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DUNGEON

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AGE OF WORMS ADVENTURE PATH

34 THE HALL OF HARSH REFLECTIONS

by Jason Bulmahn

The Free City: a shining gem in the crown of cultured civilization. Beneath the surface of this bustling metropolis is a rot, festering in the darkness, manipulating the lives of those unaware of its presence. Now a small adventuring band from out of town may be in over their heads. Their actions in Diamond Lake have attracted the wrath of one of the city's hidden masters. A gang of infiltrators and an enigmatic mastermind plot their destruction, and only tracing the rot to the root can stop the onslaught. An Age of Worms Adventure Path adventure for 7th-level characters.

ADVENTURES

16 THE HIVE

Phillip Larwood

The once-dwarven wizard Hehranna knows that her previous race, for all its pride and skill, is hampered and distracted by lesser concerns—family, friendship, emotion. Once they join the Hive, they won't begrudge a few moments of pain in exchange for the industrious awakening she has to offer them. A D&D adventure for 5th-level characters.

62 DUNGEON OF THE CRYPT

Eric L. Boyd

The High Hunt leaves the streets of Waterdeep and heads beneath the City of the Dead where monstrous criminal overlords compete for the favor of their mysterious master. It will take more than skill with a blade to cut through the web of deceit and treachery that surrounds the Vampire Master of Waterdeep. Do you have what it takes to survive the Dungeon of the Crypt? A FORGOTTEN REALMS adventure for 13th-level characters.





ON THE COVER

James Ryman illustrates a confrontation with a classic D&D monster at its best.



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"I could feel the soft, shivering touch of the lips on the super sensitive skin of my throat, and the hard dents of two sharp teeth, just touching and pausing there. I closed my eyes in languorous ecstasy and waited, waited with beating heart."

Bram Stoker
"Dracula"



DUNGEON ADVENTURE PLAYER REWARDS!

Take advantage of the RPGA'S Player Rewards program by scoring points with the adventures from this issue of DUNGEON! Each adventure is worth 2 D&D Player Rewards points, and remains active until 11/28/05.



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The Hall of Harsh Reflections (127HR1DN)
The Hive (127H11DN)
Dungeon of the Crypt (127DC1DN)



DOPPEL YOUR PLEASURE



Quite by happenstance, all three adventures this month feature doppelgangers. This didn't seem like a problem at first, since doppelgangers are classic monsters from the game's earliest days who haven't been seen much in these pages in the last couple years. While there's nothing quite like surprising jaded 30-something players with the latest creature from an obscure source, I have a very soft spot in my heart for critters that existed in the first edition of the game, in particular those from the original AD&D *Monster Manual*.

That tome introduced the black pudding, beholder, carrion crawler, couatl, most of the demons and devils, all of the chromatic and metallic dragons, djinni, efreet, green slime, intellect devourer, lamia, nightmare, purple worm, quasit, rust monster, and dozens of other creatures that have existed in every edition of the game, usually right up front with the first official monster books released for the new edition. Sure, classics like the drow and githyanki appeared in later first edition sources, and new creatures like the tiefling, choker, and grick have managed to push their way into the canon of "must have" D&D foes, but that original *Monster Manual* has the greatest concentration of classic monsters short of Gary Gygax's late 1970s miniatures case. And the shape-changing doppelganger, brilliantly realized by the late

David C. Sutherland III, stands firmly in the center of the pack.

But the doppelganger has a quality most other classic D&D monsters lack: used poorly, it can absolutely destroy a campaign. As the original *Monster Manual* puts it: "Having become the double for a person, they attempt to do away with that victim and assume its place." The modern description is very similar. If you're looking to pull a switcheroo on your PCs by having a trusted NPC turn evil, it's difficult to find a better option than a doppelganger. But if you use them how they were originally intended, to replace one of the PCs, you've got a potentially explosive situation on your hands.

Let's say you want the doppelganger to ambush a PC, assume that PC's identity, and then infiltrate the party for a last-minute betrayal at a dramatically appropriate time. If you run the ambush in front of all of the characters, everyone has to pretend that they don't know about the threat in their midst, and the final "reveal" lacks excitement. Taking the ambushed player out of the room for a brief bit of one-on-one roleplaying only results in boring the rest of the players, who will probably assume that they can't completely trust their now close-lipped friend.

We knew we wanted to use doppelgangers in the Age of Worms Adventure Path, and we knew we wanted to have them infiltrate the party, but until we started playing with the repercussions of this tactic,

we had no idea how much trouble we had invited upon ourselves. At one point, Editorial Assistant Jeremy Walker sent around an email (called "Hall of Harsh Reflections Protest," no less) in which he listed several problems with the infiltration angle, most of them objecting to what an absolute hose-job we were trying to pull in order to use the creatures as intended without ruining the surprise. When one of the editors uses the phrase "it completely violates the trust a player has in his DM not to screw him over by fiat," you know you've got to go back to the drawing board.

The final result, as explained in "The Hall of Harsh Reflections," involves the only really fair way to pull off this type of deception: getting one of the players in on it before the game even begins. If that doesn't work, perhaps it's best to leave out the infiltration angle entirely, since doppelgangers' ability to mimic just about anyone allows plenty of opportunities in the realm of the NPC alone.

But there's something primal about using a D&D monster in the way in which it was intended to be used. Choose your PC cohort carefully, and have fun wrecking the party.

ERIK

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