warm bath after a long day in a cold, damp dungeon complex is something few can resist. What better than a sauna, for example, to burn the cold from chilly bones? Well the Mad Doctor, Paul Ronkas, has devised a ghastly room trap called **Sauna** that warms my heart, but will chill the delvers' blood.

This room trap could be a deceitful shelter in arctic wastes or simply a magical room in a cold, dank dungeon. The adventurers discover an elegant public-style bath, about 10' across and a full 30' deep. It is heated to just the right temperature by an underground hot spring. Anyone entering the water will shortly discover two things: while they are in the water they are gifted with the ability to breathe water (wouldn't want any accidental drownings here, would we?); and on the bottom of the pool they can find scattered coins, gems, weapons or whatever treasure you see fit. A very observant swimmer might notice there is no wood, cloth, bones or other organic material - just glass, stone or metal. Delvers may also notice small, helpless snails throughout the pool, busily cleaning algae growing in the tepid waters.

Swimmers remain pleasantly comfortable for about ten minutes after the first person enters the pool. That should be enough time for your average delver to discard his aimless paranoia and hop in for a good hot soak. When the ten minutes are up, the hot springs stop flowing into the pool, and the water immediately gets colder - much colder. If the water-breathing delvers (remember the "gift") swim quickly up from the bottom where they've been gathering goodies, they'll find an ice crust already formed across the top of the pool; the crust gets rapidly thicker.

Those who remained out of the pool won't be able to shout warnings to those below the ice. Those who choose to just soak their feet should be up to their ankles in ice. The delvers below the water, after their initial panic, will probably settle down and wait to be chopped out. After all, they can breathe under water, right?





Right. For another five minutes.

Five minutes after the ice covers the pool, the first person into the water can no longer breathe water. His buddies underwater with him can only watch him drown, knowing their own fate is creeping up behind them. Of course, with the speed the water is turning solid, they might freeze to death first.

If some party members remain outside they can work at chopping or burning a hole in the ice with some hellacious spell. But unless the spell or the ice chopper is powerful, it'll take time. And time is something the swimmers are notably short on.

If the worst occurs, the snails will clean up afterward. They won't get everything, though, because even the most voracious snail has no taste for metal, stone or glass...

If the ice-crusting water isn't to your liking, you can be equally diabolical by making the water-breathing spell permanent after about ten minutes. That's "permanent" as in "fish" or "snail" - either a full transformation or perhaps the swimmers simply discover that breathing air will suffocate them as it would a fish.

If this room (in its basic form) is located deep inside a monster-populated dungeon, and you're seeing to the monsters' health and welfare, dispense with the snails. Stack some fishing poles, gaffing hooks, and large spoons nearby. Several hours after the delvers have "investigated" this room - or whenever feeding time rolls around - turn the hot springs back up to "Simmer" and provide your chilly monsters with a good hot meal... Soup is good food! Come 'n get it!

The Mad Doctor isn't content to make the dungeon monsters fat and lazy with home-cooked meals. For another homey touch, he designed this **Spin Cycle** room. Wash 'n wear delvers, take note.

To initial appearances, this room is a simple one: circular, about 30' in diameter, with just one entrance. At the door is a narrow pressure plate, difficult to detect. When first stepped on, the trap is set. After one minute goes by without 100 pounds or more weight on the pressure plate, the doorway shuts and seals flush with the wall.

The room then begins to spin. It rapidly gains speed, and centrifugal forces pull the dizzy delvers to the wall. Delvers crushed against the stone can move along the wall (up, down, sideways), but only the strongest will be able to battle their way to the still center of the room. Of these, only the most agile will be able to stand.

These same strong, agile folk will, de facto, also be the least fortunate. After the room has reached top speed, the floor splits and drops away. Those characters plastered against the wall are safe, but the heroes will find themselves treading air over wall-to-wall sharks, piranha, alligators or whatever slimy, toothy horrors lurk in your imagination.

So the heroes are aquasnacks. What about the others?

When the floor splits and falls away, the ceiling slides off to the side. With centrifugal forces holding them securely against the wall, the delvers can climb to safety. Which they'd better do in a hurry, because the room now begins to slow down! If they tarry, they'll join their stalwart buddies in the drink.

Up at the top is a room of an upper level. I suggest you populate it with less fishy, less massive, but no less hungry, inhabitants. After all, the adventurers will be very dizzy and commensurately less capable of putting up a good fight. And even the little guys have to eat sometime.

It's possible the last room trap would be better entitled "Fish in a Barrel," but for all its rampant overkill and aura of unpredictable violence, I venture to say it's capable of catching more than a few curious characters.

Delvers, you see, just cannot keep their hands off other people's toys. Often this means the delvers themselves become toys for someone else's amusement. Drew Deitz's **Shooting Gallery** goes to unthinkable lengths to give the delver exactly what he or she deserves for fooling around with this trap.

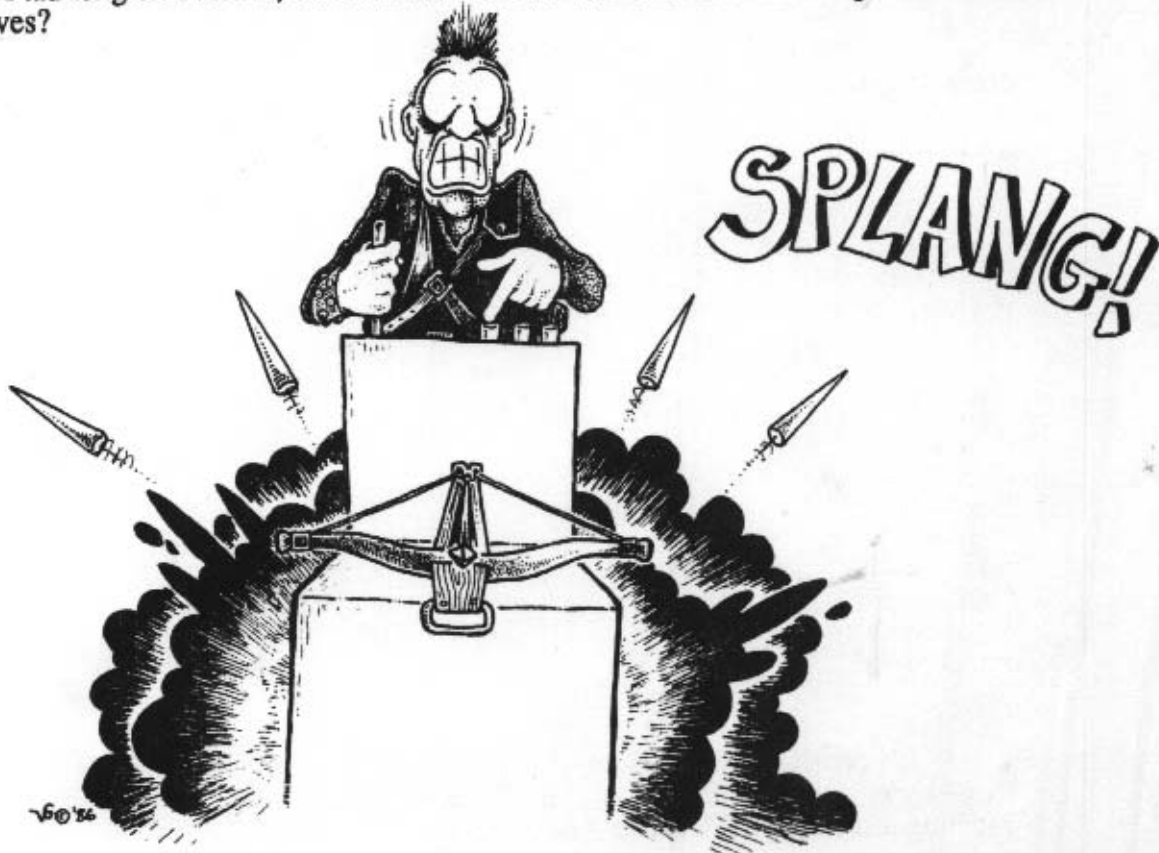
This trap can stand alone, but it is worth being the centerpiece of some long dungeon room. In appearance, this trap seems to be a podium with three buttons and a lever on it. A crossbow mechanism points down the length of the room to a target at the far end. (Having a taunting goblin-head in the center of the target would not be amiss here.) Close examination of the podium reveals that the buttons and the lever have labels: the top button (green) is marked *Start*; the middle button (red) is marked *Fire*; the bottom button (blue) is marked *Stop*; and the level is marked *Up* above and *Down* below.

Slight movements of the lever seem to adjust the crossbow's aim. Squeezing the lever shoots the bolt out of the crossbow. Pushing the green button reloads the crossbow - at least the first time.

Everything and anything else the delver could do will increase that delver's familiarity with pain. At the delver's feet is a pit (if he or she is standing normally at the podium). Pushing the green button twice in a short time will release spikes in the pit that will explode upward and impale the delver's feet on 6 inches of triangular steel with small holes about an inch below the tip. Pushing the blue *Stop* button causes needle sharp spikes to come out from the base of the podium, at a right angle to the floor spikes, and shoot through the delver's legs to lock within the holes in the floor spikes. If the lever is roughly jerked down, as might happen when a character was in a spasm of agony, the spiked floorplate will drop away and deposit our victim in a pit where he might face more spikes, or the plate locked into his feet might drag him beneath the surface of a stagnant pool of water.

Oh, and the "Fire" button marked in Flaming Red warning colors. If the delver isn't fireproofed, there will definitely be claims made against his accident indemnity insurance. Small openings appear overhead and around his feet. Jets of oil spurt out, igniting just as they leave the spouts.

A tad long on overkill, but how else can we train characters to keep their hands to themselves?



Room Traps

- NOTES -



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Room Traps

- NOTES -



Deliver, you see, just cannot keep their hands off other people's toys. When this

There is no secret trap printed in invisible ink on this page.

This trap can stand alone, but it is worth being aware of its appearance, this trap seems to be a platform with three buttons and a lever on it. A crossbow mechanism points down the length of the room to a target at the far end. (Having a hunting goblin head in the center of the target would not be a bad idea.) The lever is on the right side of the platform and the buttons are on the left. The top button (green) is marked 'Up', the middle button (red) is marked 'Fire', the bottom button (blue) is marked 'Stop', and the level is marked 'Up above and Down below.'

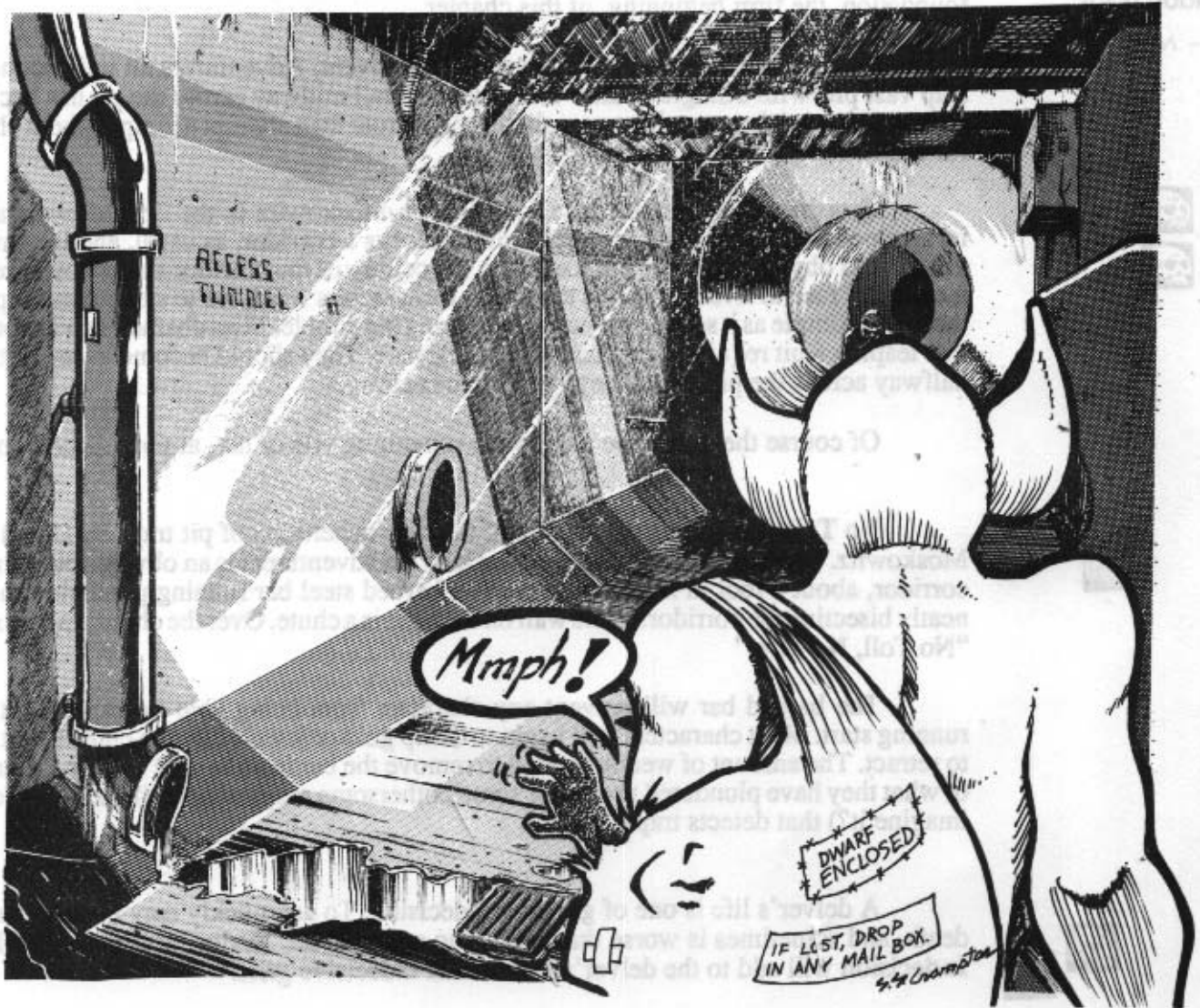
Slight movements of the lever seem to adjust the crossbow's aim. Pushing the lever shoots the bolt out of the crossbow. Pushing the green button reloads the crossbow - at least the first time.

Everything and anything else the deliver could do will increase that deliver's pain. At the deliver's feet is a pit (it is a pit) he or she is standing on. Pushing the green button twice in a short time will release spikes in the pit that will explode upward and impale the deliver's feet on 6 inches of irregular steel with small holes about an inch below the tip. Pushing the blue button causes sharp spikes to come out from the base of the platform, at a right angle to the floor spikes, and shoot through the deliver's feet to lock within the holes in the floor spikes. If the lever is roughly "level" down, as might happen when a character was in a state of agony, the spiked floorplates will drive away and deposit our victim in a pit where he might face more spikes, or the plate locked into his feet might drag him beneath the surface of a stagnant pool of water.

Oh, and the "Fire" button results in flaming Red warning color. If the deliver has a magical glow will definitely be claims made against his sacred jewelry. Small openings appear overhead and around his feet. Lots of oil pour out, lighting just as they leave the spots.

A railing on overhead, but how else can we thin characters to keep their hands in themselves?





Corridor Traps

Perhaps I was a tad harsh when I suggested the old saw, "Good things come in small packages," was a lie. Small, after all, is a relative term and can be used to describe anything from a "small" weapon like a stiletto to a "small" disaster, such as two empty seats on a wagon full of wizards going off a cliff. And a "package" is merely something that contains an item or items.



A corridor, therefore, could be considered a "small package" of sorts. If you think about it, it is often filled with delvers more tightly packed than tenpins. If they thought of corridors as anything more than a way to get between one treasure room and the next, they'd never consider cramping themselves so into such a tiny box.

So, "small packages" - corridors - can contain "good things" - delvers. And, as another proverb has it, to all "good things" must come an end. Herewith, then, are the corridor traps.




Pits are the foundation of many good corridor traps, so I chose to make pits the foundation, the firm beginning, of this chapter.

Pits can be too common, too easy to circumvent. Adventurers all train so they may leap vast pits with a single bound. The invisible wall midway across the pit has become so common that a delver would sooner slit his own throat than attempt a jump without checking for such an impediment.





Quasimodo's Lament by David Steven Moskowitz is the first of two traps that infuses new life into the old pit trap. This pit blocks a corridor, as usual, and is completely visible and obvious. The difference is that the ceiling of the corridor slants down, reaching a height of four to five feet above the pit. Tall characters will have to stoop just to approach the pit. As simple as it seems, the jump is anything but simple. Most characters will not realize that leaping a pit requires height as well as distance. They should become aware of this fact halfway across the pit, when they run into the ceiling.

Of course the pit can be filled with something vile or not, at your discretion.



No Toll, No Life is the second of the new generation of pit traps by David Steven Moskowitz. Once again the primary obstacle to the adventurers is an obvious pit. Across the corridor, about a foot in front of the pit, is a barbed steel bar running parallel to the floor, neatly bisecting the corridor. In the wall on the right is a chute. Over the chute is a sign reading "No Toll, No Life."

The barbed bar will prevent any character from being able to leap the pit with a running start. Most characters will begin to dump gold or jewels into the chute to get the bar to retract. The amount of wealth needed to remove the bar is up to you; I favor a round 25% of what they have plundered to date, or some bothersome magical item like a sword (can you imagine it?) that detects traps.



A delver's life is one of grueling indecision. To act quickly may mean salvation or death, and sometimes is worse than taking no action at all. Taylor Deupree's **The Path of Indecision** will add to the delver's measure of indecisive grief.

This pit trap is sprung like any ordinary pit - tripwires, pressure plates, or dumb bad luck. The only unusual factor is that the pit is exceptionally deep, and well lit enough near the bottom for the character who falls to see clearly the spikes and blades waiting hungrily for him at the bottom. The stink of magic will be apparent.

The magic is the illusion of spikes and blades, plus a triggering spell which, if someone seeks to dispell the illusion, will create real spikes and blades of real, nonmagical steel.

Of course, for those without magical skills, the fall will not end on spikes - they are only illusory after all. A bed of feathers cushions the fall, and an open well-lit doorway entices the characters much, much deeper into the bowels of the dungeon where sterner fates await.

Rich Bourgeois has submitted a pair of particularly cruel and vicious traps. He evidently has a fascination with pits and spikes, as they are the furnishings of two corridor traps.

I was told, once, that what separates you humans from the beasts is your use of tools to do something easily accomplished by brute force. That judgement may be a bit harsh. As Rick Bourgeois proves with his **Impaling Pit**, tools can accomplish the task with finesse.

The hapless (and soon to be deceased) character begins his own downfall by stepping on a pressure plate seconds before he plunges into a hidden pit. Pressure on the plate severs a wire, yet prevents the weight on the other end of the wire from falling. As the delver steps

forward and falls into the pit, the weight is released. As it falls, the weight draws a section of flooring across the pit, making it seem as though the delver has been swallowed up by the floor itself.

The fallen delver finds the floor of the pit a curiosity in that there are one-inch diameter holes all over it. Steel spikes slowly grow out of these holes, rising toward the roof of the pit. When the first weight fell, it also severed a line that released two other weights, gently counterbalanced, that would raise these impaling stakes through the pit - and through anything in the pit. Death should take about 30 minutes.

Movable corridor sections are a tried and true friend to all dungeon masters, and Rich designed **The Pivoting Pit** with this firmly in mind. Chances are fair the nosy delvers will be punctured twice on the same set of spikes: double duty! Be sure to put this trap on a level well below ground level.

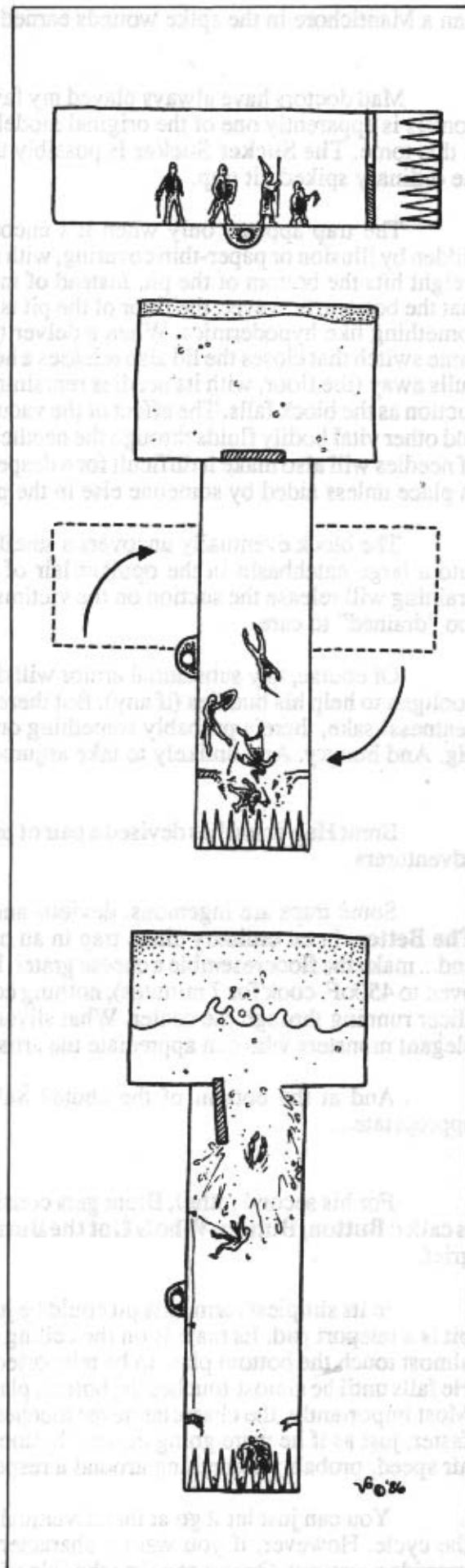
A corridor at least 30 feet long terminates in an ordinary door. The corridor is otherwise featureless. However, when the majority of the party passes the pivot point in the middle of the corridor, all 30' of corridor pivots down, throwing the entire group head over heels toward the door.

Unfortunately for the adventurers, the door is only a replica cunningly painted on thin cloth shim. The delvers will rip through the cloth and have an intimate encounter with the bed of spikes waiting behind.

Okay. But Rich isn't content to let it go at that... a sure sign of a properly devious mind in a trap-designer.

The corridor, now locked in a vertical position, provides access to a room on the level above (best left accessible in no other way). Those who survived the short 15' fall (and some will, most likely) can devise what means they will to climb 30' up into the room above.

Opening the trap door will be a disaster. The room above is full of rubbing alcohol. When the door is opened the liquid will rush out under such pressure that anyone climbing up will be knocked back down onto the spikes. And even if someone manages to hang on to a rope and not fall back on the spikes, all that alcohol is bound to sting worse



than a Mantichore in the spike wounds earned earlier!

Mad doctors have always played my favorite parts in late night movies, and Dr. Paul Ronkas is apparently one of the original models. He's created some of the most grisly traps in this tome. **The Sucker Sucker** is possibly the most gruesome of all, and a novel use for the ordinary spiked pit trap.

The trap appears only when it's encountered: a fairly typical ten foot square pit, hidden by illusion or paper-thin covering, with a self-closing steel plate for a lid when sudden weight hits the bottom of the pit. Instead of massing bone-breaking, skin-shredding spikes that the bottom, however, the floor of the pit is carpeted with tiny inch-long hollow needles, something like hypodermics. When a delver (or delvers) clumsily blunder into the pit, the same switch that closes the lid also releases a heavy block underneath the pit floor. The block pulls away (the floor, with its needles remaining), creating a slight vacuum that increases in suction as the block falls. The effect of the vacuum will be to start drawing the victims' blood and other vital bodily fluids through the needles and into the cavity below. The sheer number of needles will also make it difficult for a desperate delver to move; the suction will hold him in place unless aided by someone else in the pit lucky enough not to be stuck.

The block eventually uncovers a small hole in one wall, allowing the blood to drain into a large catchbasin in the opulent lair of an ingenious (and very lazy) vampire. This draining will release the suction on the victims(s), but by then they will probably be feeling too "drained" to care.

Of course, any substantial armor will defeat the tiny spikes, and allow the encrusted hooligan to help his buddies (if any). But there's still the problem of the covered pit, and for neatness' sake, there's probably something on the way to clean up what's left... something big. And hungry. And unlikely to take argument from its food very politely.

Brent Halverson has devised a pair of pits sure to increase caution in the most careless adventurers.

Some traps are ingenious, devious and twisted, but Brent maintains **The Simpler, The Better**. In an ordinary chute trap in an ordinary corridor, don't put ugly spikes at the end... make the floor resemble a cheese grater. For a midnight snack of delver nachos (preheat oven to 450oF, cook for 7 minutes), nothing could be better. You could even include a small slicer running through the center. What slivers off you can put on canape's for those more elegant monsters who can appreciate the artistry of delvers sliced like radish curls.

And at the bottom of the chute? Salt water to "soothe" their wounds would be appropriate...

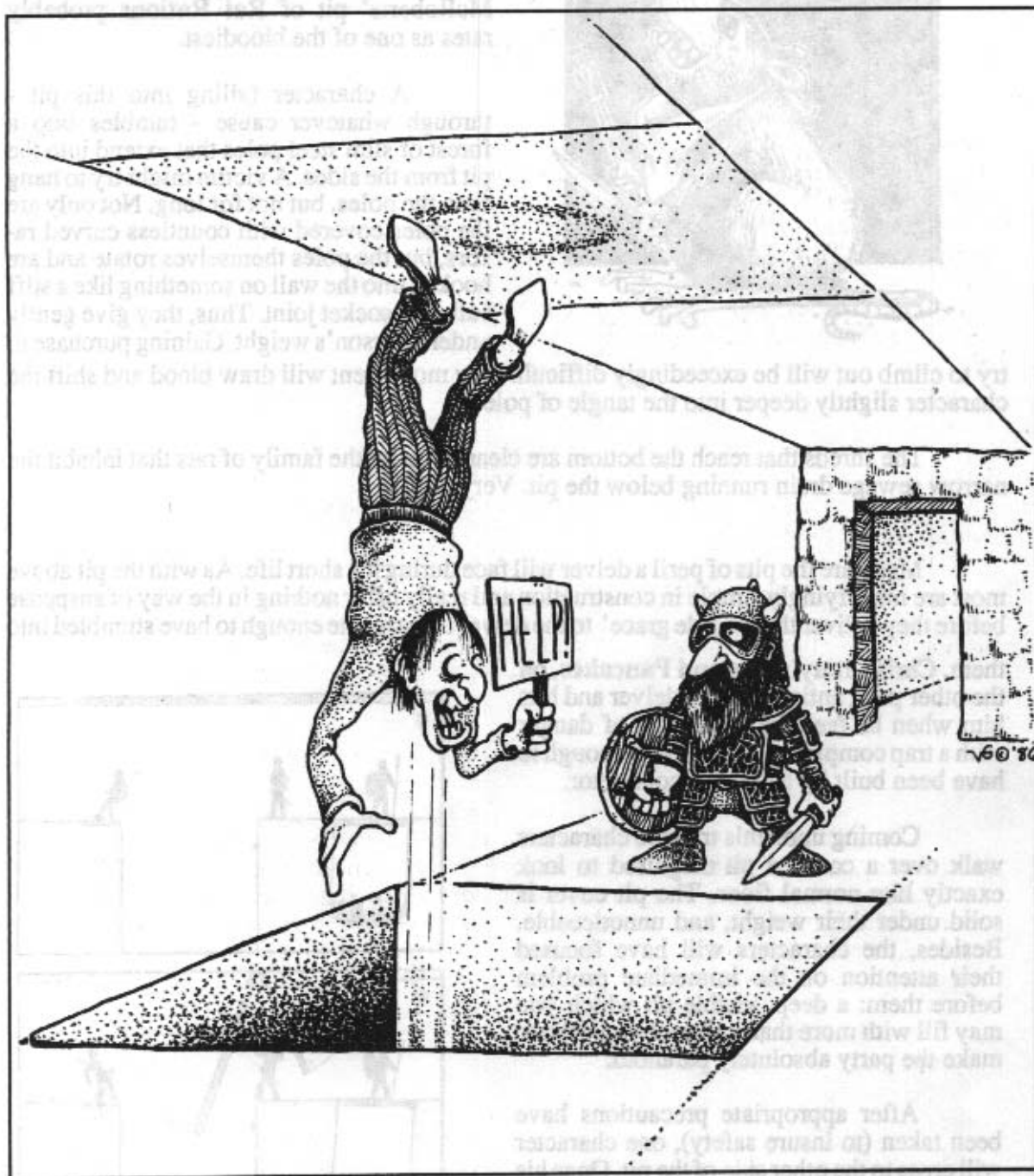
For his second pitfall, Brent gets considerably more elaborate. This pit-full of doom is called **Button, Button, Who's Got the Button?** and again, the delver brings about his own grief.

In its simplest form, this pit could be just an annoyance. At the bottom of an ordinary pit is a teleport pad. Its mate is on the ceiling directly above the pit. A character only has to almost touch the bottom plate to be teleported up to where he almost touches the top plate. He falls until he almost touches the bottom plate and is teleported up again... you get the idea. Most importantly, the character never touches any surface, so he continues to fall faster and faster, just as if he were going down a bottomless pit. Eventually he'll reach his maximum air speed, probably something around a respectable 120 mph.

You can just let it go at that. Eventually his friends should manage to get him out of the cycle. However, if you want a character to be the instrument of his own destruction, provide a way out. Open a panel on the side of the pit after the character has reached a healthy



speed. This panel should be down low, where only the "falling" character can see it. Behind the panel are four buttons. Give him another fall or two to think about it. Unless his friends have a better solution prepared, the plummeting character will eventually push one of the buttons as he flies past.



Button Number One will in fact save the delver by casting a spell that will slow him and stop him at floor level where he can step free. Button Number Two simply shuts off the teleport pads about two seconds after being pushed. That should be enough time for the character to teleport up to the top of the shaft for his last fall. Button Number Three will cause a bed of spikes to rise up through the teleport pad (although you could combine Brent's previous suggestion with this one by tilting the shaft into the grater chute). Of course, the teleport pads keep working, which keeps the falling character "coming back for more." Ouch. Button Number Four is my favorite, but I have a weakness for Delver Julienne. A grid of fine wire pops across the pit above the teleport pad on the bottom. Shouldn't this stop the delver? Well, no, because the grid isn't all that fine, and the wires are covered with diamond dust so they achieve a truly Razormatic* cutting edge. The, uh, sauce resulting after just a few teleports is just right for pouring over elf ears flambe'.



try to climb out will be exceedingly difficult. Any movement will draw blood and shift the character slightly deeper into the tangle of poles.

The shreds that reach the bottom are cleaned up by the family of rats that inhabit the narrow sewage drain running below the pit. Very tidy...

Many are the pits of peril a delver will face during his short life. As with the pit above most are mortifyingly simple in construction and really offer nothing in the way of suspense before they deliver the coup de grace' to the delver unfortunate enough to have stumbled into

them. Chris Crotty's **Pits and Pancakes**, on the other paw, anticipates the delver and hits him when he feels he's well out of danger with a trap complex and expensive enough to have been built by a defense contractor.

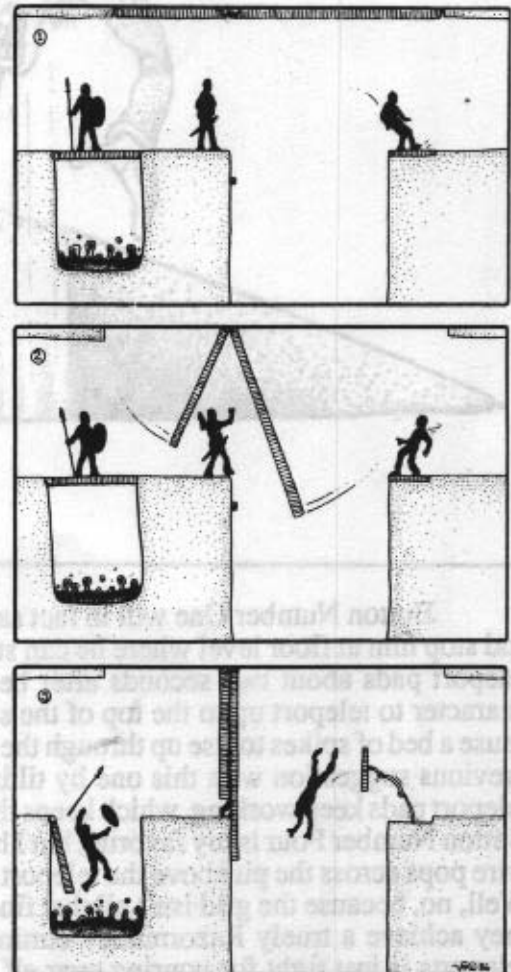
Coming upon this trap the characters walk over a covered pit disguised to look exactly like normal floor. The pit cover is solid under their weight, and unnoticeable. Besides, the characters will have focused their attention on the immediate problem before them: a deep, visible pit which you may fill with more than spikes if you wish to make the party absolutely paranoid.

After appropriate precautions have been taken (to insure safety), one character will cross to the other side of the pit. Once his or her full weight (at least 50 pounds or more) trips the pressure plate on the other side, the bloodbath begins.

First two steel plates swing down from the ceiling, hinged right above the visible pit's nearest edge, to meet snugly and pulp characters standing there. The plate swinging down through the pit area is longer than its companion and it hits a button set inside the near pit wall that releases two mechanisms. One is a spring beneath the pressure plate (below the character who crossed

Delvers have numerous wily precautions against the pitfalls they face, probably because they face so many. Some pits are simple, some are complex, but Leonard McRoberts' pit of **Rat Rations** probably rates as one of the bloodiest.

A character falling into this pit - through whatever cause - tumbles into a forest of slim steel poles that extend into the pit from the sides. A victim might try to hang onto the poles, but not for long. Not only are the poles covered with countless curved razors covered with the poles themselves rotate and are hooked into the wall on something like a stiff ball-and-socket joint. Thus, they give gently under a person's weight. Gaining purchase to



the pit to start all this). The spring catapults that character back into the open pit.

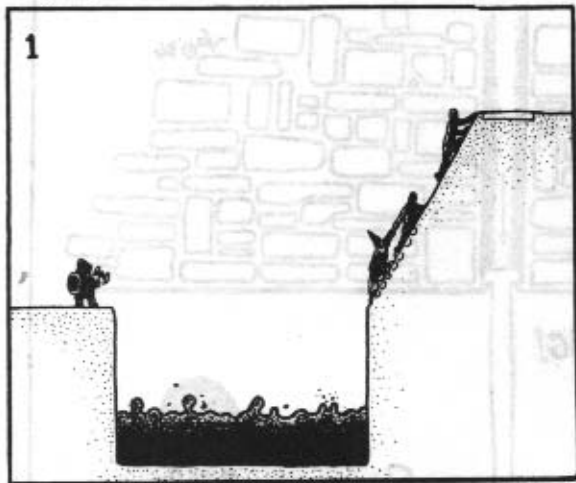
The second mechanism opens the "floor" over the enclosed pit, where the rear guard of the party has been standing. Even as they thank their lucky stars they were not involved in the carnage before them, the floor opens and dumps them into the previously hidden pit. Instead of filling the pit they fall into you might drop a horror upon them from the area opened up when one of the ceiling plates swung down. Even if you elect to let them fall unharmed, the adventurers will have a difficult time crawling out of the pit and then getting beyond the steel panels blocking the corridor before them. It'll keep 'em off the streets for a little while...

Brannon Moore is a trap designer who enjoys a good double-think double punch to do in delvers. The next three traps will put an extra twist on a character's thinking - or failing that, a twist in the character's thinking apparatus.

Brannon's first corridor trap proves he is, in fact, a reincarnation of a troll. It's a pity to find such a noble spirit trapped in a human body, but I am gratified to see it making itself felt with a trap like **Going Up?**

The delvers, traveling a corridor, find themselves walking up a 45 degree slant. Soon it levels out into a landing about 20' long and 10' wide. At the end is a door. The most disturbing thing is that the roof of the landing is covered with spikes.

Once the door is fiddled with, a portcullis slams down, cutting off the landing from the sloping approach corridor. The landing begins to slowly rise toward the spikes, inexorably. Anything used to brace against the roof and landing will be shattered or destroyed. As the landing gets within a foot and a half of the spikes, the portcullis springs up and an avenue of freedom presents itself. Adventurers may scramble for safety onto the sloping corridor.

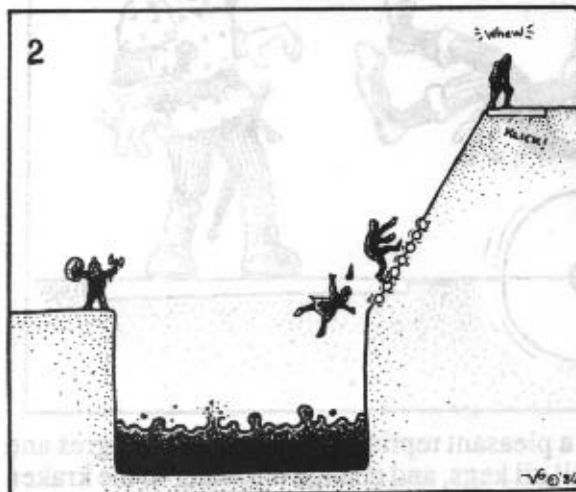


Unfortunately, the floor of the sloped corridor is now a bed of rollers which will accelerate adventurers toward the diamond dust wire mesh now strung across the end of the slope. Monsters may be waiting for fresh delver filet on the other side.

And if the characters had not dived from the landing? Since the landing stops a foot away from the spikes, only the chubbiest would be endangered. Patience is a great virtue...

Brannon's next example, **Anything He Can Do**, has to be one of the more technically exacting traps in this tome. Here he brings his double-think to a high state of refinement. What adventurer imagines there could be any trouble if he does exactly what he just saw his buddy safely do? Precautions seem unnecessary, but doom comes as swiftly as ever.

The characters come up to a section of corridor bisected by a pit containing boiling oil. Beyond the trap the corridor slants up at a 60 degree angle, with the first 15' of corridor paved with rollers like rolling pins. The corridor continues its upward





slant another 20', then levels out again.

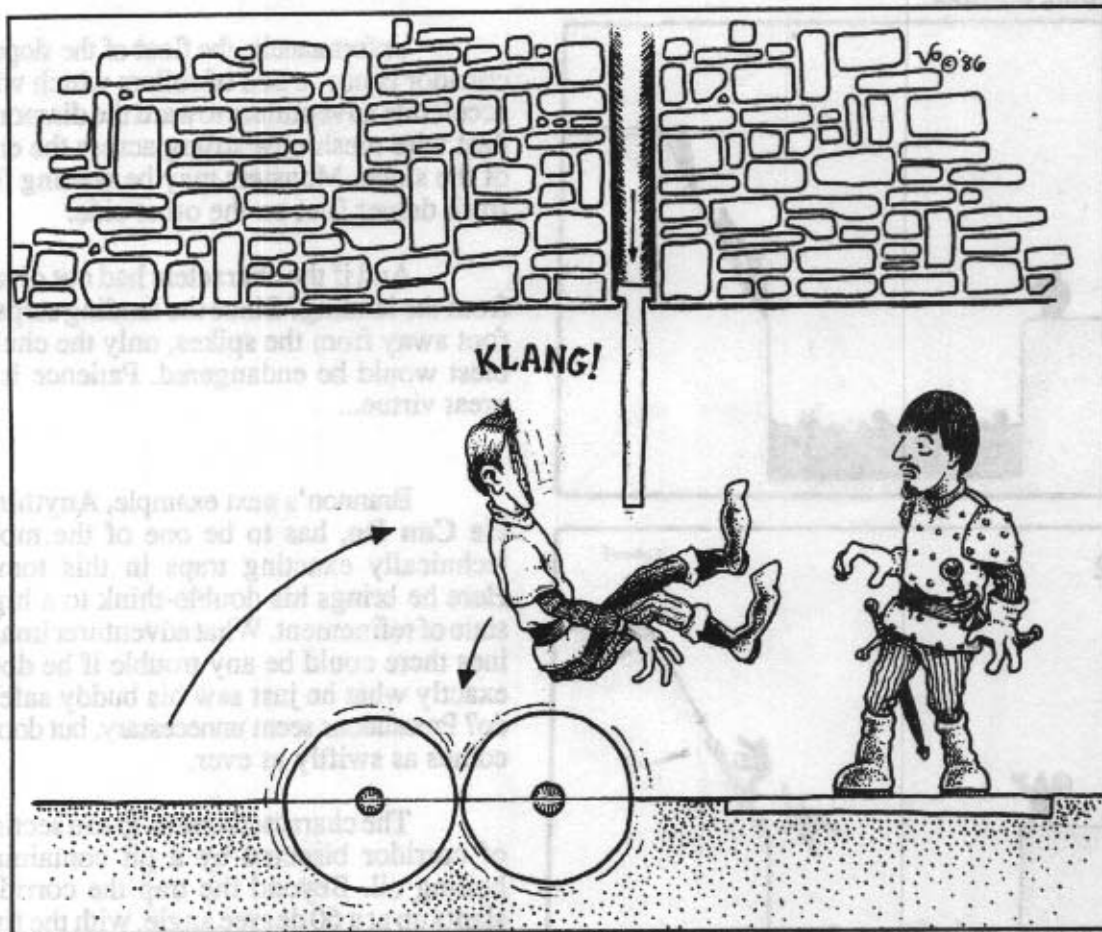
The delvers swiftly discover that the rollers will not turn. In fact, the rollers are blocked. The first character scrambles up the slope; at the top, he hits a pressure plate that removes the blocking mechanism. Now the adventurers on the rollers will find them rolling freely, sliding anyone back into the boiling oil. The careless followers will pay dearly for their presumption of safety.

Brannon's last offering, **Roller Derby**, also catches the cowardly second in line while allowing the brave first to pass unscathed. If Brannon has a fault, it's a fixation with rollers, but the result makes that easy to overlook.

The party finds the corridor blocked by two rolling cylinders. Each cylinder rolls toward the other so anything landing on them will be sucked down between and flattened. A coin tossed onto them will vanish between and reappear all squashed and thin below the cylinders. The characters will laugh about not wanting to end up like that, and on the surface, it would appear that they will not because the cylinders are only 5' across and rise 3' off the floor at their highest point. It is an easy jump at the worst of times.

When the first character leaps over the rollers, though, he lands on a pressure plate that drops an invisible wall down from the ceiling to just about a foot over the rollers. As the next character leaps, the wall stops him in mid-flight, and the rollers press his suit of armor very nicely, and without starch in the collar!

If you really want to be nasty you make the first character set the pressure plate, and the second character activates it when he lands. The plate springs up and dumps anyone on it back into the rollers. A tad crude, perhaps, but getting the characters who believe the danger is behind them just proves there is no statute of limitations on the offense of believing you have outsmarted the dungeon master!



Traps that pick up after themselves are a pleasant reprieve for those weary ogres and goblins who have to re-set pressure plates, re-fill oil kegs, and change the water in the kraken

tanks. Ed Heil's **Wringer** is fittingly tidy, even though he shares Brannon Moore's fixation with rollers!

Nosy delvers discover a trapdoor which, while small, can be wrestled open with a

little leverage. Below the trapdoor is a short shaft - almost like a one-person little room, featureless.

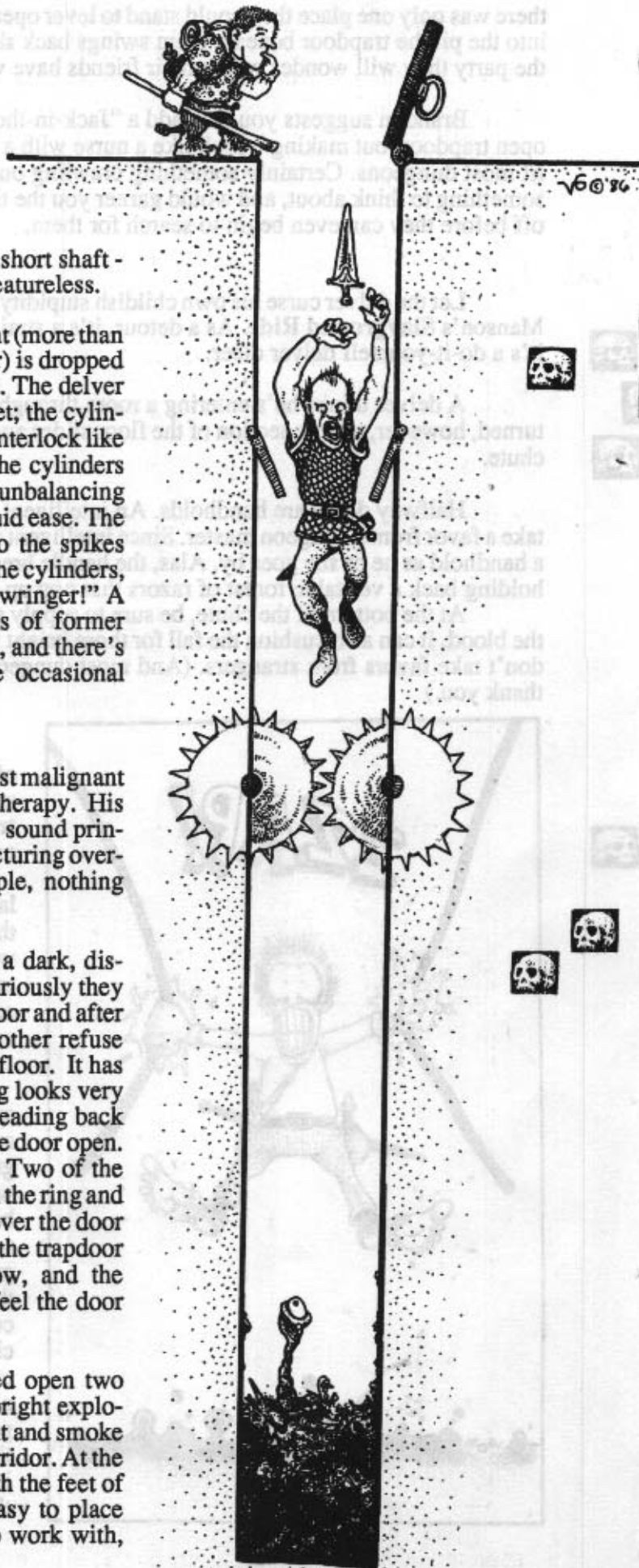
When a certain amount of weight (more than a few coins, less than an average delver) is dropped to the floor of the shaft, the floor splits. The delver drops through to where two rollers meet; the cylinders are covered with short spikes that interlock like gears. The central pivoting shafts of the cylinders are delicately balanced - any weight unbalancing them causes the rollers to turn with liquid ease. The shafts have a little room to "give", so the spikes catch on the poor fool that unbalances the cylinders, and that character is "put through the wringer!" A pit below holds the mangled remains of former passers-by. The pit is very deep indeed, and there's probably something surviving on the occasional feasts that drip down from above....

Brandon Corey has to be the most malignant mind ever to survive electro-shock therapy. His **Leveraged Dropout** is a trap that uses sound principle to get down to the business of puncturing over-inflated egos. Everything is so simple, nothing could be amiss, could it?

The party finds themselves in a dark, disused section of a dead end corridor. Curiously they spot monster tracks in the dust on the floor and after they clear away wood, iron bars and other refuse they find a trap door set flush with the floor. It has a big steel ring in it and the whole thing looks very heavy. The hinges are set in the edge leading back down the corridor and no one can tug the door open.

But delvers are a cunning lot. Two of the strongest grab a steel bar, jam it through the ring and after setting a fulcrum, up proceed to lever the door open. The rest of the party stands near the trapdoor to surprise whatever is waiting below, and the heroes on the bar announce they can feel the door giving way!

When the trapdoor is wrenched open two things happen immediately. A small, bright explosive bursts at the door with enough light and smoke to temporarily blind everyone in the corridor. At the same moment a trap door opens beneath the feet of the men operating the lever. It was easy to place because, given the material at hand to work with,



there was only one place they could stand to lever open the door. Once the heroes have fallen into the pit the trapdoor beneath them swings back shut so when sight returns to the rest of the party they will wonder where their friends have vanished to!

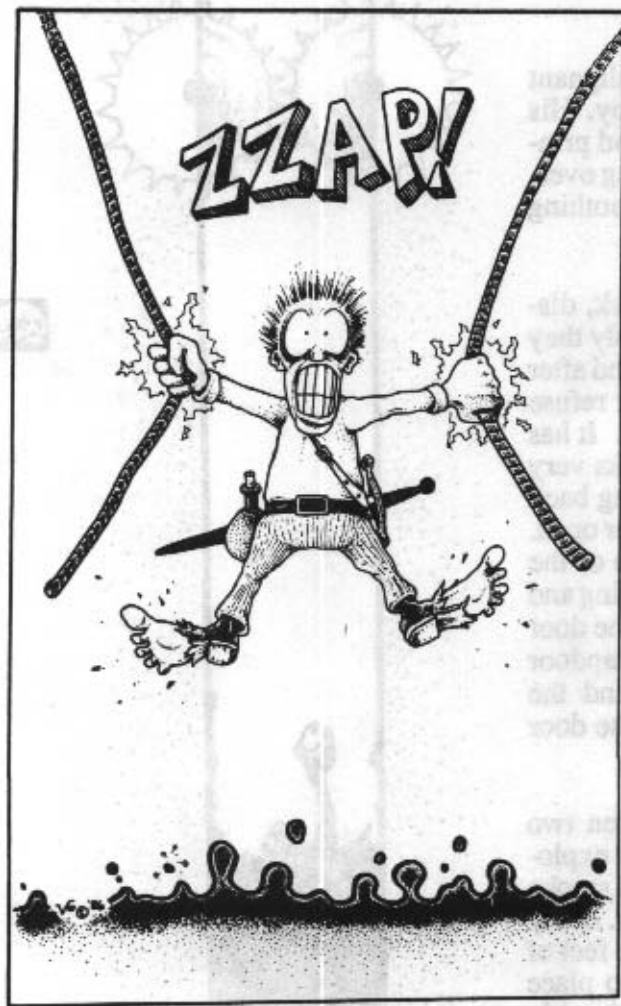
Brandon suggests you also add a "Jack-in-the-box" creature to spring up out of the open trapdoor, but making it look like a nurse with a hypodermic needle probably does not fit most dungeons. Certainly something crawling out of the opening would give the party something to think about, and would garner you the time to haul their captured companions off before they can even begin to search for them.

Let the delver curse his own childish stupidity. That's the philosophy behind Charles Manson's **Slayground Ride**. As a detour, it's a straight shot to the lower levels. As a trap, it's a do-it-yourself delver dicer.

A delver thinks he's entering a room through an ordinary door. When the handle is turned, however, a large section of the floor slides away, and zip, the delver slides down the chute.

Halfway down are handholds. An intelligent delver (could one be found) wouldn't take a favor from a dungeon master. Since intelligent delvers are a rarity, the delver will grab a handhold as he or she goes by. Alas, the handle breaks away instantly, releasing the catch holding back a veritable forest of razors that pop up along the lower half of the chute.

At the bottom of the chute, be sure to supply a thick pad of cotton batting to soak up the blood. It can also cushion the fall for those bright folks who leave the handles alone, and don't take favors from strangers. (And most dungeon masters are unequivocally strange, thank you.)



As long as we are on the subject of strange, Maxwell Roberts offers a strange doom with **The Amazing Electric Hero**, a nasty test for those adventurers who seek to emulate Tarzan.

The party is fleeing something large or numerous and horrifying when they come upon a lava-filled chasm. Those who can fly probably will; those who cannot will have to consider using the series of ropy cables suspended from the ceiling far overhead.

The first brave delver finds the cable is made of metal. If you feel cruel, and want more death from the same trap, grease the cable liberally; the pointman will almost certainly fall to the lava bed below. Such elaborations are not really necessary though, because when the delver grips the second cable, he or she finds all the cables are charged with electricity. By completing the circuit with his body, the character is severely jolted by the electricity. If he survives that (and can actually make his hand let go - a possible problem in an electrical "accident" like this), he'll find the third cable is oppositely charged again, and so it goes with the remaining cables across the chasm.

Of course, if the character actually makes it clear across without muscles spasms that plummet him to his death, then the potential of the current must not have been very severe. This trap can be merely discomforting, or decidedly deadly, all depending upon how much juice you pump into the system.

There are countless ways to slay adventurers, from the complex to crazy and back again. However, subtle stresses can be more satisfying than

bludgeoning characters with obvious fates. The next several traps are bewilders and confusion-makers, and the effects on a party can be more fun than a barrel of hobbits.

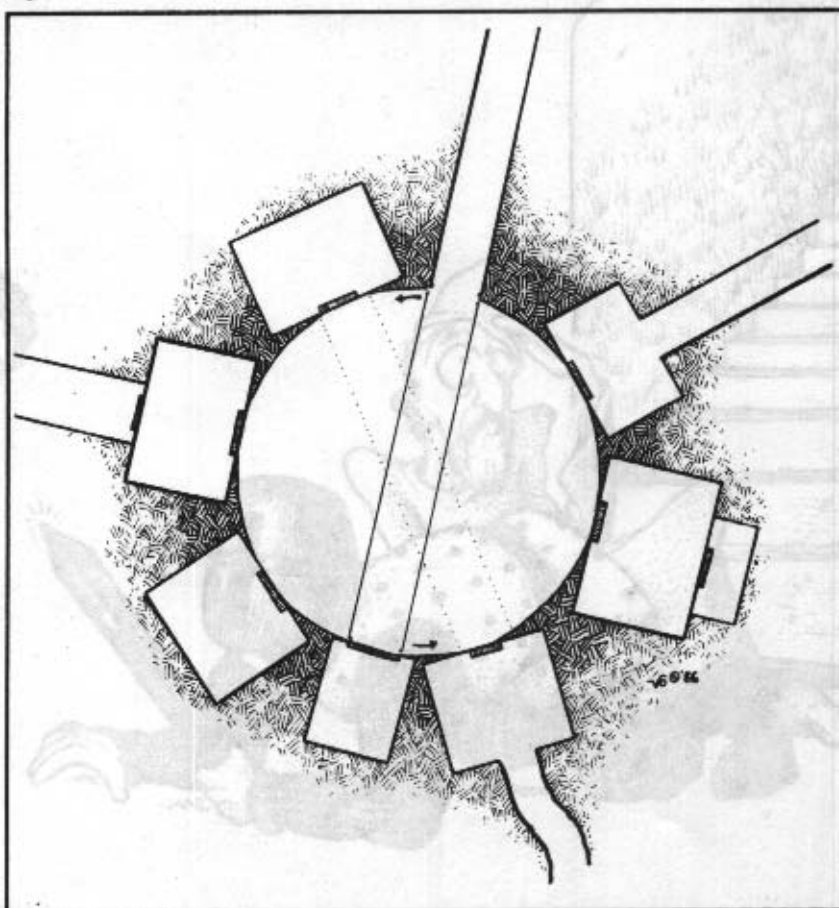
The Click Plate, by Brent Jones, is not at all deadly in and of itself. It will, however, make many other traps more difficult to avoid.

This type of pressure plate is located randomly through the corridors and byways of a dungeon. When trodden on, the plate produces an audible *click*, perhaps no different from any other pressure plate that isn't kept properly oiled. Enough of these Click Plates™ will have the party flinching and wincing in confusion and paranoia, like sheep around a shepherd periodically crying "Wolf!"

When they least expect it, the adventurers find a pressure plate that clicks. And activates a real trap, for a change....

Adventurers who carefully map dungeons and strongholds are an abomination. They always know which way is out and are never easy to trap far from safety. **Revolver**, by Joe Formichella, provides a simple way to confuse and disorient such characters.

The trap is activated by a pressure plate set in a very long hallway. The first time the plate is stepped on it causes an imperceptible counterclockwise rotation of the entire hall. At the end of the corridor, the delvers will locate a secret door designed to look much like the other dungeon walls. This door should lead into a room with something to entertain the characters, but not kill them all. After all, your entertainment is just about to start.



Leaving the secret room behind (the only entrance or exit is into the revolving corridor), the characters now discover the other end of the corridor appears to have been sealed off. As they head back toward the sealed-off corridor, they will hit the plate again, and set it, moving the corridor counter-clockwise again. Once more the party's eagle-eyes can find a secret door, but it doesn't lead out of the corridor via the route they entered. It leads to another room, with more "entertainment" for the adventurers. Once cleared away, the characters will have few options but to troop back to the other end of the corridor. The corridor rotates again, there's a third room behind yet another secret door.

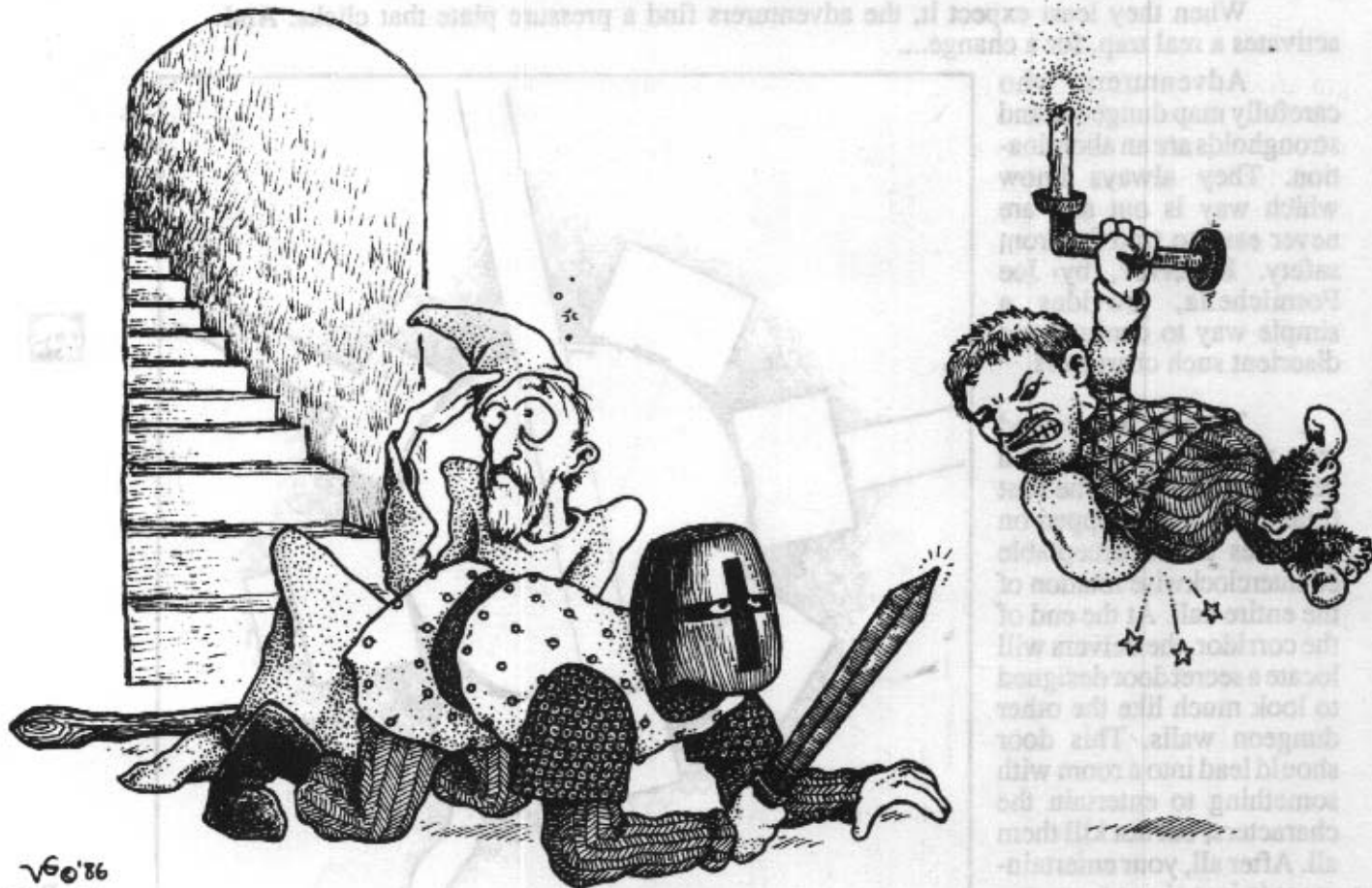
This sequence of bouncing back and forth between hidden rooms will stop after a fourth, fifth, and sixth room, totally disorienting them with the paradox of what appears to be three rooms in one. If these rooms offer other exits, the party may never know at what angle they've gone. And imagine their problems if one Revolver corridor leads to another, and another, and another....



Subtle modifications in reality like the Revolver corridor are likely to go unnoticed by characters at the best of times. If the delvers have something else to think about (like walking down stairs), the effects can be even more graphic. Wayne West has exploited this face with his simple admonition, **Speed Kills**.

The delvers begin to walk down a long flight of stairs and do not notice that the stairs begin to move, almost imperceptibly at first, like a modern escalator. A markedly plain wall will disguise the real movement, which does not need to be terribly fast to begin with. When they reach the bottom, the characters will be moving faster than they imagined and will lose their footing on the landing. This can be augmented with a little oil where they step off.

Just a little extra speed would be enough to make them all crash together. And it will give them a good taste of what their "always drawn" weapons can do.



A genuinely rotten corridor trap was devised by the insidiously clever Mark O'Green. While things are not as they appear, this trap will do more than confuse the delvers. Nobody will be rushing up to answer the question of **Who's On First?**

This corridor trap will work best if the party is pressed for time - as in being chased by your favorite nasties. Turning a corridor, the unfortunates may notice numerous long slits at various heights along both walls. Each slot contains long knobby staves something like over-long, too-thin baseball bats mounted grip to grip on a central spindle. Any movement in the corridor will start the spindles turning, filling the corridor with dangerously whirling staves. If the party has a hostage (you could supply one), the group may throw the hostage forward to test the punishment - or some brave fool will try to wriggle his way through on his own.

As soon as anyone makes contact with one of the thick poles, they will find the wood is friable - rotten clear through - and it does little or no damage as it breaks.

So off the party goes again, hot-footing it to the far end of the corridor, breaking off the poles as they go. However, because there is not as much weight to spin as before, the spindles will speed up. Centrifugal force will release the joined razor-sharp blades, which slide out of the broken ends of the poles and into... let's just say that the characters in the last half of the party had better be "on the ball" at this point!

Even more destructive is the next trap. Action-adventure movies notwithstanding, great juggernauts of stone rolling to crush our erstwhile heroes makes for a heart-thumping adrenaline rush. Greg Fisher's **Coney Island Express** will provide this thrilling experience to adventurers of every stripe, though I doubt if the ungrateful boors will thank him for it.

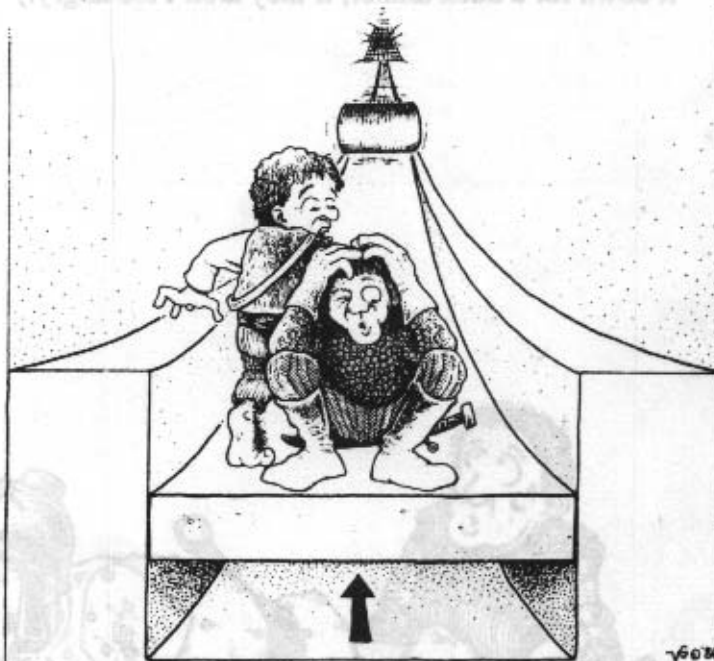
A dark side corridor of roughly finished stone branches off the main tunnel. Something entices the characters to explore this side passage: a chalk-mark of an arrow pointing down it, or a slithering rustle, or a choked-off cry of a missing party member. Footing is precarious here because there is a fairly long downslope which,

maddeningly, some thoughtless architect neglected to provide stairs for. Still, it is no slick slide, and all but the clumsiest should be able to negotiate the slope without coming to harm.

Some distance down, the corridor levels off and the wary will notice a trench cut into the center of the passage floor. The trench is perhaps two or three feet wide, and equally deep. Observant eyes will see the tunnel floor and the trench then begin to rise back to the main level.

At about the same time as these features are noted, the characters will hear an earth-deep rumble from back the way they came. If they left their cowardly friends up in the main corridor, those nervous nellys will see an immense stone cylinder crash through the "wall" opposite the entrance of the side corridor (the "wall" is false and thin, and does not slow the juggernaut in the least). The stone tumbles into the corridor, picking up speed coming down the slope. By the time it reaches the bottom, it is going dangerously fast.

If the delvers are quick-witted, they will see the trench is the only possible haven. If they are equally quick in action, they'll reach it in safety. If not...



The stone's momentum carries it to the top of the rising slope beyond. There it meets a series of catchnets which slow, stop, and reverse it. There is also a ratchet which releases the gear works holding down the floor of the trench. When that catch is sprung, the floor of the trench rises up to the level of the rest of the floor, with agonizing slowness, and just in time for the stone cylinder to return!

Running, flying and fleeing - upslope - is the only route to safety as the stone rumbles back through its appointed course. The stone will have an easier time going up the incline than the adventurers will, but what a heart-clutching thrill they'll have if they make it safely over the top!

What is it that everyone needs, everyone gives, everyone asks and that very few take? The answer is Advice. Taking Wally Blunder's advice to **Duck!** in this trap may save a life, at the expense of one's dignity.

Characters are walking down a simple corridor when a loud voice cries out "Duck!" At the same moment, the top quarter-inch of the floor turns into a very smelly, sticky, but essentially harmless sludge. If the characters just stand there, nothing happens. If they throw themselves to the floor, they get up again looking pretty silly, to say nothing of smelling like an alley cat's leftovers. In a moment or two later a large duck flies past. (The party could shoot it down for a duck dinner, if they aren't too angry.)



V6/86

When the players have stopped groaning and grousing about the GM's warped sense of "humor," the characters again hear the voice cry out "Duck!" This time a large wooden bar comes flying out of one wall about 4' above the floor. It swings across the corridor, bowling over anyone who didn't duck. They'll be knocked down into the muck with their cautious friends, but not seriously hurt even though the bar moves with enough force to knock down even a fairly large, strong character.

After everyone stands up, gets themselves in order, and prepares to move along, the voice yells even louder than before "DUCK!" This third time the bar swings back in the other direction, and more dangerously: the back side of the bar is braced with sharpened metal blades. The GM can have the bar move with enough force to cut a character in two, or just slash the slow.

And the Gamemaster should carefully consider the strength of his relationship with the players before uttering the final remark by the voice: "Well, I gave you three warnings..."

Dungeon hallways are occasionally marked by unnecessarily ornate or just peculiar examples of the mason's handiwork. Strange stonework is all the warning offered delvers who wander into **The Stairway To Mortuary**, a fiendish design by Greg Fisher.

In a normal corridor, a short flight of steps leads down to a level about 6' below the original level. A few paces ahead, an equal number of steps return to the original level.

About halfway down each side is one step doing double duty as a pressure plate. The first time it is stepped on, the trap is set. The third time it is stepped on, the trap is sprung. Note that stepping on the trigger steps in any sequence will do - two steps on one side and one step on the far side will trigger the trap as easily as three steps on one trigger.

As the weight is removed from that step, two steel blades spring out to meet midway. They'll be about 3' above the lower floor level and will cause grievous disfigurement to anyone caught in between.

Who's caught there? If three characters are moving single file, the blades should catch the leader about waist level, the second in line at the knees, and the trap-tripper through the ankle. Note that if only two characters walk this section, the trap will spring when the lead character first steps from the trigger step on the opposite side of the dip. Then the lead character will lose an ankle and the follower will become sensitive to Short People jokes.

Characters will be on their guard in a corridor with any remarkable features, so Leonard McRoberts' next corridor trap, **Step and Slide**, will have to be in the proper surroundings. I recommend this as an entrance to an underground adventure so the trap may be found in a wood-floored ruined chalet or something equivalent.

The corridor is floored with 12" wide parallel strips running from side to side through the corridor. The strips can be wooden planks, square-edged tiles, or even very regularly-laid stones. The characters can test the corridor through much of its length without finding anything unusual. However, there is one strip which will give way, swinging down to expose a razor-sharp edge crossing the corridor. The release of that strip will throw a gear releasing all the strips throughout the corridor, both in front of and behind the triggering strip. All the strips will swing down and expose their razor edges.

Some of the characters will stumble as footing becomes precarious, but even the fortunate and agile may not be able to remain unscathed. After all, simple pressure against a sharp blade may not cause a wound. When a blade is dragged across a surface, that's when a blade cuts deeply.

Therefore, a few moments after all the strips have turned sharp-side up, one side of the corridor tilts down sharply. The characters all slide down the length of the blades, under the corridor wall, and into whatever collection area the GM has devised.

Laurel Gouling offers another trap of the "step and die" variety which is also dependent on decorative flooring. **That Sinking Feeling** is enough to make the strongest heart falter. The wrong step will have the mightiest hero on crutches for good.

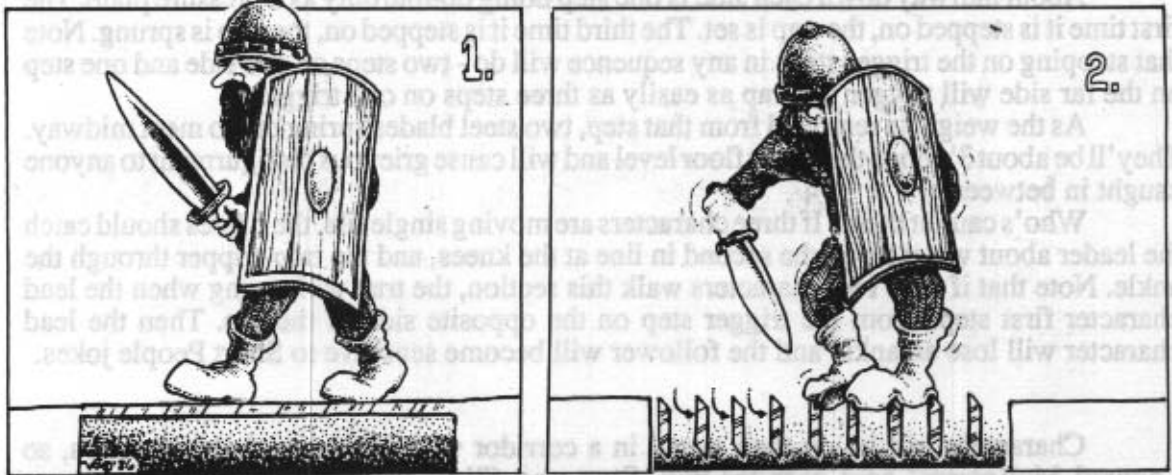
The characters come to a section of corridor (or even a complete room) floored with neatly set, decorative tiles, each about 12" square. Many of the tiles are perfectly safe to step on. Quite a few, however, are not. Stepping on one of these randomly-placed tiles will be a



disabling experience. The trapped tile sinks about 5" and two of the surrounding tiles snap shut around the character's ankle. The enclosing tiles could be razor-edged, of course, although making them stone or blunt metal would be enough to make Major Macho Hero limp around on a smashed ankle for two or three weeks at best. And placing this trap right before a room where one has to jump from pillar to post, as with our opening room trap, can make for lots of fun with a broken ankle.

But stairs remain an excellent focus of fear. Instilled in most children is a wariness about stairs, and an equal wariness about tools left lying about. Leonard McRoberts has combined these two concepts and produced **A Household Accident**.

Passing along a corridor, the characters come to a flight of stairs leading down. As the lead character approaches the first step, he or she trips a pressure plate. This releases a catch below the stairs and the footboards of the top eight feet of stairs swings over and back - like when one steps on a rake, and the handle flies up to strike you in the face!



Brian Hammond also takes advantage of household dangers, bringing to light **The Troll Co. Retractable Blade Trap**, which he says shaves as close as a blade... The design of the trap is simple: the first character in line trips into a hidden pit without warning. This triggers the section of the floor on the other side of the pit into flipping completely over, assisted by a spring-loaded release, on top of those who are coming behind.

Where do the blades come in? They flip out of the flooring tiles as the floor section begins its downward swing, impaling and slicing anything in their way.

The final trap in this corridor section is a perfect example of how a trap does not need to kill or be expensive to be effective. Julie Hoverson, who actually solved the cypher in Traps Too and wrote to my minions in that code, has provided **Shuffle and Deal With It** to help all of us get more blood for our gold with a very simple plan.

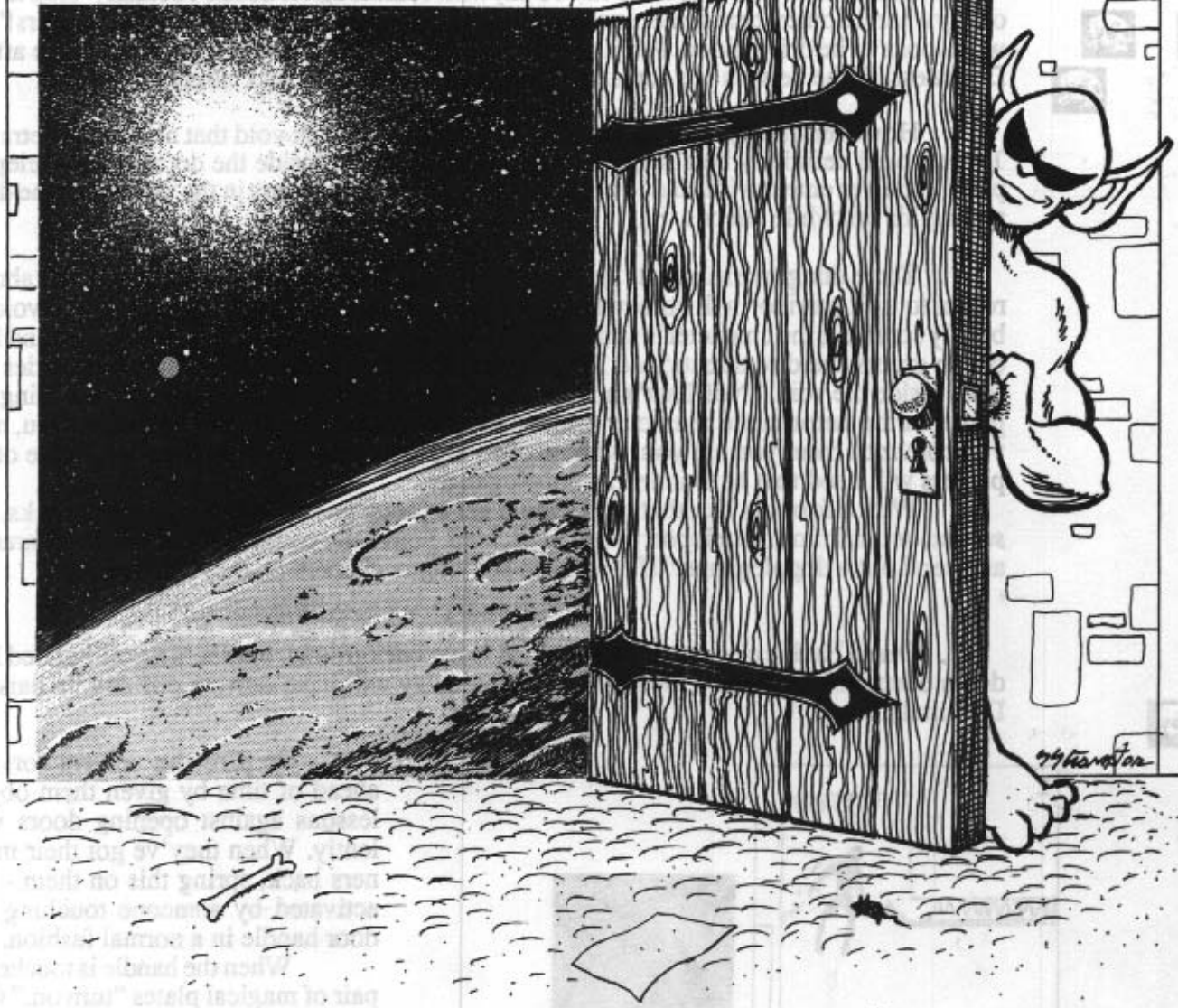
The party rounds a corner or enters a small room - either will do so they don't have a clear view of the corridor behind them - and the lights flicker or some other sign is given to the characters that something is wrong. When they look back the way they came, they see the corridor has changed, a new intersection is revealed, and their compasses tell them they are heading in a different direction than they thought they were.

But all this teleportation must be expensive, right? It would be, but the party has not moved an inch.

Back up in the corridor the wall has been shifted back about 12' to reveal a new intersection that was not there before. In addition a huge lodestone has been unshielded to totally reorient the delvers' compasses. With just a few of these sliding walls strategically placed through a tunnel complex you can have the delvers traveling around in circles and hunting for an exit in an area totally away from where it really is.

DUNGEON EXIT

FOR MY
"A-DOOR-ING"
FANS



Door Traps

*What does one say about doors? Portals from one place to another, characters are either exceedingly nervous or contemptuous of these thin barriers and the real estate nearby. I can only hope the following **Doom Doors** make contempt the less common response. With these gems in place no one need ever hang a "No Solicitors" sign on a door again.*



Door Traps

- NOTES -

I begin this chapter with a trap that is ingenious in its implication and sincerely horrid in application. Brent Halverson has designed the **Beware of Doppelgangers** door to accurately face the delvers with a puzzle and a threat they'll be dying to defeat. And really all they're fighting is themselves....

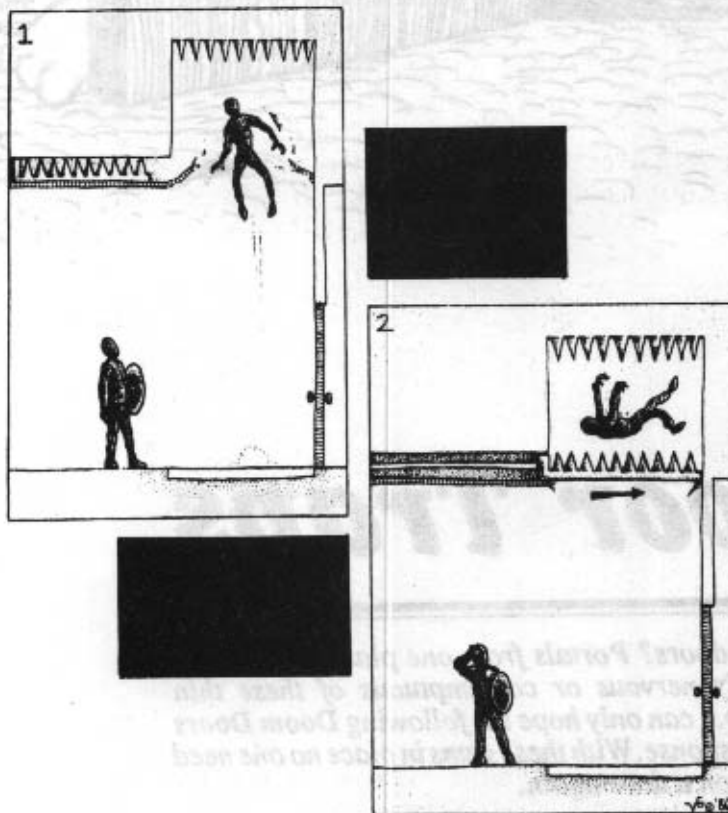
The delvers find a door. It can be anywhere, although it doesn't actually lead much of anywhere. Somewhere rather low on the door is scrawled "Beware of doppelgangers!" in what looks to be dried blood. A dying delver's last message to those who might come after? Doubtless. If the delvers are actually warned off, well, better luck next time.

However, if they open the door, they face a pitch black void that no light penetrates. There would definitely be a sense of magic, for a few feet inside the doorway is a teleport plate. A delver enters with all due caution, and poof! He reappears in the vicinity of the door among his erstwhile friends.

Three things are relevant: 1) the void and blackness are intense enough that the abrupt return to a lit corridor will somewhat blind the character; 2) it is the nature of the void to briefly scramble the character's auditory mechanism, meaning his friend's voices sound like orcish grunts and dire threats; and 3) a thin voice, as from a considerable distance, cries out from inside the void, "No! That's not me! Don't let 'im fool you arruugghh!" Handing the player of the unfortunate character a note that reads, "The figure in the corridor is you, now you convince them you are you, without showing them this note." is all the proof the other players will need that he is indeed a doppelganger!

With a formula like that, you should get a pretty good fight. And just for yucks, the second or third time the teleport plate is activated, you really could capture the real character and send out a doppelganger. If they keep shoving in characters, they deserve it.

Diana Harlan claims it's elvish blood in her background, but she's a troll-hearted lass down deep inside. Diana's **Upsidaisy-Downsidaisy** will have delvers pushing up daisies. Definitely.



Prepare the delvers for this ahead of time by given them object lessons against opening doors violently. When they've got their manners back, spring this on them - it's activated by someone touching the door handle in a normal fashion.

When the handle is touched, a pair of magical plates "turn on." One plate is at the delver's feet and the other is overhead. The area in a ten foot square in front of the door is transformed by a heavy reverse gravity field. Anyone standing in the area will fly up to the ceiling, and break on through the thin balsa shim that just looks like ceiling. His flight ends against the spikes in the real ceiling.

When the false ceiling breaks away, a catch releases and a second bank of spikes slides forward to block the opening. The reverse gravity field shuts off, and the flying delvers has a "punctuated" landing on the lower spike bed.

For especially nasty dungeon masters - are there any other sort? - add a hungry monster or three, and dose the spikes with a mild paralyzing poison....

The next trap also requires a relatively normal approach to the door, so the placement of Charles Manson's **Heads Up!** is of crucial importance if you don't want the paranoid to

easily circumvent it. Place this door at the head of a deadend corridor, with the corridor not significantly wider than the door itself.

The door has no handles or other fixtures by which to open it. On the right hand wall, however, the delvers see a small button with the label "Open" on it.

Pushing the button will open the door. It drops out into the corridor like a drawbridge, crushing the simpleton who pushed the button.

On the other hand, how simple can 250' of door be? Such massive portals usually decorate the very entrance of a tunnel com-

plex, or indicate something Very Large Indeed lives behind it. Characters who only anticipate trouble after they pass through the door are fair prey for Caroline J. Maher's **The Downer Door**.

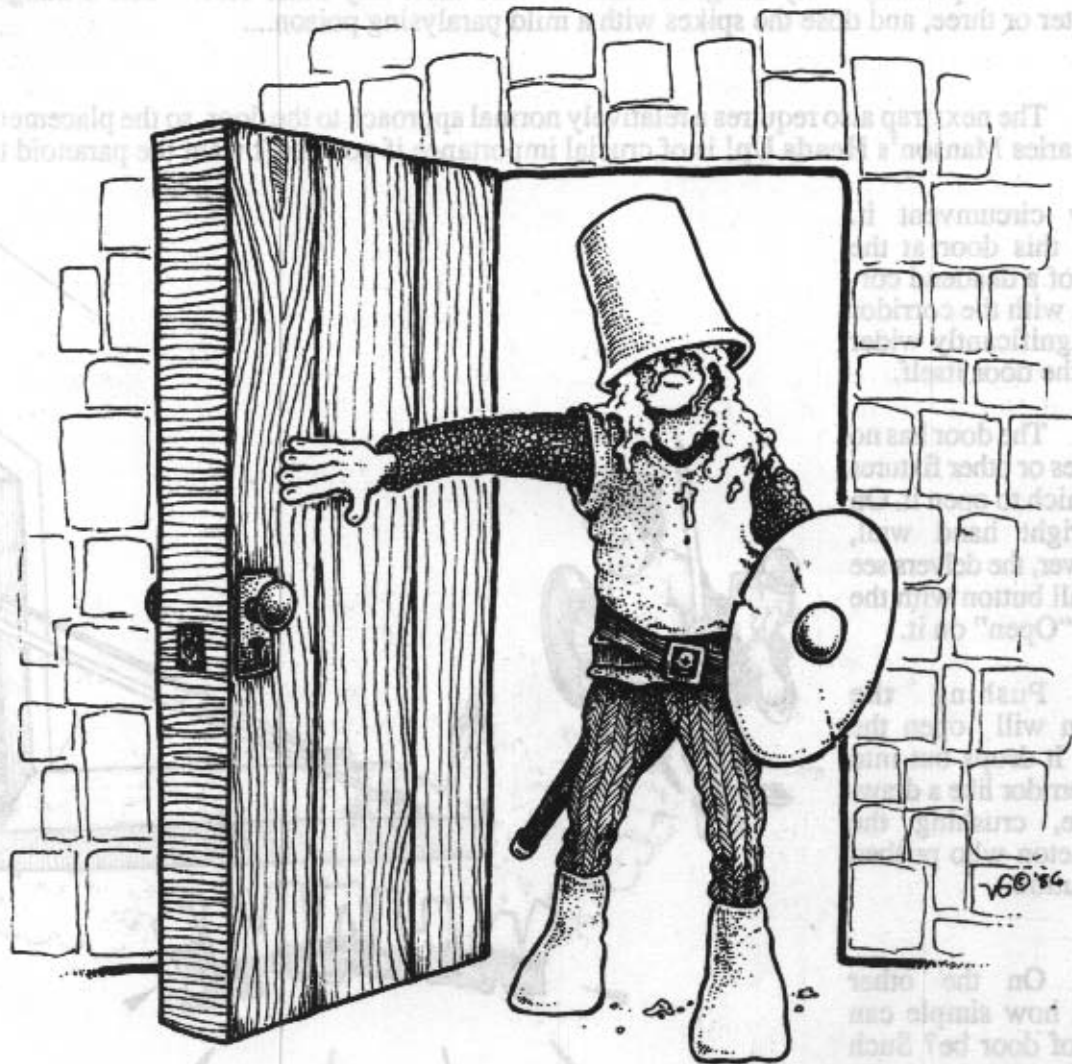
Joe and Jane Averagedelver (of the Soggybog Averagedelvers) whip out their trusty ropes to help them open the massive door with its latches/knobs/knockers placed too high to work in any ordinary fashion. After all, the portal has been examined for smaller entrances (and there are none), and the hinges indicate the door swings outward.

The hinges are false. When the delvers pull, they'll find the door is only propped up. Numerous spring-loaded bolts, triggered when the door moves an inch or two, slam into the top of the door and substantially increase the rate of its fall. It will be a very speedy delver, or one who teleports, who escapes getting flattened - the latches will smash into the door itself on impact, so there is no breathing space under the door after it falls.

Putty knives should be issued to the clean-up crew.

Lovers of practical jokes will appreciate this trap, so simple as to be beyond the expectations of the average delver. Charles Manson reminds us that **The Bucket Over The Door** has all the potential of a joy buzzer or a squirting plastic flower... and when is a door not a door?





In simplest form, a door left slightly ajar provides the balance for a bucket full of, well, take your pick. The variations are endless. Ice water in a damp, cold dungeon may be unhealthy without being devastating. Fine glassy sand would get into the joints of armor, and under and into everything else. The itching and grating would be maddening, if non-fatal, but nothing to brag about back at the tavern.

Brine is another annoyance. Cold, and wet now, and outrageously itchy and uncomfortable when it dries in one's clothing. A nest of red ants or a bees' nest inside the bucket could have unpleasant consequences - more people die each year from bee stings than from snake bites! Bright yellow dye would be laughable and might damage spell books; Eau de Comestible Monsterum could be dangerous, and plain old skunk oil would be enough to disband the party.

Naturally, more vicious options are available, from acid (in a glass bucket) to a bucket full of mercury. What's so nasty about mercury? Well, it'll be tough on the digestive system of anyone who swallows some, but more importantly, it'll thoroughly coat anything they have that's made of gold, like gold coins for starters. There's no decent way to unbond mercury from gold, so the characters will have a sack full of coins that look suspiciously like fake goods. Then there is the old stand-by: a bucket full of lead-heavy rocks could cause a concussion or three.

Of course even a mildly suspicious delver might think to look up when encountering a door that is not a door. (Because it's ajar!) The door can be left closed. The same assortment of exasperating annoyances can be kept in a reservoir above the door to spray out when the door is opened more than an inch or two!

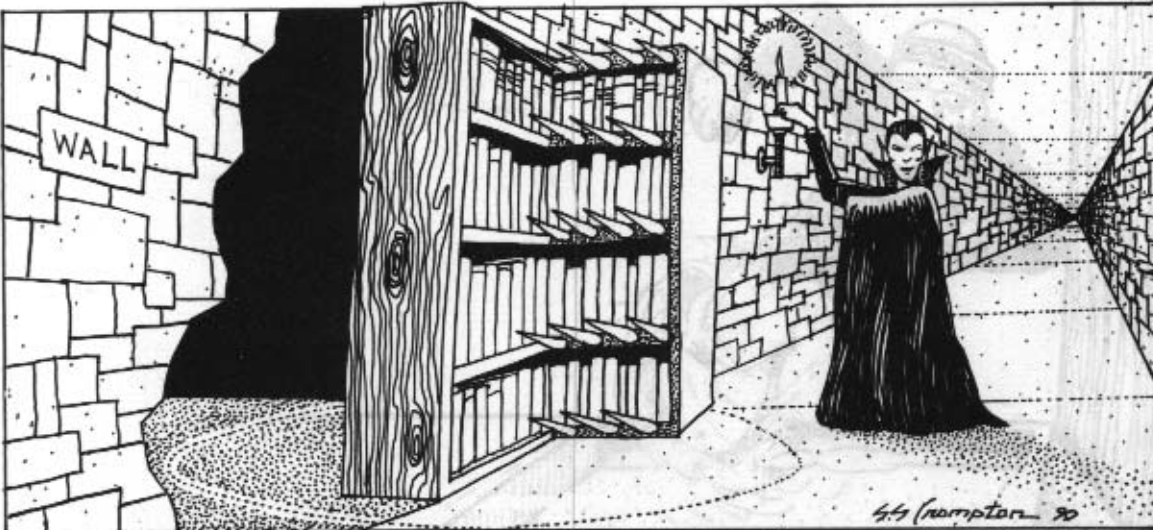


Laurel Gouling provides yet another dreadful destiny for delvers in the unusual portal called **The Bookcase Cliche'**. She may have seen too many movies, but this trap is treachery incarnate. Not designed for the depths of a dank and dreary dungeon, this bookcase could be the main secret entrance to a tunnel - just to start the party off on the right foot.

The **Bookcase Cliche'** looks to be just that: a swiveling floor-to-ceiling bookcase of the sort one generally sees in old movies. Torches are conveniently placed on either side of the bookcase, and twisting either one of the sconces will cause the bookcase to make a very fast 180! turn on its platform. Perhaps the delvers will catch a glimpse of a passageway behind. An identical bookcase - previously the "back" of the other one - now rests where the original was.

The obvious solution is to get onto the platform and then have the torch sconce pulled for you. Easier said than done, but undoubtedly the cunning characters will find a way.

Unfortunately, the second time the bookcase is activated, without a safety switch known to the book's owner being thrown first, one half of the "bookcase" sprouts spikes just before it pivots in the middle directly onto the other half.



A little less vicious, but with a similar result, is this next trap. From the frozen wastes of Alaska to the foggy streets of London, John Longenbaugh is making sure no delver is safe.

The Door of Manners is an object lesson in politeness. If the door is opened normally, by turning the latch, nothing untoward happens; a rod assembly is engaged and the door operates in the ordinary fashion.

If the door is kicked in, however, the trap is released. A hinged panel set with spikes has been concealed in the wall. Unless the rod assembly is engaged, the panel will snap around from the hinge side of the door, driven by a powerful spring, to clobber the kicker and anyone else standing nearby.

John Olsen is responsible for this door trap, **A Slipshod Operation**. The intrepid adventurers find a strong wooden door sign with a sturdy doorknob and lock. The door bears the carefully lettered sign "Authorized Personnel Only." This, of course, has no power whatsoever to stop the characters, who now want nothing so much as to find out what's on the other side of the door.

They can fiddle with the lock all they want, and even normal magical means to unlock doors will fail. This will probably just whet their appetites. When someone finally gets exasperated enough to try to bash the door in by throwing his weight against it, or kicking it in, then things get really interesting.



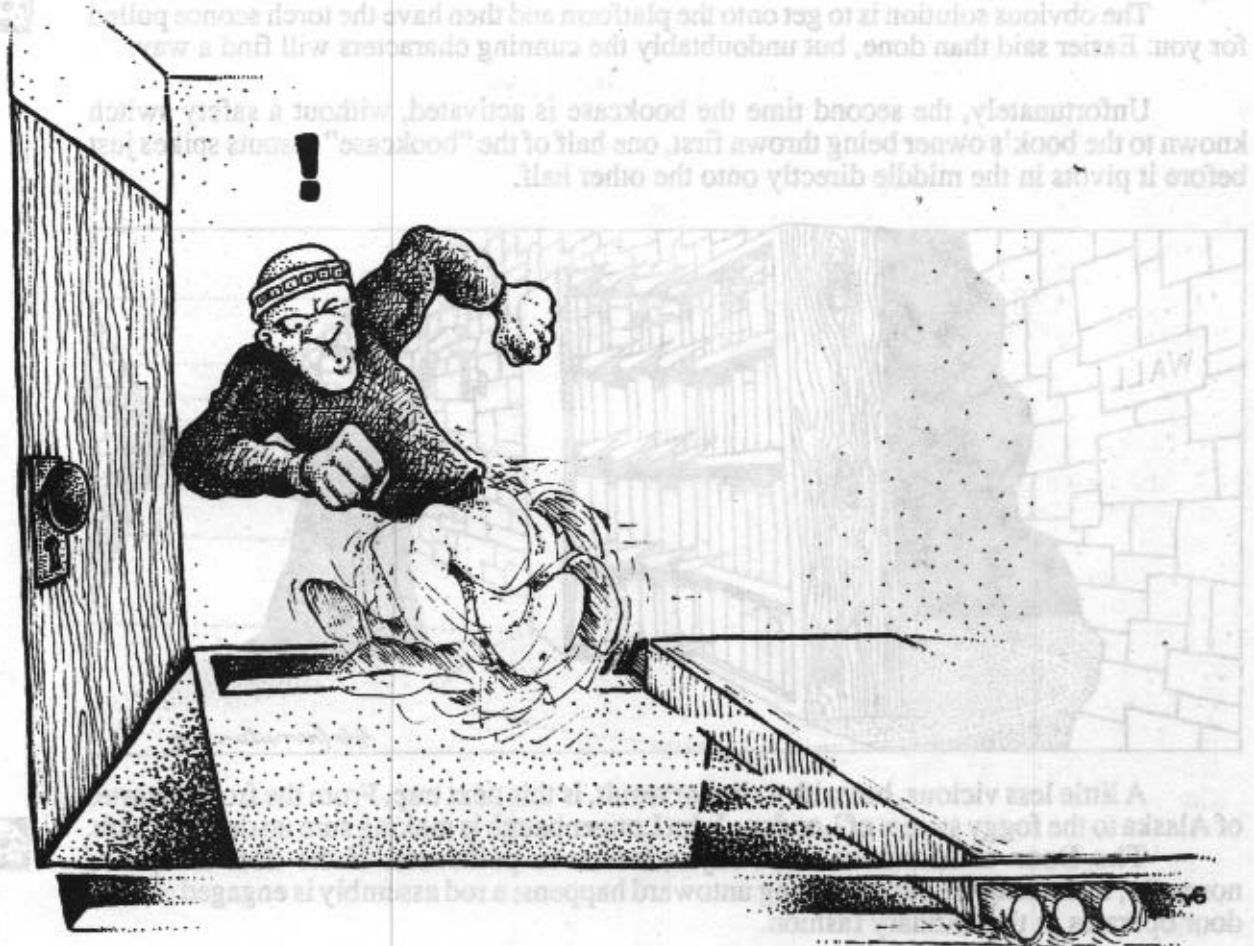


Door Traps

- NOTES -

The floor immediately in front of the door is mounted on rollers, allowing the floor to suddenly slide back. Underneath the flooring is a very deep pit with - well, whatever you like to keep in very deep pits. Whoever was trying to force the door will probably plunge straight to the bottom. At best, he or she will be clawing at the doorsill with fingertips, while toes clutch helplessly at the other side of the pit.

How does one get through this door? Well, it does say "Authorized Personnel Only." Authorized personnel have keys.



Mark O'Green has concocted a trio of doom-doors which will incite fear and frustration in almost any red-blooded delver - especially when it's his red blood that's leaking all over the floor.

The Windmill is the most elaborate device dredged so far from Mark's fiendish imagination. With a little experimentation, even the dumbest delver will discover the door slides to either side, out of sight of the wall. Someone gives the door a good shove, the door slides away, and the first character steps into the doorway - just in time to catch the next blade rotating through the doorway from the other side.

The "door" itself is one of four sharpened blades on a windmill-like arrangement, with the hub of the wheel high above the door. Moving the door either direction severs a wire; the wire was preventing a weight on a rope from falling. The rope was wound around the axle of a wheel. As the weight falls, the rope causes the wheel to whirl, spinning the blades faster until the rope plays out. The blades slice through the doorway, catching anything in its path and slicing it neatly in two.

For added nasty effect, you have the weight turn up and down on the axle like a yo-yo, periodically reversing both speed and direction. Eventually it'll come to rest again, but not before causing some small difficulties to the adventurers.

Mark's second offering is a good old standby he calls **Buster's Facade**. Although my previous collections of traps certainly have nothing to do with the rampant paranoia of modern dungeon delvers, few characters are comfortable opening doors from the front. They cluster to either side of the door, cringing as one foolhardy soul gingerly twists the door's handle.

This in mind, Mark dedicates this trap to the memory of that famous old comedian. When the handle is turned the entire wall around the door falls out onto the party. Only the person with the handle in his hand - and the stupid look on his face - will escape unscathed. He'll also be a real "hit" with any surviving party members!

Tarbuddy is Mark's last trap, another famous "stuff inside the door" trap that has its beginnings in a childhood story. It's very good at catching the child-minded delvers.

The insides of this thick door are filled with exceptionally sticky tar-like adhesive. The door-kickers will get their just desserts when they sink into it up to their knees. Just ask Brer Fox. And keep it at the right stickiness: it should be rather hot.

M i k e Stackpole must have heard the same story back when he was a child (millions of eons ago), because he presents characters with **A Sticky Situation**. Here, the door's exterior face is covered with a transparent, sticky substance that will go unnoticed - until it is touched. A character placing his ear to the door to get a clue to what is going on beyond will find his ear firmly stuck. Placing hands or feet against the door to pull free will probably work, but hands and feet will be stuck. The door is egalitarian: anything touched by it will get firmly attached.



If you're cold-hearted, provide a solvent for the adhesive. It's kept in the room beyond the door, agonizingly just out of reach of someone stuck to the door...





Door Traps

- NOTES -



Adventurers take up their trade as much for the great stories they can tell as for the loot they hope to acquire. Laurel Goulding's **Ear's Looking At You Kid** will *not* provide that satisfaction to the delver who is caught by this trap. Place this door in front of your barracks, or some other place where the monstrous inhabitants are likely to be having a noisy, friendly game of poker or Black Brontosaurus when the adventurers stumble upon the closed door.

The door seems quite normal. However, when a character presses his or her ear to the door to listen, ear, hair, and perhaps some lightly-placed fingertips will be stuck to the covering sheet of very strong adhesive. A guillotine then drops, the blade perhaps a half-inch from the door. It'll be a very close haircut, and the character at the door will only be buying half sets of earrings in the future.

As a favor to the natural inhabitants of the room, the dropping blade could also ring a warning chime inside. It'll give your guards a few extra moments in which to tot up their winnings and gird for battle.

And remind your monsters to be considerate of the poor character who was maimed by the door. I instruct my ogres to pound the delvers on the "good" side of the head until everything is evened up again.

The final door trap comes to this tome courtesy of Brandon Corey. He's very used to people bursting unexpectedly into his rooms up at the Home....

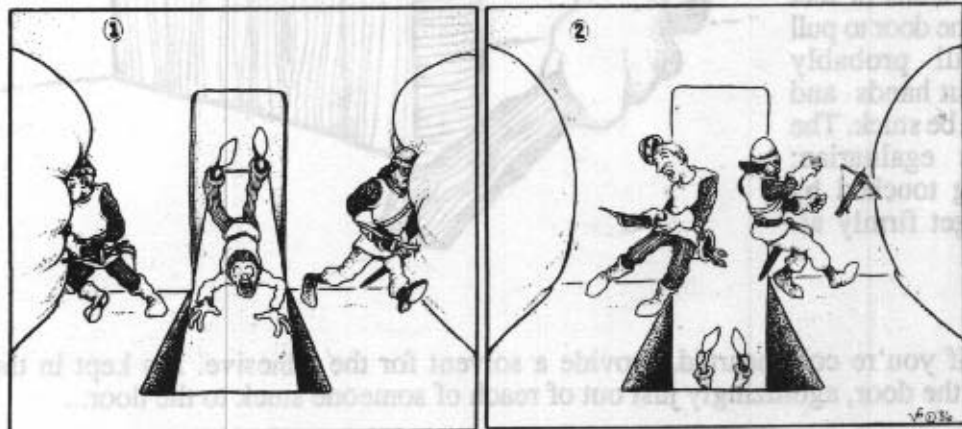
Brandon claims this trap was designed to deal with the adventurers who burst through doors, two crossbowmen slipping in to each side of the door, ready to destroy anything lurking within. **Swatting SWATters** combines Brandon's intimate knowledge of rooms with rubber walls and his unique grasp of theoretical physics.

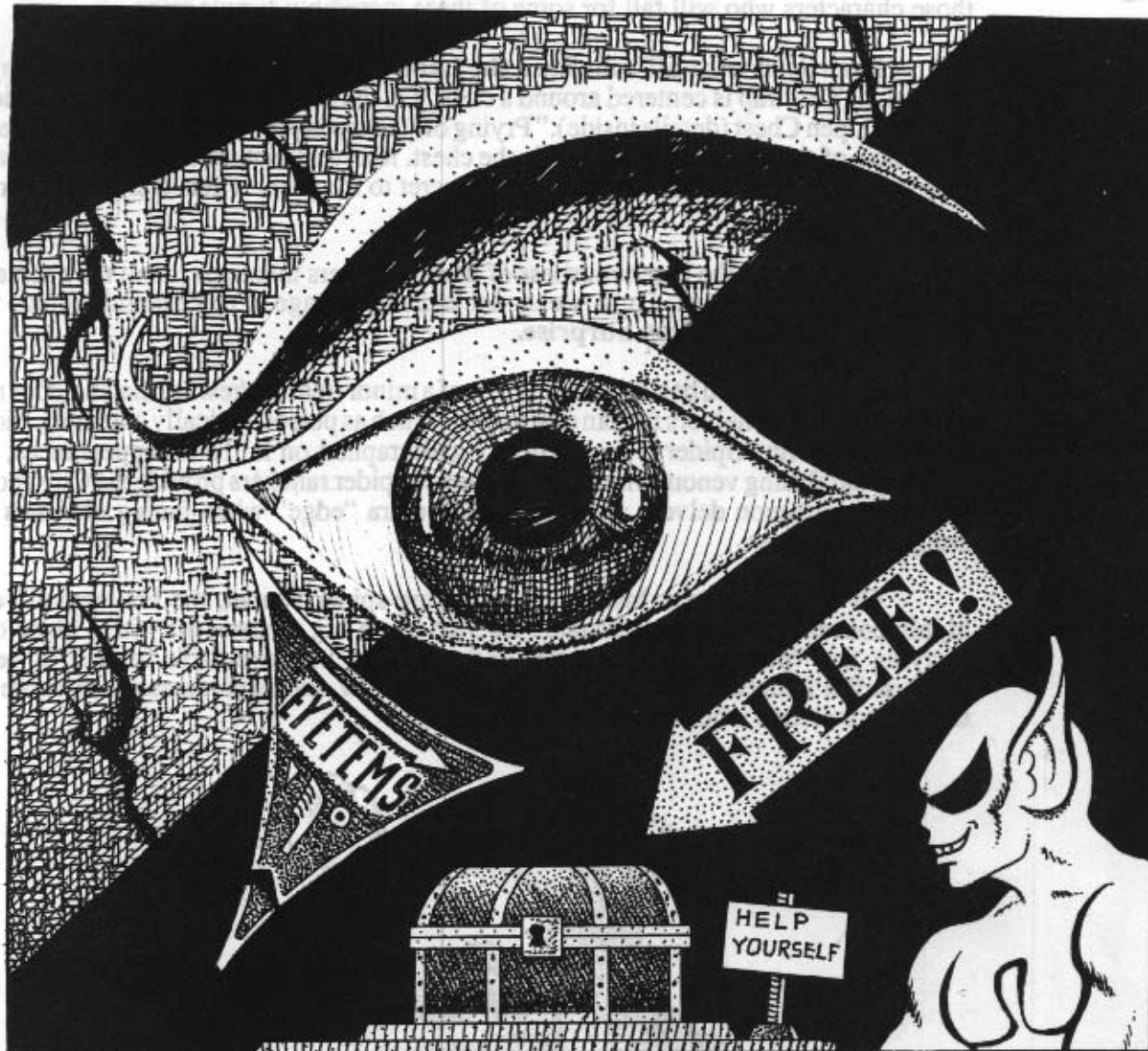
Outside the door is a section of flooring nearly the same size as the door; this flooring covers a pit. The slab also extends under the door into the next room, where the opposite end of the floor section is heavily weighted.

When the door is torn from its hinges by an adventurer's puissant kick, a pin is pulled loose and the weighted end of the slab rotates down into the pit. The outside end of the slab rises, propelling the kicker into the room, and sealing the doorway.

The two crossbowmen who dashed into the room just ahead of the kicker discover rubber bumpers occupying the same space where they had planned to be. The crossbowmen rebound, collide with one another, then drop into the pit with the kicker.

The party is now cut off from their fellows, who are left to whatever fate you deem suitable.





S. S. Hampton '90

Item Traps

Adventurers are a very curious lot. Instead of settling for an honest trade, they head off into dark and forbidding - though not forbidding enough - places that really are quite foreign to them, in search of wealth and excitement. Excitement we give them, in brimming, gory buckets full, and wealth we hand over all too freely, but for most delvers this type of diversion quickly grows boring. Ho hum, another ten orcs slain today, and four thousand gold pieces in gems. So, did anything exciting happen to you today?

But even the most jaded delver - magically inclined or otherwise - smiles when he comes across an item. His heart quickens at the sight of an elixir, and his pulse pounds in his ears when he sees a magic sword or a jeweled ring. Items are unique and remarkable. They are worth much more than the value of their parts. They are treasure!

They are also the traps the delver willingly, and greedily, gathers to himself until they take action and destroy him.



I begin this chapter of trapped items by directing the GM's attention to those delvers who read. This skill apparently has nothing to do with innate intelligence, as evidenced by those characters who will fall for some of these incredibly simple traps.

Ryan Scott leads off with **Read the Label**, which is as effective a trap as any in this collection. This trap is centered around a chest. On the chest is bolted a big sign which reads "Do Not Open Chest (details inside)." Prying off the top layer of the sign would indeed reveal the details of the poison gas trap inside the chest. Many adventurers will end their careers as they open the chest trying to discover the secret to the joke. It gets them every time.

Perhaps it is the ingenuousness of literate delvers that traps them: they actually tend to believe what they read. Chris Alexander takes advantage of this trustful attitude with the deviously surprising **Poison Surprise**.

This trap would best be found as part of a minor treasure/reward that includes a variety of other items. The delvers find an ordinary vial such as poison typically comes in, and there's even a label with "Spider Venom" neatly calligraphed on it. To all appearances, it is the ordinary paralyzing venom which Stetson-hatted spider ranchers provide the City apothecary for use by dungeon delvers who like a little extra "edge" when facing denizens of dark dungeon demesnes.

Of course, it isn't. Instead of paralyzing spider venom, the vial actually contains highly concentrated spider adrenalin. Be sure it is a big monster hit with a blade or arrow carrying this "poison;" the monster will speed up into overdrive instead of becoming paralysed! It'll hit twice as fast instead of twice as slow, and do commesurately more damage to the poor stooge who fired up its afterburners!





Of course, dungeon monsters are a tough breed. They're able to handle injections of this adrenalin in moderate quantities. If, however, a surviving delver thinks to use the remaining Spider Adrenalin on himself, he could be in for a second surprise, especially if he overdoses himself (easy to do). When the concentrated adrenalin hits his system, the delver's heart will beat harder and faster than it ever has before. Blood pressure will climb, putting a tremendous load on his circulatory system, and especially the small, delicate blood vessels of the heart and brain. Rending claw or talon isn't necessary if the delver gives himself a heart attack or disabling stroke.

Although Chris misleads characters with his little vial, Matt Willson takes the idea one step further: offer the characters the entire contents of an alchemist's laboratory (after they have faced suitable resistance). All the pills, potions, and vials have carefully lettered labels identifying them as "Smarter," "Quicker," "Invisible," or things like "Black Destruction," "Death," and "Endless Sleep." Matt will soon have all the characters asking, **What Are The Ingredients, Anyway?**

"Smarter" pills cause immediate heart failure, "Invisible" clots all the blood in one's body, and "Quicker" dissolves bones - just for examples. Many of the more deadly sounding items, however, are anything but. "Death" pills make a character smarter, "Black Destruction" increases strength, and so on. But just to keep the uninformed from being too cocky, any of the items with a deadly label which are packaged in blue bottles (say 25% of the total) are just what they say. "Endless Sleep" potion in a blue bottle will indeed cast the imbiber into never-ending sleep.

In fairness, provide the alchemist's notes behind a well-concealed hidden panel (like The Bookcase Cliche' back in the Doors section of this book) somewhere nearby. These notes should contain a key to the "mis-"labeling of the bottles and vials. If the characters take the time to find a key, they deserve not to discover the bottles' contents the hard way.



Vending machines are certainly an anachronism in the dank tunnels explored by sword-wielding warriors and mad-eyed mages. If that sort of anachronism is bothersome to you... well, how in the world can you have any fun at all? Loosen up a bit! These two machines are definitely for fun - since playing with characters' brains from the inside out is my idea of a good time.

Rick Loomis brings up a particularly trouble-making item with his **Sweet Drink Machine**. Far back in some dreary hole they're exploring, adventurers discover a tall rectangular box, brightly colored. Mages, mad-eyed or not, will announce that an aura of arcane magic surrounds this bright red and blue thing. (Legend has it that some of these boxes are red and white, while others are green and silver. No one reads the language the words are written in, however, so what these different colors mean, no one knows.)

The box has a number of large buttons, a slot the size to take a coin (and a painted arrow pointing to the slot), and a small niche near the bottom third of the box. Any coin of any denomination can be put into the coin slot. If the button is then pushed, a paper cup drops into the slot (usually right side up), and the cup fills with a foamy brown liquid. (except in the case of the green and silver machines where the liquid is clear.)





There is no magic sensed from the cup or its contents. Appropriate tests report it is definitely non-poisonous. Someone who drinks the liquid will find it tastes sweet, cool and refreshing.

An hour later, the character has a sudden flash: he **MUST** have *another drink from that machine!* Neither water, ale, nor any other drinkable satisfies the craving. In short, the character is hideously addicted to the vending machine's drink. Unfortunately, even if the party thought of it, the character will find the drink he brought along with him goes stale, flat and is unsatisfactory in a very short time. If unable to get back to the machine the delver will first experience headaches, twitches, a ravening thirst, blurred vision, and be very nervous. More serious complications follow...

Speaking of following, Rick suggests that it may prove amusing to have the machine follow the character(s) who drank from it. This can be awkward if the delvers want to go down a passage too narrow for the machine, and if it follows too closely, it could interfere in combat. I wouldn't recommend letting the machine follow a character outside the ruins/dungeon where it is found - unless you want to provide that character a sinecure back home.

If you must have a cure for the poor player, I would suggest a pilgrimage to some distant shrine, which forces the character to haul the machine over hill and dale. Once he reaches the shrine he undergoes a three day ritual that involves fasting, praying and doing certain things with branding irons that I won't mention for the sake of delicacy. And when he's finished with all that, and free of the habit, the shrine's monks direct him to carry his machine out back and to put it with the thousands of other machines just like it...

The machine is insidious and subtle, waiting to strike. Every hour on the hour, the character must have another drink from the magical innards of the machine. Any coin will buy it - but it must be had. Here, kid - *the first one's free...*

Delvers are heavily into material acquisitions. Whatever they have, they want more. Why else should they go out grubbing in dingy holes? Tom Quaid offers **The Vexatious Vending Machine** for those acquisitive characters who have more money than sense; I applaud his means of retrieving some of the cash stolen from the treasure vaults of somebody-or-other's esteemed ancestors!





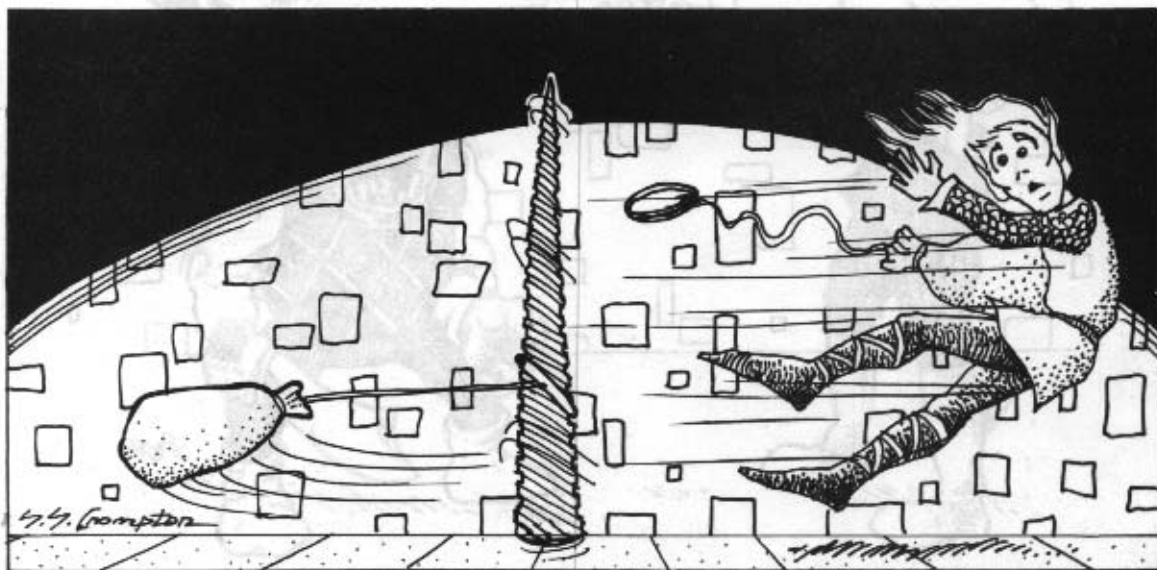
The boxy vending machine - make it as big or small as you like - definitely contains magic. The magic apparently exudes from the weaponry, armor, wands, scrolls and sundry other peculiar items that are lovingly displayed behind a thick sheet of crystal or glass. Each item is numbered, and there is a bank of buttons on the side of the box which apparently correspond to the numbers on the items. A slot in the side of the machine says "Insert Coin Here." A hopper large enough to catch any of the items is near the bottom.

Avarice blossoms in the delver's heart. How to resist? A coin goes into the slot, the button is pushed - the gem-hilted glowing sword does not pop down into the hopper. Well, there are no prices listed for the items - perhaps one must insert more coins. More precious metal dribbles down the chute, but sadly the desired item is never released. So push a button for something that looks less costly - no luck. Look for a coin return?

No Luck.

The coins are gone. The main magic on the vending machine is that all the pounding, beating, kicking, magic and explosives applied to it will not harm it or convince it to regurgitate its coins or bait.

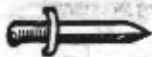
If you suspect the characters won't fall for this machine, set it up in the space formerly occupied by your local dungeon smith and sword-maker - you know, the one who did decent work for the adventurers in the past. You should be able to convince them the smith has merely automated his establishment.



While not a vending machine, the next trap definitely qualifies as a great peculiarity - which is why I include it in this chapter instead of in with the Room traps. Occasionally, a designer of traps will go to substantial lengths to offer the obscure and the arcane. Such is the **Sasquatch WDB** trap, submitted for your consideration by Brent Halverson, with assistance from Monty Liebrant and Stanley Rutledge. Little is known of the secret rites of the Siberian sasquatch - and Brent, Monty, and Stanley know more than most (possibly more than they're telling)! If your tunnel complexes aren't presently inhabited by Siberian sasquatches, then Caribbean sasquatches - those with very little fur and good tans - will do as a substitute.

These rare beings are known to build tall spires in secluded rooms; the spires are threaded like a screw. A sturdy cable rope is wrapped once around the spire, and at either end of the rope is tied a 50 lb. bag of dirt. At the single entrance (quite wide and high, of course, to admit two or more sasquatches standing shoulder to shoulder) a pressure plate starts a round platform spinning at the base of the spire. The platform winds up the spire, spinning faster and faster (up around 150 rpm). When the rope and the attached bags of dirt reach the top of the spire, the whole whirling mess goes spinning off toward the entrance. Now, when there are sasquatches at the door, they know what's going on and catch the bags (though quite a feat it is considered the proper thing to do when visiting)!





Item Traps

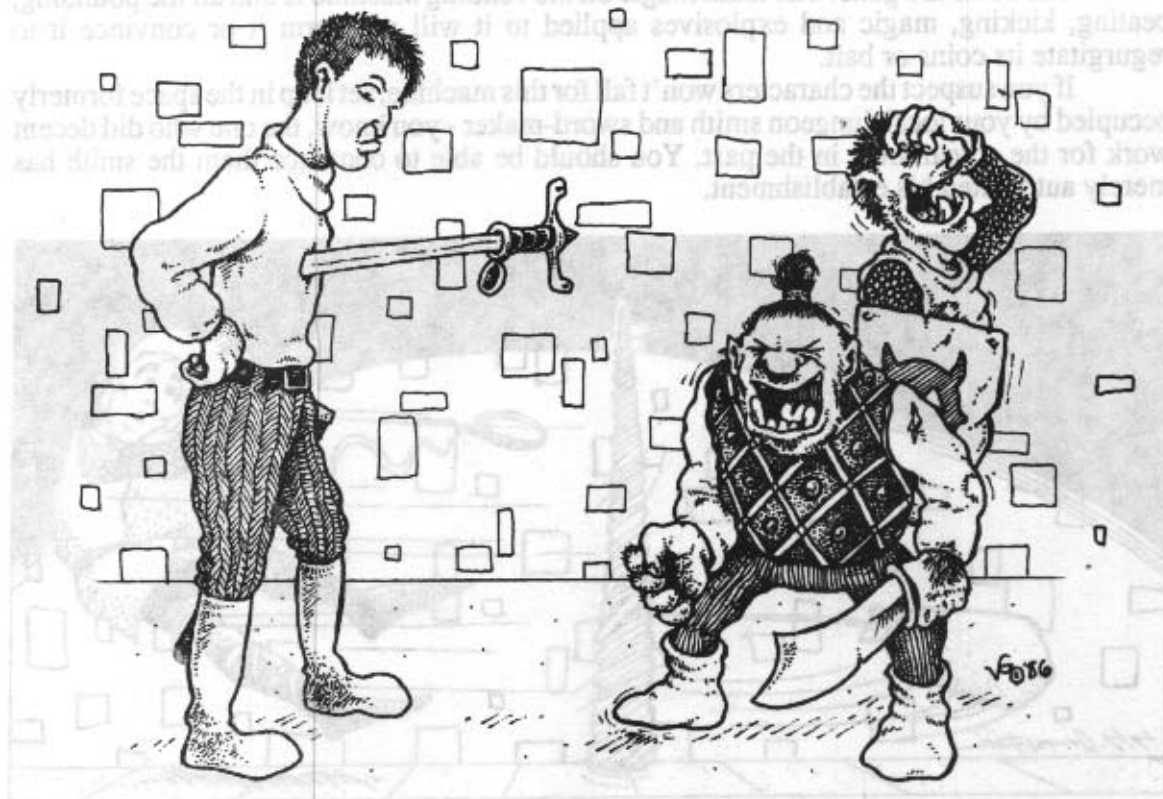
- NOTES -

The uninitiated - and ill-mannered - will be caught by the whirling dirt bags (WDBs). The bags and rope will wrap around like an enormously oversized bola, and quite probably break a spine or two. To add insult to injury, the bags may break, burying the delvers under a hundred pounds of dirt. So gratifying to see a nice, peaceful delver's grave...

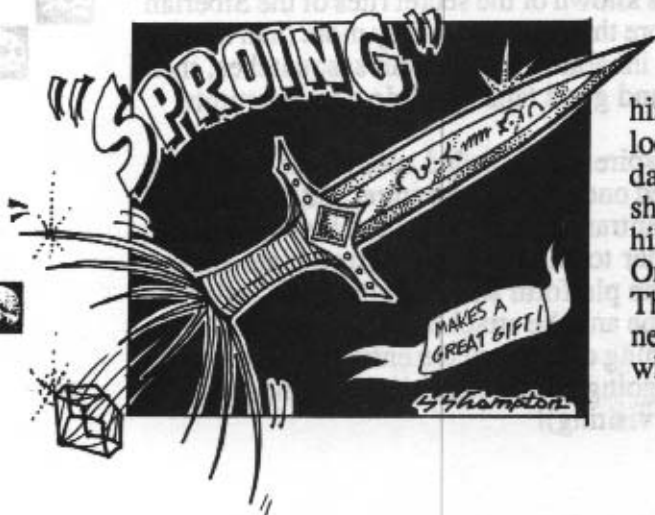


Trapped items that are apparently good weapons are daily fare for dungeon delvers, but still they cannot easily refuse a free weapon. Offered now are several traps masquerading as delvers' favorite toys.

Two minds that think alike are Mike McClymont and Billy Leslie. Mike developed **The Sliding Sword**, a blade that will work perfectly well until it is used to thrust instead of slash. When used in a thrust, the blade slides out the back end of the hilt to impale the person wielding it.



Billy created its companion, a dagger he calls **Reversie**. Because it is not as long as the sword it cannot hope to impale its user. Instead, when the blade sinks in through the hilt, its opposite sharpened end slides up the character's wrist. What a pity, if either the Sliding Sword or Reversie were to take effect when the blades had previously been poisoned...



Billie Leslie provides another variation with his deadly dagger **Backfire**, a moderately sound-looking item with a fair gem decorating the hilt. This dagger, too, will backfire on first thrust. A cluster of sharp poisoned needles pop off the gem capping the hilt; the needles expand like the ribs of an umbrella. One of the needles is sure to prick the user's wrist. There the skin is thin, rarely protected, and has lots of nearby blood vessels to carry the poison straight to where it will do the most good.



Justin Levitt contributes a lovely weapon with an esthetic touch in his **Deadly Work of Art**. In some appropriate location - an armory, perhaps - characters find a particularly beautiful, finely-crafted, all-metal spear standing alone. It shimmers with mild magic, enhancing its attraction.

Actually, the magic has another purpose. Whenever an orc comes within 50', the spear calls out in a very loud voice, "Hey, you, Fatface!"

So? The character appears to have insulted a fumble-footed dungeon monster, right? He'd probably do it by choice, if he'd known the critter was there. And if a fight comes about, no big problem with a nifty new magical spear in hand, eh?

The nifty new magical spear is made of glass, thickly coated with metallic paint. It will shatter as soon as it's used, harming no one - unless you consider being instantly disarmed while facing an angry, insulted, "fumble-footed" dungeon monster to be *harmful*...



But Justin's sense of esthetics doesn't stop with an objet d'art like a fine glass spear. Jewelry is also within his purview, as his **Ring of Doom** clearly shows. He brings the concept of liquid crystals a new perspective.

A ring is found, probably among some other treasures, with a large, lovely diamond glistening in the setting. Obviously valuable, nothing untoward happens until or unless the ring gets wet - if the characters take an unexpected dip in a watery pit, or after a long and difficult fight makes his hands quite sweaty. Then the ring abruptly shrinks at record speed. The character will have to find a spare digit if he or she wants to count to ten when it's finished!





In case the character won't fall into wet holes, or manages to avoid strenuous exertion, he or she may still take a jarring fall. A sharp rap will shatter the "diamond," which proves to have been hollowed out and filled with water. It contains, in fact, just enough water to make the ring do its grisly work.

Another digit devastator is Brannon Moore's **Ring Around the Finger**. The ring is strongly magic, and if you favor giving them a fair warning, leave one half of a dead bug in the box where the ring is found.

The ring is a one-way teleport band which only activates periodically - say, once an hour for just one minute. Anything inside the ring - like a finger joint - is delivered to the Keeper of the Finer Fingernail Collections.

If the ring has some other, more useful magic power (accessible only while being worn, of course), you can probably hook the character into keeping the ring in use while occasionally losing his fingers in the process (since the ring is not all that regular in its cycle). Loss of fingers implies loss of manual dexterity - a serious problem to a mage, to say nothing of the obvious limit to the number of digits a character can sacrifice.

And if your characters have magic enough to regrow the digits after they are lost, consider expanding the ring and letting them use it as a circlet...

Strange minds devising deadly devices can be found anywhere. Start by looking in the mirror, but stop at no sea shore. Trollish hearts trapped in human bodies have spoken up from both side of the Atlantic, and now Jos Valdman offers his masterpiece from Down Under.

This last disabling ring is **The Ring That Won't Let Go**. Again there is magic, which might entice someone into putting the ring on since there is nothing unusual in its looks.

The ring might feel a bit uncomfortable, as if it were knobby on the inside. A wary character will pull the ring off and find, much to his dismay, that most of the flesh and sinew on that finger comes with it, as if shredded by hundreds of tiny cat's-claw curved razors inside the band.

The magic prevents the razor-sharp barbs from being seen, and lets delvers slide the ring on in one direction - but not off the other way.

From trapped jewelry, we progress to the trapping of certain other items of apparel. Somewhere amidst a treasure trove, or perhaps just in the back of a forgotten closet, is the place for Dorothy March's **Acid Boots**. This trap threatens the delver with the very thing he fears, something you humans call poetic justice. How "fitting."

The boots are nicely crafted and very comfortable. A label sewn into the lining near the top proclaims the boots to be made from the finest basilisk leather, completely acid-proof. A worthy treasure indeed.

Between the sole of the boot and its inner lining (which is not acid-proof) is a thin bladder made from the stomach lining of the poor basilisk who gave its all to make the boots. The bladder is, of course, acid-proof and contains a quantity of the most powerful acid known





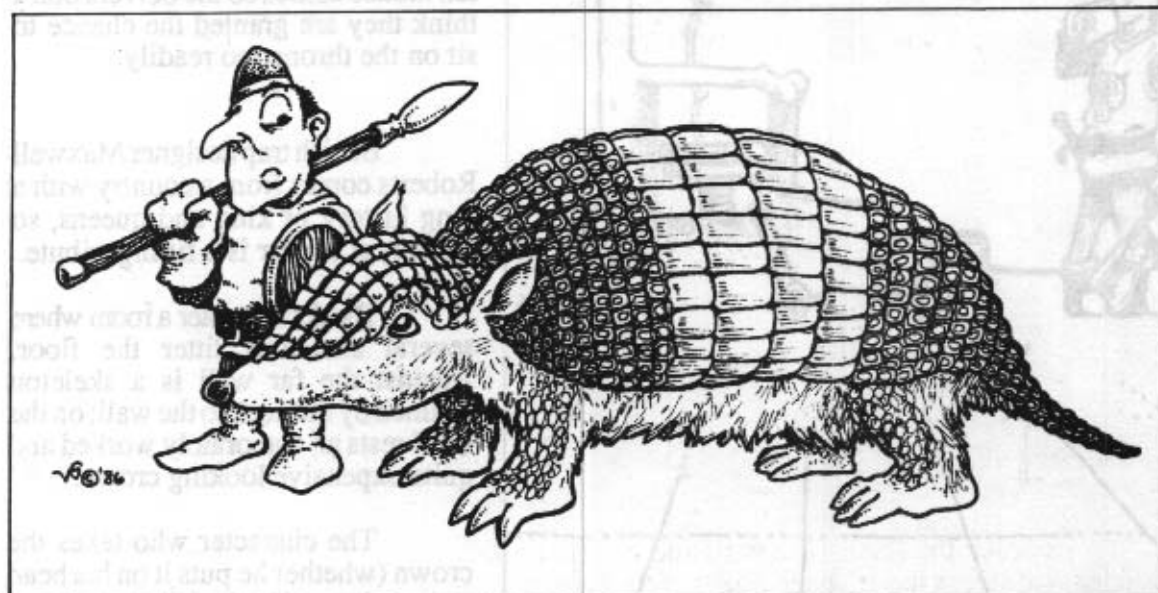
to man or troll. The bladder is removable and is present in the boots for salesmen to remove and pour on the boots to prove the claims on the label.

The bladder, being slightly flexible, will not burst under the impact of normal walking, but when the wearer takes his first few running steps (increasing the pressure on the bladder from just his weight to four times his weight by running), or - the gods forbid! - jumps any distance, the bladder will burst in each boot. The unfortunate delver now finds himself standing in a small pool of acid - neatly confined by his acid-proof boots - and he will be in a desperate hurry to get them off before his feet disappear entirely.

Of course it would be an excellent time for the delver to discover the thing he is running or jumping away from is the boot-basilisk's mother...

Dorothy March also understands that magical armor is an item much prized by adventurers who have serious respect for the integrity of their own skin. Thus, her **Armor-dillo** will probably be snapped up as soon as someone lays eyes on it. Such a character is another victim of poetic justice.

The suit of fine scale mail practically screams that it is magical; even the most cursory inspection will reveal that its power in the arcane is considerable. The armor should have at least one power which can come in handy in the dungeons for which it is designed: if you have a watery theme, the armor allows the wearer to breathe underwater; if people traipse around in the desert, the wearer stays clean, cool, and immune to sunstroke. Whatever this polishing touch is, make it worthwhile to the adventurers. Remember, you'll get back out of this what you put into it, and more.





The insidious thing about this armor is that a curse underlies its special abilities. Once donned, the armor will graft itself onto the wearer's body and transform him or her - slowly, so the character has time to think about it - into an armadillo. A large, magically radiant armadillo that breaths water (or whatever), but in the end, just an armadillo, plain and simple.

The rest of the party will have to come up with a collar and leash, or your tunnels will have a new "wanderer."

Doug Chasant delivers up the deadly simple (and simply deadly) **Ejection Seat** for those characters who think more with their hinder parts than with their brains. The item in question is an ornately carved throne which must be approached by going up two or three steps. The throne is much decorated with reliefs of flying birds and other airborne creatures. An inscription on the throne reads "Whomsoever sitteth upon this throne will gain the power to fly."



When a character walks up the steps to the throne, a measuring device gauges his or her weight. When that same weight is lowered into the seat of the throne, the trap activates. (This subterfuge prevents a wily delver from dumping his pet rock on the seat just to see what happens. Also, if weight remains on the steps, nothing happens, so his companions will have to stay back.)

When the trap springs, the ceiling splits open and the seat of the throne catapults the character into the sky blue yonder. Unless the character already has the power to fly (in which case, why take a seat on the throne?), it will be a long, long way down, during which time the delver can practice missing the earth.

You may need to add guardian monstrosities so the delvers don't think they are granted the chance to sit on the throne too readily.

British trap designer Maxwell Roberts comes from a country with a long history of king and queens, so his **Royal Collar** is a fitting tribute.

The delvers enter a room where several skeletons litter the floor. Against the far wall is a skeleton chained by the neck to the wall; on the skull rests an elaborately worked and quite expensive looking crown.

The character who takes the crown (whether he puts it on his head or not), immediately switches places





with the skeleton. He is now the one chained to the wall by the neck, with the crown securely resting on his cranium. Since the chains are deeply set, and undoubtedly crafted by your courteous local adamantine dealer, the character could be there quite a long time. And if the crown-snitcher is the typical bull-necked bully, he might even have a little difficulty breathing!



Naturally, any spell designed to shrink a person would provide a safe way out of the trap - so you might instruct the adamantine dealer to engrave a warning that implies, true or not, that such a spell would shrink the collar first, and not the person. (While not the truth, no one said we had to be totally honest all the time, did they?) If such magic isn't available, finding a person whose head is smaller than the collar is a practical alternative. But you certainly don't have to suggest it.

If the characters are still seeking to emulate royalty after the last trap, Privileged Information is waiting to enthrone the arrogant. Elija Dixon and Scott Rogers have conspired to trap adventurers who pride themselves on their brains.

The trap is set in "The Throne of Knowledge," a high-backed chair created of obsidian and inlaid with gold, silver, and ivory. If the party can avoid trashing it for the loot, a character might sit in the throne. When he does so, he is immobilized and his head begins to swell (an affliction common enough among delvers and game designers). The character's mind is bombarded with all sorts of information on high-speed dump; if he is not pulled off the throne within 10 seconds, his brain will "explode" or burn out from too much knowledge.

To be on the safe side, the precise amount of time needed to burn out a brain might be linked to the character's original brain capacity. In other words, idiots would blow up faster than geniuses. And what if a character is pulled off the throne in time? You could make all the information date from when the throne was last used by someone who could add instead of just draw information. Court gossip from 1000 years ago might be interesting, but it probably is not going to be much use now.

Equipment can be trapped to good effect. Characters are occasionally constrained to climb steep mountainsides and sheer cliffs, so they tend to be familiar with the art of mountaineering and the equipment that goes with it. Matt Willson has conceived **The Poisonous Pitons** to take advantage of this. If the characters find pitons, hammer and rope as part of a "treasure" shortly before they require them, they'll consider themselves fortunate. It's such a pleasure to raise hopes just before dashing them...

Most of the pitons are perfectly sound, but a number of them are hollow and filled with poisonous gas. Although their weight seems normal, these special pitons are brittle and the first time they're struck with a piton hammer, they'll shatter and the deadly contents will puff out. Since the only safe way to pound in pitons is to work with them close to eye level, and since even heavily armored characters must breathe, the result is quite horrible.



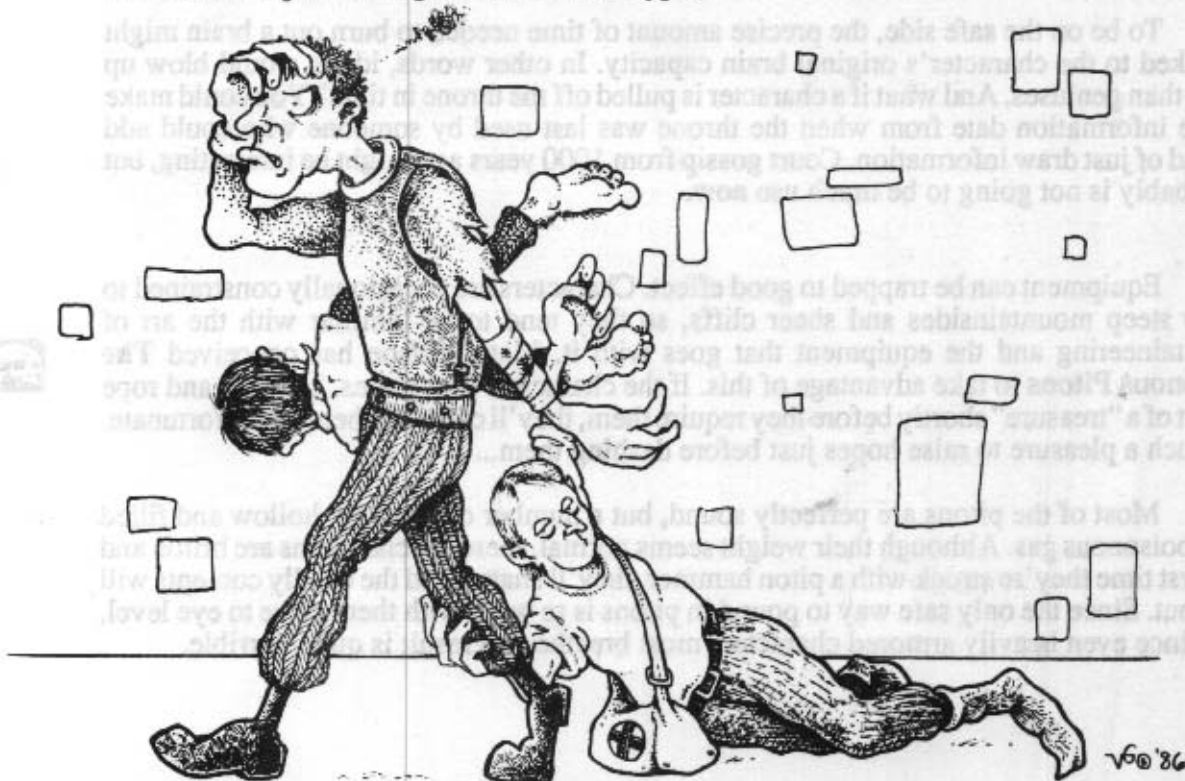
A variation on this theme is to have the special pitons with a slow acid core. When pounded the glass capsule containing the acid is shattered, and the acid slowly weakens the piton from the inside out. A piton that once took weight is now flawed, and will make climbing a true adventure.

Most characters either take first aid for granted, or ignore it entirely. This should not be so - a delver should be educated in the ways of bandaging wounds to speed recovery and ease pain. Then springing David Steven Moskowitz's **Painful Aid** will make the education a mixed blessing.

Set up the delvers in advance of their need for it. A wandering vendor could sell these bandages just outside the tunnels. With a sufficiently hearty sales pitch, the characters will part with a little cash to safeguard their blood and bones later.

Perhaps some portion of these bandage rolls are actually "as advertised." But if the vendor is in league with the dungeon denizens, these could be a serious annoyance at the worst possible times. Variety is the key.

Imagine, if you will, a delver wrapping a slashed forearm with a bandage that, once exposed to moisture (i.e. blood) hardens. A dagger won't cut it free and so the delver might lose use of his arm. (On the other hand, this makes fine modular armor, once they figure it out - so don't provide a great deal of this type.)





Or consider the sticky problem of putting on a bandage with a quick-acting adhesive. Wounded delver and helpful friend would find themselves too tightly wrapped up in each other to gainfully search the dungeon for a solvent.

And of course the most rotten thing to do is coat the bandages with contact poison or venom that must enter the bloodstream to be effective.

Charles Manson's **Interdimensional Book of Magic** is sure to catch the eyes of the greenhorn magic-users who can't resist the urge to pole through the weighty tomes of their betters. Even more experienced sorcerous types succumb to the temptation to check out the latest magical experiments of their peers.

The book is definitely magical, and it definitely does deal with interdimensional magic. It must be read one page at a time, starting at the beginning. The first few pages are just conventional nattering about the subject, nothing even the rudest tyro couldn't have picked up long since. However, when page five is turned, the book's true nature is revealed: it is itself an interdimensional object, rather than being a book about interdimensional magic. Five steel spikes shoot out of the book from this nether dimension, spiking the nosy neophytes and putting a permanent end to his rude inquisitiveness. Thus, it even fulfills the implied promise of teaching a mage how to exit from this plane of existence...

Now we come to the magical deviousness of Steve McAllister. Steve is unquestionably one of the subtlest minds on this planet, and the traps and tricks he has devised to dismay delvers over the millenia have probably caused more players to rip out their hair in frustration than any other dungeon master, ever. His **Magic Gems** have a nearly Zen-like simplicity.

The party locates a small treasure trove of gems in some out-of-the-way location. The greediest delver reaches out to collect his just reward - and disappears. An eagle-eyed companion might notice one more gem lying on the floor. Like all the other gems, it too is magical. If a companion picks up that newest gem, he too disappears. There's yet another gem on the floor, also just as magical.

Yup. It goes on indefinitely.



Magic Gems turn characters into magic gems that turn characters into magic gems that turn characters... but you get the idea. If treated as a powerful curse, the party might eventually be able to retrieve a lost character. But even with the most careful handling, getting a gem-character to a place where the curse-dispelling could occur might leave the party with more gems than characters. And as for cashing them in? A shopkeeper or moneychanger who has been transformed into a gem would have a hard time giving fair value!

These next few item traps range from the sublime to the outrageous, and occasionally are both simultaneously. Don't be fooled by the foolishness; some of these traps can be the most humiliating of all to those adventurers dim enough to be caught by them.

Evil simplicity is the crux of some very effective and clever traps. With **The Nothing Box**, Marc VunKannon has dispensed with the elaborate clockworks, vile chemicals, and twisted mechanisms favored by many trap designers. The box is the inevitable chest somewhere in an inevitable room. On the chest is pasted a notice which reads: "There is Nothing in this chest."



Item Traps

- NOTES -



Such a disparaging statement is the greed-beacon for the average delver. He won't be fooled by such an old trick, no siree! With commendable industry, the character struggles to open the chest - and in fact, it is considerably more difficult to open than it appears. That should merely whet his appetite for the valuables he expects to find inside.

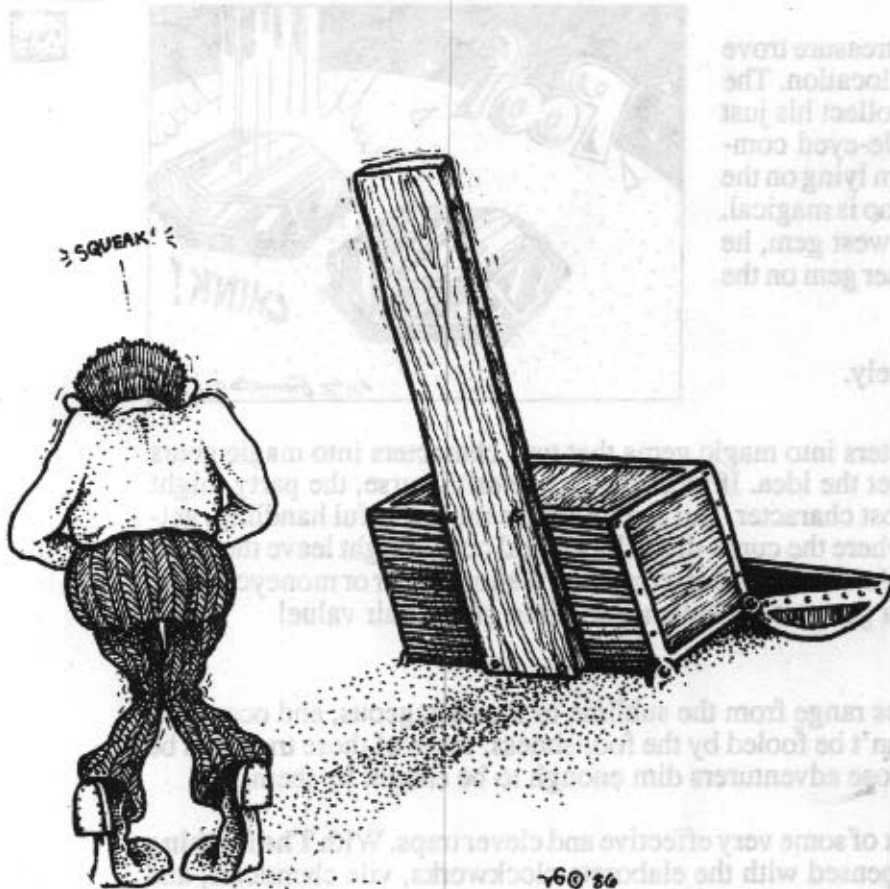
Surprise, surprise. When he finally does wrestle it open, he finds the box really is empty - mainly because it is an interdimensional gateway to interstellar space. The suction caused by the room's air rushing through the box into the void will usually draw any loose items, and possibly a few loose adventurers. (If the fool bashed in the lid, your clean-up crew will have some difficult work cut out for them. Then again, there won't be anything to clean up for a long time, will there?) If the lid was pried up, it will shut again, when the delver holding it is sucked out into the endless chasm. The small amount of air in the box when it closes rapidly evacuates, and once again the box contains... Nothing.



Little attention is paid to the truly vulnerable parts of the average adventurer - by which I mean his mind and his ego, of course. Mark O'Green's **Soprano Chest** effectively plays with his mind while it crushes his ego, among other things.

The chest in which this trap is set looks normal, like the previous trap. Also like the previous trap, the lid is incredibly heavy and difficult to lift. As the delver huffs and puffs, and eventually pushes the lid over, he will discover that the chest is itself on a pivot. As the weight of the chest beings to topple backward, a plank from the floor will also rise sharply (something like the unweighted end of a seesaw) and will catch the delver amidstships.

You'll want to consider putting a monster or other threat in the pit where the chest had been. I, however, favor the idea of having a mirror there to show the character how foolish he looks gasping like a fish...



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While a trap like those above feature a traditional chest in traditional settings, there are some traps which, while simple, are best sprung in elaborate surroundings. Such is Matt Willson's **Pillow of Mung Lung**. I recommend a place deep in your tunnels, defensible to a delver's eye, and with all the trappings of sybaritic luxury and relaxation. A temple complex, perhaps, with the unearthly priestesses ready to tend wounds, offer refreshment, and allow the weary adventurers a good safe night's sleep. If you give the temple an Oriental flavor you could even call it the "Temple of Mung Lung" and no one will ever know the difference.

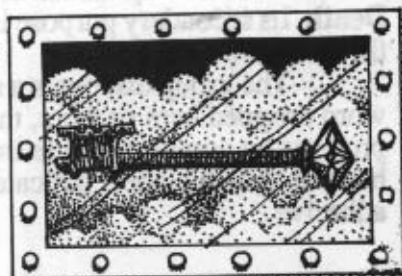


The trap is pathetically simple: all the pillows on which the adventurers might rest are filled with *Rabulus mungum* fungi spores. When a character rests his head on a pillow, the microscopic spores puff out, too small to see, but easy to inhale. The spores will infest the character's lungs - but they do it slowly. Chances are good that when the character wakes the next morning, he'll have no symptoms more discomforting than might presage a head cold. However, by nightfall, he'll be collapsing, cyanotic, strangling, and soon dead. Even before he gets that far gone, he'll be short of breath (a problem for someone having to fight his way out of a dungeon), and slow to recover from exhaustion. Add the aura of a curse that is rumored to take out those who venture into the dungeon's halls, and this Mung Lung infestation is a means to make it seem true - without connecting the unearthly inhabitants to the characters' demises.



Unearthly did I say? Of course: they don't breathe.

In keeping with my chosen theme of discomfort over death, it's a pleasure to offer Brannon Moore's **The Key To Pain**. The delvers come to a door with a big brass handle and a keyhole that resists the best efforts of the lockpickers. However, even cursory investigation



77 (compton)





will turn up a panel nearby. Behind the panel is a glass globe containing swirling mists and a jeweled key. Breaking the glass sets off no alarm and the delvers will discover the key is a perfect fit for the lock. When the key is turned, however, it begins to spin at an incredible rate of speed, scraping flesh from the thumb and forefinger of the character unlocking the door. Wait until they try to collect a Purple Heart for that "battle wound!"

Matt Willson is a trap-designer with an evil mind. (He bought it at an odd boutique in Denver.) Using this mind he discovered that "the only thing worse than a brutal warrior is one with **A Plaid Thumb.**" Silly? Doubtless. But picture a 6'7" warrior with the ability to lift 49,764.112 pounds who has to walk into taverns and explain *this*...



As found, the item is a plaid sphere about 6" in diameter. It exudes magical vibes; eventually someone will pick it up. When that person does so, his or her thumb sinks all the way into the sphere. It is physically impossible to remove, break, melt, paint, bleach, bend, or destroy the sphere - although thumbodectomy remains an option for those who don't care to hold anything in that hand ever again. (Limbs cut off and then magically regrown still have the color problem.)

A glove can be constructed to mask the disfiguration, but it will still look like the character has a tangerine stuck on the end of his or her thumb. More insidiously, if the plaid area is not exposed to light regularly and as much as possible, the discoloration will start to spread further. The plaid will creep up the arm, around the neck, across the face, down the chest...

suffice to say that it gets more and more difficult to disguise. Regular and prolonged exposure to sunlight will cause the plaid to go "into remission," although it will never cover less area than the character's swollen thumb.

It's an interesting exercise in role playing, one hopes, or at least good for a laugh. If the former, you could start the rumor that if the character can locate the (far distant/probably hostile/virtually unknown) clan whose tartan it is, the plaid can be removed through some extensive and adventurous ritual. Of course, the clansmen might not understand why the character would wish to disavow connection with their noble people. And the clan's feud-foes might want to remove the tartan in their own way...

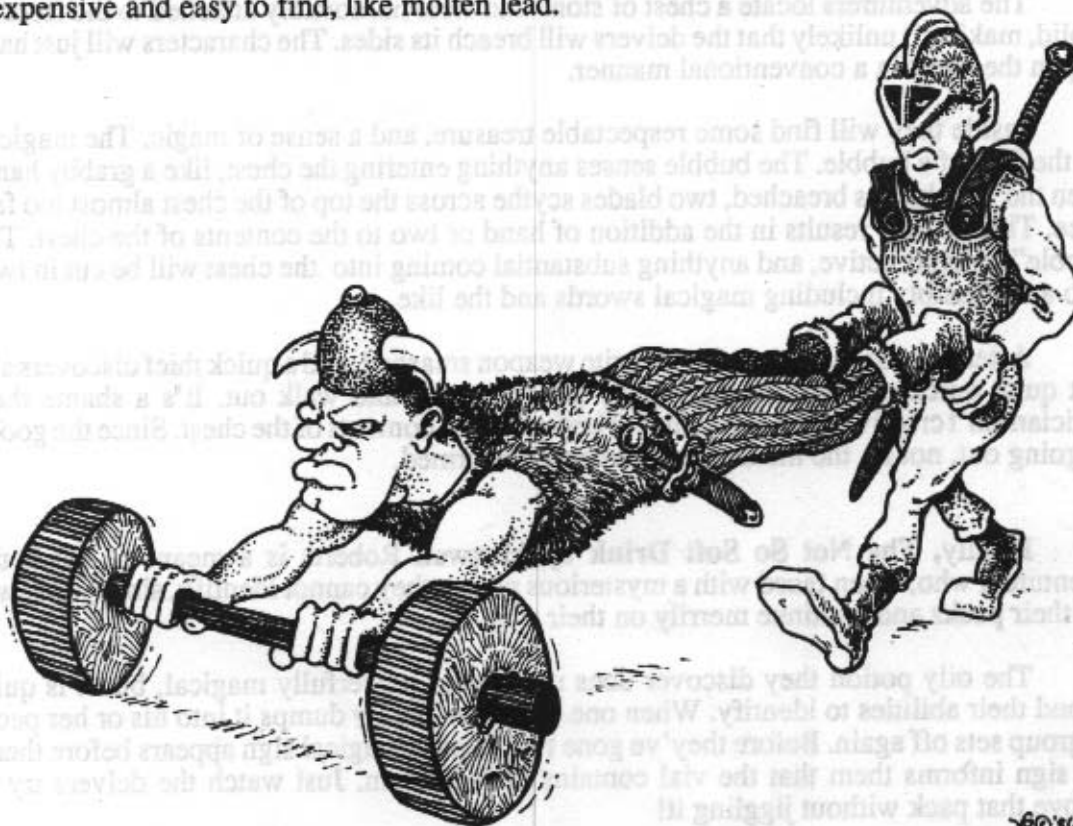
Another trap whose main purpose is to teach humility is Brent Jones' **Barbells of Death**. Its secondary purpose is to substantially weaken the party by challenging the pride of the strongest member.

The group discovers a room with weights on bars, as if for weight-lifting. With a sly word dropped here or there, the strong characters can probably be goaded into testing their prowess by pumping a little iron. There are two catches: 1) the weights are easily ten times heavier than the labels indicate; and 2) every bar is coated with a strong, fast-acting contact adhesive.



The result is that the mighty character, having attempted to lift a weight he cannot possibly lift, is trapped in a crouching squat - a useless, embarrassing, and vulnerable position. The character can move about since the weights turn like wheels, but the weight absolutely cannot be removed from the bars. Unless he or she can fight crouched over with sword in teeth, the trapped character will be little more than a pitiable tag-along who'll have problems negotiating stairs. This has an incredibly traumatic effect on a delver's ego, so be sure to give the problem all the attention it warrants.

Of course, you *should* provide a solvent for the adhesive. You can even give them a choice: something expensive, difficult to find and difficult to transport - or something inexpensive and easy to find, like molten lead.



Someone who has succumbed to The Barbells of Death will have nothing to fear from Brent's last scurrilous trick, **The Magical Binoculars**, since the weight-lifters won't be getting their hands on the prize. Everyone else is fair game for this jest.

The magic binoculars definitely should be part of a hoard the adventurers have worked hard to find, making this "trap" the last laugh of the being who has been ripped off.

The binoculars are made of brass, well crafted, and the lenses even appear to be of a quality surpassing anything else available. Best of all, an inscription on the side reads "Use Magic Binocs To See Through Darkness."

The field glasses do indeed let one "see through darkness" but it probably isn't in the way one expects. The magic of the binoculars places a smeary black circle around each eyes of the character who uses the field glasses - a *permanent* smeary black circle. Looking through black circles could be said to be "looking through darkness."

This trap is purely designed for fun. If you can keep the afflicted character from finding out what happened, the joke can last quite a while. (Plan ahead: provide a slip of paper for everyone in the party - except



Ol' Raccoon Eyes - which explains the appearance of the adventurer who used the glasses.)

The final pair of traps in this Items section are a tad grimmer than the traps above, but are a fitting end to this chapter. They literally get the characters coming and going.

One definition of creativity is the ability to think of the unusual way to do an ordinary thing. Greg Fisher's **Handy Treasure** will force a little creativity from the characters - or make them pay for the lack of it.

The adventurers locate a chest of stone and steel immovably attached to the floor. It is solid, making it unlikely that the delvers will breach its sides. The characters will just have to open the chest in a conventional manner.

Inside they will find some respectable treasure, and a sense of magic. The magic is like the film of a bubble. The bubble senses anything entering the chest, like a grabby hand. When the "bubble" is breached, two blades scythe across the top of the chest almost too fast to see. This usually results in the addition of hand or two to the contents of the chest. The "bubble" remains active, and anything substantial coming into the chest will be cut in two, up to and possibly including magical swords and the like.

After a hand is amputated, a favorite weapon smashed, and a quick thief discovers she ain't quite quick enough, the party may get frustrated and walk out. It's a shame their magician isn't creative enough to think of levitating the contents of the chest. Since the goods are going out, not in, the material will emerge unharmed.

Finally, **The Not So Soft Drink** by Maxwell Roberts is a means to catch the adventurers who, when faced with a mysterious potion they cannot identify, simply throw it into their packs and continue merrily on their way.

The oily potion they discover does not appear powerfully magical, but it is quite beyond their abilities to identify. When one character finally dumps it into his or her pack, the group sets off again. Before they've gone two steps, a magical sign appears before them. The sign informs them that the vial contains nitroglycerin. Just watch the delvers try to remove that pack without jiggling it!

Just for the record - nitro is poisonous if taken internally. And you should always shake before swallowing. Or after, as the case might be...





Things

I have been accused in the past of putting any trap that does not fit into another category into this final "catch-all" chapter called Things. I think this really does a disservice to Thing traps. Instead of looking at Things as those traps that fit no other category, perhaps we should think of them as traps that are not so easily pegged with a label. This difficulty in easily defining Thing traps makes them less easy to spot, to figure out and much less simple to avoid.



Thing traps seem well tailored to let the delvers be the instrument of their own destruction. I begin this chapter with Brent Jones' **Help!** which is exemplary among its kind. If the characters want to call for help, their careless wish will be answered.

The adventurers find this trap in a room more like an office than your typical dreary dungeon room. There is a desk at the far end of the room, and a rope bellpull hanging against the wall close behind the desk. The occupant of the desk is out - certainly not to be seen - but he, she, or it has left simple instructions on the desktop: "To Call For Help, Pull On Rope."

Too many delvers think selfishly. In this case, that means the delver who pulls on the rope assumes he'll be summoning help - someone to give him assistance, first aid, or directions to the nearest treasure hoard.

The rope bellpull rises up into the darkness that substitutes for a ceiling. Up in the darkness the rope winds up over a ledge, and attaches to the tail of a nasty man-eater sleeping on that ledge. A really good tug will pull the creature right off the ledge and into the lap of the bell-puller. Neither beastie nor delver will have their tempers soothed by such a tumble!

The delvers wanted to call for help? That's exactly what they'll probably be doing with a grouchy monster hot after them!

Another variation on this theme is Laurel Goulding's **Not Quite Rapunzel**. Delvers who grew up on tales of white knights rescuing fainting damsels in distress will fall easily for this sucker trap, especially if it's set up with all the right trimmings. (Some might object to picking on such "romantic" individuals, but anyone stupid enough to base career decisions on fairy tales has got it coming. Never see me under any bridge...)

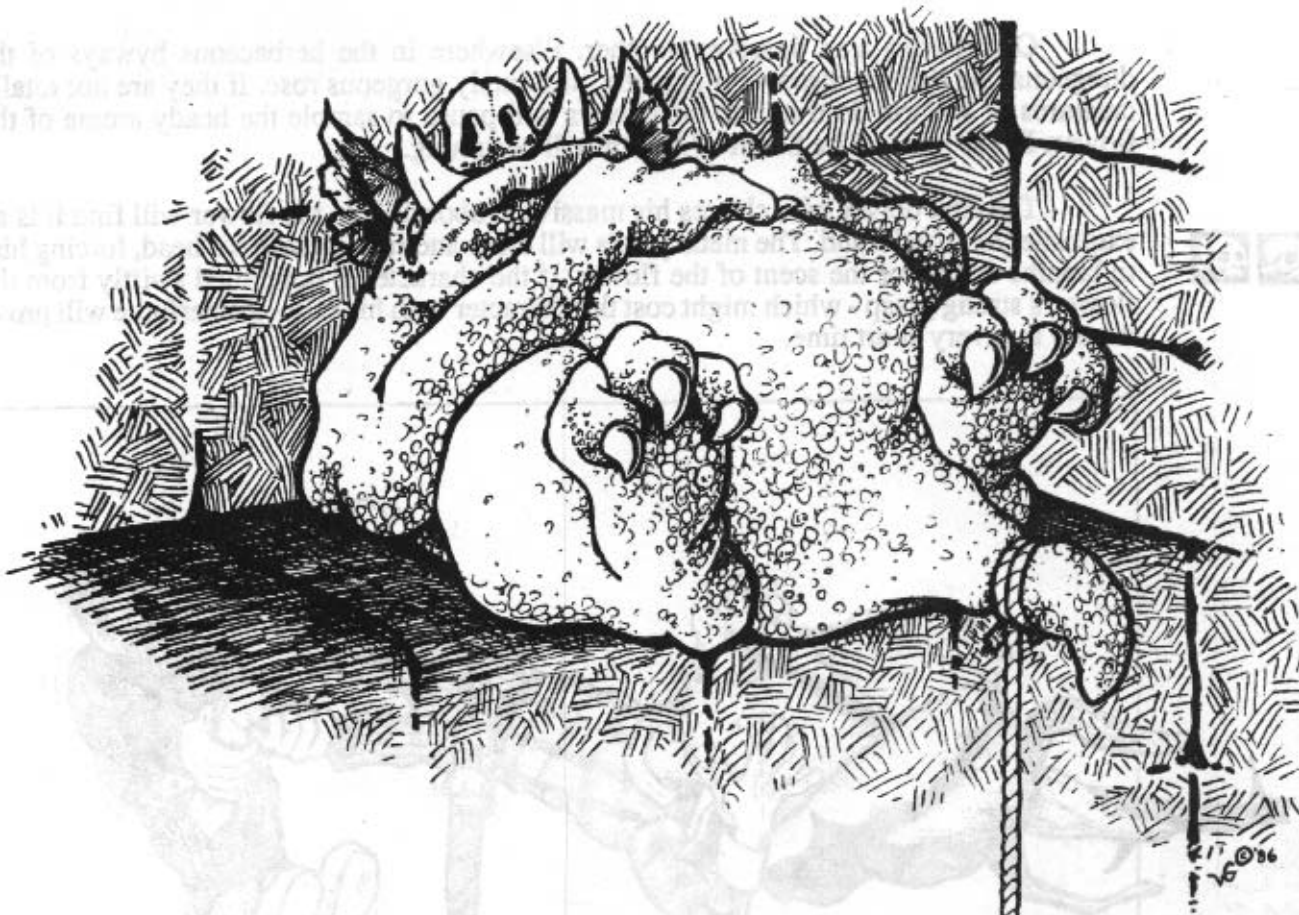
The bold adventurers are confronted with a sheer wall leading up several stories to a tower window. On the window ledge they see, perhaps, a flicker of thick golden braid. Visions of childhood fairy tales blossom in their small minds, and they call up sweetly "Rapunzel, Rapunzel..." - well, they can call out anything actually, and the braid will twitch, then come tumbling down. The adventurers can climb up the braid or use their own ropes, but they will be unpleasantly surprised when they reach the top, regardless of how they get there. A huge Golden-Tailed Multi-Clawed Short-Tempered Head-Crusher was awakened when the characters raised their voices, and it can hardly wait to teach them the error of their ways...!

Laurel Goulding shows a definite flair for adapting tales into wails with yet another bait-and-switch tactic for those well-read adventurers who imagine themselves to be heroes of myths and fairy tales. **Daphne's Revenge** takes place in a glade (or room that looks like a glade). The characters discover an enchanted laurel tree guarded by some unfortunate goblin or gremlin you want harshly disciplined.

After the party has dealt with the overmatched guard, they will have time to notice the tree has a bracelet around one of its major limbs and a ring on a branch that could pass for one of several fingers. In fact, the whole tree has a feminine cast about it, and smart delvers will be reminded of the story of Apollo and Daphne. They'll soon assume the tree is a shape-changed woman - and they'll be quite right. As soon as they dispell the magic, the character will briefly understand why the woman-tree was guarded.

In her natural form, the lady is a gorgon.





TO CALL
FOR HELP,
PULL ON
ROPE



One garden trap deserves another. Elsewhere in the herbaceous byways of the dungeons, the delvers discover a gigantic, absolutely gorgeous rose. If they are not totally creatures of wanton destruction, the delvers will pause to sample the heady aroma of the flower. Brent Jones' **The Scent of Death** will be sprung.



The first delver who shoves his massive proboscis into the flower will find it is an exquisitely-crafted fraud. The metal petals will close and fasten about his head, forcing him to breathe deeply of the scent of the flower. If the character is not pulled swiftly from the flower's strong grasp - which might cost the character both his ears - the perfume will prove deadly in a very short time.



Brent Halverson has a businessman's acumen - also an amazon's toe and a politician's heart - but it is the business sense which fires up his next two traps. **Getcher Fresh Hot Toasties!** will allow enterprising freelance monsters the golden opportunity of setting up a fresh-fried refreshment stand. You don't need kings, clowns, colonels or arches to go into the food business, just a way to make food fast!

Permit the cleverest of delvers into the area "behind the scenes" back where your monsters live (and presumably come for their food when off duty). A small tunnel - hidden behind a secret doorway - leads up to a lookout over a cavern where several sleeping monsters lie snoring away. A spur of rock extends from the path out over the cavern room below. And on the spur off rock the delvers find a cauldron.

Clearly another party wrestled it this far because it is all set to pour its contents down on the room below. In fact it is still full of hot oil bubbling merrily away. There is even magic on the pot which a wizard knows keeps the contents of the pot boiling at a steady even heat - it was once a witches' cauldron. Even the most stupid of characters can see this seigemaster's dream of a pot is ready to wreak havoc on the monsters below!

That is exactly what would happen, except for two mid-air teleport fields shimmering unnoticed: one below the oil's probable trajectory, and the other... over the delvers' ledge, of course.



If you've got your monsters on a diet and are trying to cut out the greasy fried foods, substitute boiling water.

Brent's next business is just the right kind of encounter for adventurers who have been sent on a wild goose chase to rescue a missing prince or princess. **Frog Prince** may not be what they had in mind, but it should keep them occupied.

In a secluded room, or a shabby tent on the fringes of a bizarre bazaar, the characters find an old blind man seated beside a pool or bucket which contains 20 or 30 bullfrogs. A sign nearby reads "Kiss A Frog - 5 Gold Pieces."

If one of the adventurers actually pays the man (who can tell a gold coin from a lead slug - he's blind, not stupid), the fellow produces a net, catches a frog, and offers it to the customer. One kiss actually bestowed, and... poof! An amazing transformation!

One of the frogs is actually a prince or princess, although it might not be the one the adventurers are looking for. All the other frogs are nasties-of-your-choice transmuted into froggy bodies - and released with a kiss.

Lest the characters take out their frustrations on the "blind" old man, let them think about this: considerable magic power is required to transform 20 or 30 vile beasts into bullfrogs. Is their ire worth the rest of their lives being spent wet, cold and eating flies? There's room aplenty in that bucket!

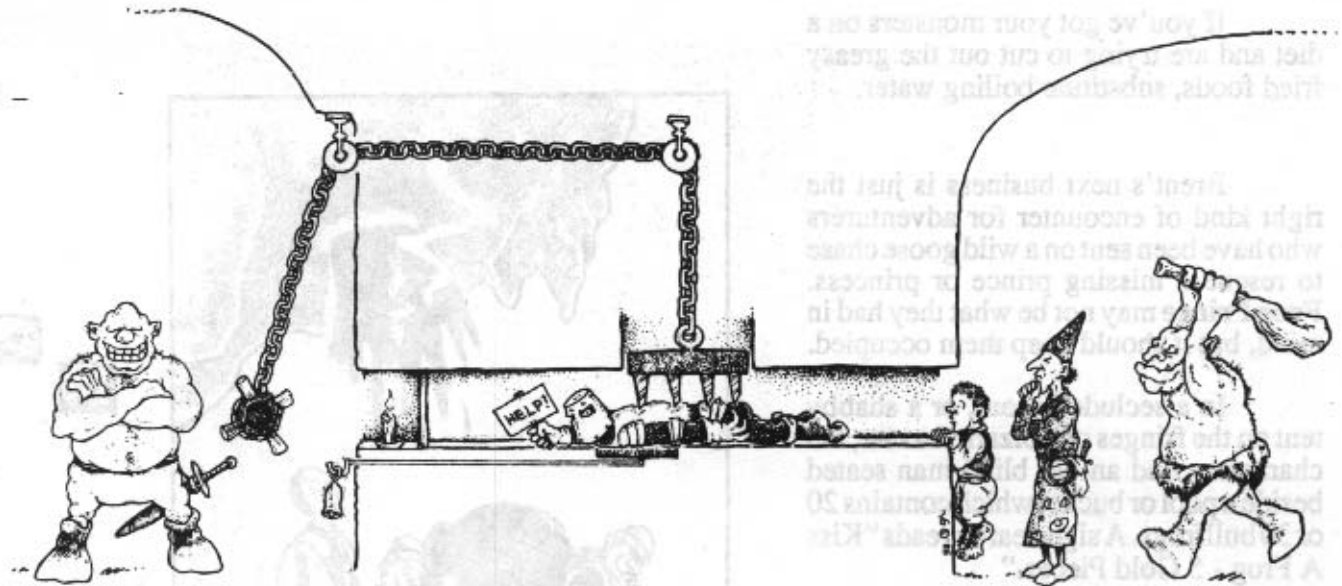
Frogs and toads are such lovely creatures, it's a shame no one thought to provide them with fangs! Alas, they're condemned to be foolishly bloated beasties frequently found in strange places - which is why the next trap, in their honor, is called **Toad In The Hole**. Jos Valdman forces the delver to become a toad, after a fashion, and it will take more than a kiss to put him right again.

This trap is quite dangerous for the sorry bloke who crawls into it. But since he won't obey signs anyway, he should be removed from the gene pool. Because delvers in general are prone to ignore written warnings, it's possible this trap could work repeatedly in different locations.

Over a narrow crawlspace hangs a neatly lettered sign. It reads "Employees Only - No Entry Without Authority." Peering in, delvers can see a pale rectangle, as if the crawlspace debouched into a dimly lit room perhaps 20' away.

Eventually some character will summon his courage and creep in. However careful he is, about 13 feet in he will depress a pressure plate. It doesn't have to give much, so he may not notice at all, especially if he is in armor. The plate jangles a bell, and the bell alerts





the ogre (orc, goblin, or hobbit-gone-bad) who inhabits the other room. The bell won't be heard because the crawlspace doesn't actually go all the way through. The far end is just a luminous square (or thick parchment before a candle if you want to fool magick-sniffers).

When he hears the bell, the ogre knows there is unauthorized entry into the crawlspace - everybody is unauthorized to be there. The ogre leaps to a winch and lever mechanism that swiftly lowers razor-sharp blades that divide the character into equal sections. Note that curved blades make the slicing easier...

Should your creeping crawler be encased in endless plates of impenetrable armor, you have two options. The first is to allow the fellow his miserable life for the expediency of wearing armor in the first place. He'll still be pressed firmly against the ground by at least 4 or 5 thick blades in a space too small for his friends to assist him. When the ogre finds his winch won't lower the blades all the way, he can send his buddies out to harrass the characters who are trying to help their companion out of his predicament.

If you prefer the short and sweet, use the blades first. If they don't cut through, leave them in place to hold your victim still - then lower the optional needle-sharp spikes or power drill to punch through the ferrous carapace.

Taylor Deupree has conclusively proven that it's possible to completely frustrate greedy adventurers without causing them any physical pain whatsoever. **Good Things Come In Small Packages** is one of the most potentially aggravating trap set-ups I've seen, remarkable in its simplicity.



This trap is located in a rather plain side-branch off a regular corridor. The side corridor appears quite long, and there's something - perhaps an open chest - at the far end.

However tremulously the characters approach, they find two things: 1) the corridor has a definite aura of magic; and 2) there is a chest at the end and it is filled to overflowing with coins, gold plates and flatware, fat ropes of pearls, and much more. The chest also seems rather large. In fact, by the time they get up close to it, the chest is the size of a 2-story house! - a fact not in the least apparent from the beginning. From where they stand, the characters can look up and see a coin balanced on the edge of the chest, and the coin is as big as a double bed!

It's quite likely the characters will devise some way into this gigantic chest. They will find everything in it commensurately immense. The very smallest pearl gruntingly pried out of a pinkie ring is the size of a head of cabbage.

A character who takes that cabbage-sized pearl back up the corridor will find that by the time he reaches the intersection, the pearl is as tiny as a mustard seed. If he had casually tossed it into his pouch, he might have trouble finding it without a magnifying glass.

The magic of the corridor makes the characters shrink. All the treasure is normal in size, but the tunnel itself is constructed to fool the eye's sense of perspective so it seems that one misjudged the length of the corridor originally. Magic cast by others tends to get muddled in the corridor: teleporting into the corridor, a character will still arrive as small as ever; trying to teleport out with the treasure just doesn't work.

The characters are welcome to set up a bucket brigade to get out what treasure they can handle, but aside from tiny pearls and gem dust, they shouldn't have much luck. Even the most unbelievably strong character must be able to get his or her hands around an oversized item. Since belongings also shrink, rope is more likely to break than retrieve so much as a fork.

And while the party is lifting and toting, you should send wanderers along to see how they're doing...



The final "thing" in this chapter is a piece of furniture. Sort of. It's an uncommon delver who, when finding a desk, dresser or chest of drawers, can resist the temptation to search through it. Matt Willson's **Never Trust A Drawer** may not end this uncivilized nosiness, but it may slow it down a little. This should allow the more conventional nasties in your halls an advantage to shift the delvers' gears from Slow to Stop...



The characters locate a piece of furniture which has drawers. It's handy if the drawers are relatively numerous and stacked one over the others. The intrepid adventurer gives one drawer a tug and finds it a little hard to pull open. This should encourage him to stand right in front of the drawer and tug harder. Doing so, the adventurer finds the drawer releases suddenly - hard and fast. So do all the other drawers.



The drawers are made of steel and are spring-loaded. They will shoot out with considerable force, crunching kneecaps, smashing shins, belting breadbaskets and ravaging ribs - at least. If that's not enough, while the crippled delver lies in front of the dripping furniture, a heavy poisonous gas may be released. It should sink to floor level - which is currently nose-level for the erstwhile adventurer - and finish the job.

"GAWDS! IMAGINE
THE OYSTER!"

And while the party is lifting
and taking, you should send wander-
ers along to see how they're doing...

The final "thing" in this chapter is a piece of furniture. Sort of. It's an uncommon delver who, when finding a desk, dresser or chest of drawers, can resist the temptation to search through it. Man Willows Never Trust A Drawer may not eat this unwholesome morsel, but it may slow it down a little. This should allow the more conventional parties in your halls an advantage to shift the delver's gears from slow to stop...

The character locates a piece of furniture which has drawers. It's handy if the drawers are relatively unsecured and stacked out over the others. The intrepid adventurer gives one drawer a tug and finds it a little hard to pull open. This should encourage him to stand right in front of the drawer and tug harder. Doing so, the adventurer finds the drawer releases suddenly - but not fast. So do all the other drawers.

The 102nd Trap



101st Trap+

- NOTES -

Now, for the fourth time, I come to the point where I must set quill aside after the arduous task of collating all the traps contained herein. I must say this collection was somewhat easier to compile than the three that have preceded. The selection of traps I had to choose from was very wide, and seldom was an offering abandoned because it was not useful. My thanks to all the contributors. Without their efforts and labors I should have spent years, and the total male population of several small countries, in gathering and testing the traps above.

Before I pass this volume to my aids so they may prepare it for final production I do want to leave you with a final trap. There is no need for gloves or environment suits this time; what I did thrice before I need not repeat again. After all, if I've not gotten you by now you've proved your worthiness to share my wisdom.

In many ways this trap has been worked through the pages of this book. It was subtle in construction and, in fact, many of you may not have noticed it at all. For its foundation it took my reputation - a formidable base for any trap - and added a hint of harmlessness by using something you are more than familiar with. 1 clue was thrown in midway through the book, but the trap itself is yet to be sprung!

Now, turn back for a few pages and look at the skulls. Notice the "seemingly random" pattern of their distribution. See how they form odd shapes and are spaced differently. Notice that no pattern is the same throughout the book! All the patterns are unique. What could these sinister symbols mean?

Humans are inquisitive creatures, and a mystery will hold their attention as a shackle might hold an ankle. Curiosity burns in them like a hot poker and the very thought of leaving a clue unsought or a puzzle unsolved makes them uneasy and spurs them on to even greater and greater acts of stupidity in an effort to prove how smart they are.

So, what is the mystery of the skulls? There is no mystery. The skulls are randomly placed on the pages in a pattern that is no pattern. Had you but seen the loathsome creature placing them you would know any sort of complex pattern was beyond him.

My point is this: place objects that seem incongruous or slightly out of place within your demense. Certainly nothing that might upset the fine thematic balance you have labored hard to present, but enough to be noticed as different or unusual. Imagine, for example, a wall painting that depicts the life of a great hero, and suggests a location for his tomb. Adventurers will look for more clues to piece this puzzle together so they can find the tomb and - instead of setting up a shrine appropriate to such an individual - loot it. As long as they feel there is one more clue that will make everything fit together, and that said clue is just around the corner or over the next hill, they will drag themselves through gauntlet after torturous gauntlet to find it.

Then again, there might be a pattern to the clues you offer, and the solution to that puzzle might well lead to worse than they faced gathering the clues.

That is, after all, the way it is with the skulls above.

Pleasant Dreams,

-Grimtooth



The 102nd Trap

Now, for the fourth time, I come to the point where I must set my guide after the arduous task of collating all the traps contained herein. I must say this collection was somewhat easier to compile than the three that have preceded. The selection of traps I had to choose from was very wide, and seldom was an offering abandoned because it was not useful. My thanks to all the contributors. Without their effort and labor I should have spent years, and the total male population of several small countries, in gathering and setting the traps above.

Pearls of Wisdom

Before I pass this to you, I want to leave you with a final thought. I have no doubt that you will find pearls of wisdom here. I did not repeat before I need not repeat again. After all, if I've not gotten you by now, you've proved your worthiness to share my wisdom.

In many ways this trap has been worked through the pages of this book. It was subtle in construction and, in fact, many of you may not have noticed it at all. For its foundation I took my reputation - a formidable base for any trap - and added a hint of randomness by using something you are more than familiar with. I clue was thrown in midway through the book, but the trap itself is yet to be sprung!

Now, turn back for a few pages and look at the skulls. Notice the "seemingly random" pattern of their distribution. See how they form odd shapes and are spaced differently. Notice that no pattern is the same throughout the book! All the patterns are unique. What could these sinister symbols mean?

There's a sucker born every minute

-P.T. Barnum

Humans are impulsive creatures. They will hold their attention as a sucker might hold an apple. Curiosity burns in their eyes like a hot poker and the very thought of having a clue wrought or a puzzle unraveled makes them uneasy and spurs them on to even greater and greater acts of stupidity in an effort to prove how smart they are.

And they die about that fast, too.

-Grimtooth

So, what is the mystery? The skulls are randomly placed on the pages in a pattern that is as random as the last time you saw the last time creature placing them you would know any sort of complex pattern was beyond him.

My point is this: place objects that seem incongruous or slightly out of place within your domain. Certainly nothing that might upset the fine thematic balance you have labored hard to present, but enough to be noticed as different or unusual. Imagine, for example, a wall painting that depicts the life of a great hero, and suggests a location for his tomb. Adventurers will look for more clues to piece this puzzle together so they can find the tomb and - instead of setting up a shrine appropriate to such an individual - loot it. As long as they feel there is one more clue that will make everything fit together, and that said clue is just around the corner or over the next hill, they will dig themselves through gauntlet after gauntlet after gauntlet to find it.

Then again, there might be a pattern to the clues you offer, and the solution to that puzzle might well lead to worse than they faced gathering the clues.

That is, after all, the way it is with the skulls above.

Pleasant Dreams,
-Grimtooth



end...

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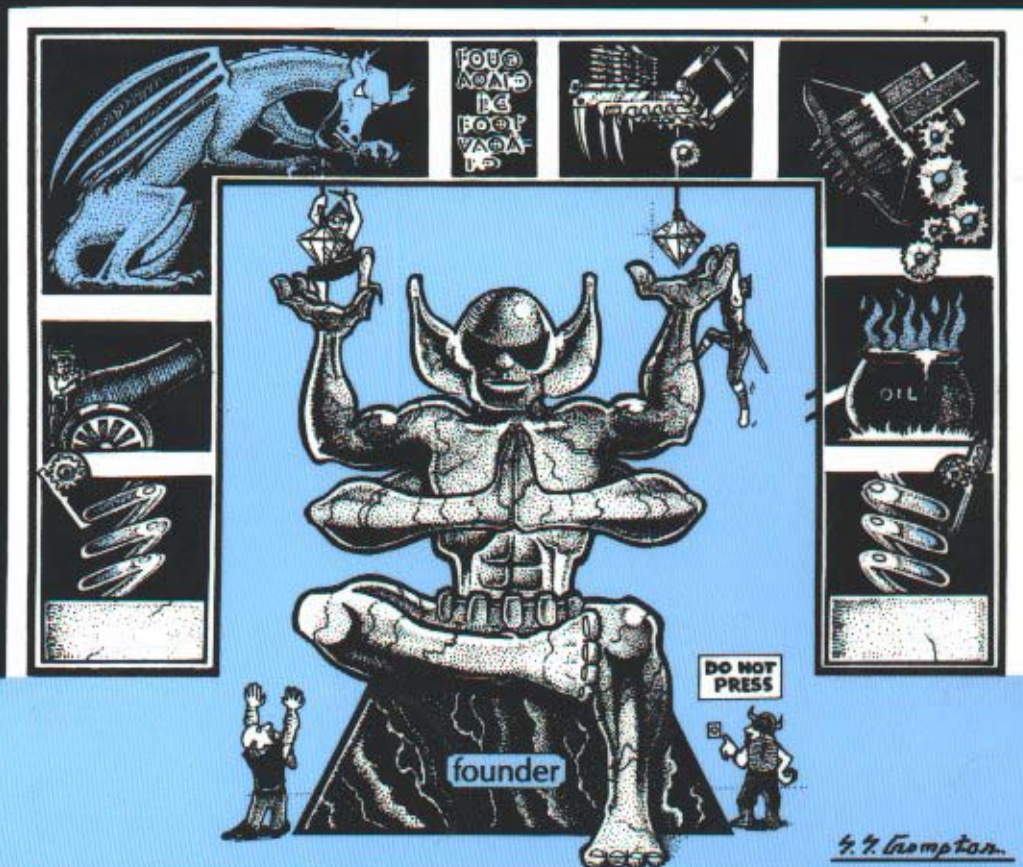
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