

FANTASY AGE

ENCOUNTERS



MENACE FROM THE MINES

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MENACE FROM THE MINES

WHERE ARE THE CHARACTERS?

At a sparsely-populated inn on the edge of a nearly deserted mining village.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

While traveling the characters encounter a nasty storm. In need of shelter, the PCs come find the Digger's Delight Inn, a once-thriving establishment that is now the last refuge of the only survivors of a series of monster attacks.

WHAT DOES THE PARTY NEED TO DO?

When at the inn, the PCs encounter a menace from the nearby mines in the form of a band of previously unknown monsters. These creatures are the reason the mine shut down and the village is nearly empty.

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

The PCs and the few survivors hiding in the inn will need to either defeat the monsters in the mine or escape them if they hope to survive.

THE SETUP

While the PCs are traveling through a mountainous region the weather takes a turn for the worse. The PCs need shelter to wait out the storm, and find it nearby in a dilapidated old inn at the edge of an abandoned mining town.

The building is broken down and boarded up but it seems to provide adequate protection from the weather. The same cannot be said for the other buildings in town, which all seem to have burned down or collapsed over time. A sign bearing the name "The Digger's Delight" hangs half-broken over the door to the inn. The door itself is barred from the other side, but it's easy enough to break loose or open with a **TN 12 STRENGTH (MIGHT) or DEXTERITY (LOCK PICKING)** test.

Once the PCs enter they are quickly confronted by six ragged and very frightened people—four adults and two children. These people are the only remaining inhabitants of the region. They will explain they have been holed up in the inn since "something terrible" burst out of the mine one night and attacked the town. Everyone else fled or was killed.

The survivors are:

- Foreman Vell, former assistant foreman at the mine. This middle-aged dwarf barely escaped the original monster attack. He considers it a miracle he's survived so long and he's considering entering the clergy if he survives.
- Freena and Deena, twin adult children of the innkeeper. These two young ladies are all that remains of the Digger's Delight's original proprietors and staff. The twins are fast on their feet, skilled at hiding, but untrained in combat. If they survive, they will move to a large city, avoiding caves and small towns whenever possible.
- Old Gannan. This half-blind old "witch woman" was the town's herbalist and physician. She's got a bad leg made worse by a nasty tumble she took a few nights ago. However, she's a skilled healer and gifted counselor. If she survives this, she will take the village's two remaining children and relocate.
- Happer, two-year-old toddler whose family was killed recently. Happer doesn't really understand what's going on but he knows the

"scary pale men" come at night and keep taking everyone away.

- Phinna, the eight-year-old, half-orc / half-dwarf daughter of one of the miners. She saw her family torn apart by the monsters and hasn't spoken since.

The survivors begin to answer any questions the PCs have when the night's attack begins. Through the door (or a poorly boarded up first floor window if someone re-barred the door) comes 1 mine monster (see Adversaries) for every 2 PCs (round up). One turn later, another 1 monster for every 2 PCs (round down) burst through various weak points in the inn's outer walls and windows. The monsters go for the nearest "easy" targets first, likely the children. However, any loud or aggressive action by the PCs easily draws their attention, causing them to attack the PCs instead.

The monsters fight until over half of them are killed or all of them half lost at least half their health. If any of the PCs go down during this fight, the monsters will attempt to drag them off. If the PCs retreat from the monsters, they will grab one of the survivors at random and seek to flee. Anyone dragged off by the monsters is doomed to be devoured by them, though GMs might allow PCs one final chance to rescue them if they enter the monster's lair within the day (see **The Terror Below**).

After the monsters are driven off or defeated, the PCs can ask the survivors whatever questions they like and decide what their next move is. No more attacks will occur until at least the next evening. Some answers to common questions are:

Has anyone tried to leave?

"Yes, some people fled early on. We think a few made it, but we've found ... pieces of those who didn't."

Where are the monsters coming from?

"They come out of the mine. They have a lair down there, we think. Deep down."

Where is everyone else?

"Dead, fled, or worse."

Can you travel if we flee?

"Should be able to, once the weather clears up. However, it'll take over a week to reach the next town and we

think those things have tracked down others who were trying to leave. That's why we've stayed."

Tell us about these attacks.

"They come in waves. Sometimes they come night after night, sometimes they don't come for a while. But they always come back."

DECISION POINT: FIGHT OR FLIGHT?

The PCs need to decide if they will try to leave the area or stay with the survivors. The storm won't let up for two days, so leaving before that is highly impractical. This means that the PCs will need to spend two nights in the inn in any event.

The monsters don't attack during daytime, leaving the PCs to explore, prepare, or flee. However, it's a week's journey to escape the region around the mine and each night the monsters will seek the PCs and any survivors they have with them.

Note the PCs may leave with or without the survivors. If they don't take the survivors with them, the villagers will eventually be killed. However, leaving them does reduce the chance of encountering the monsters themselves. If the PCs leave the survivors they will beg them to reconsider, curse them for cowards, and rightly accuse them of leaving them to die. As an alternative, Old Gannan will beg the PCs to at least take the young woman and the chil-

dren with them, herself and Foreman Vell offering to stay behind to draw the monsters to them.

THINGS THAT GO BUMP IN THE NIGHT

Each night the PCs stay in the inn or travel in the region around the mines, roll a 2d6. For every 2 monsters the PCs have killed so far, add +1 to the roll. If the PCs left any survivors behind as they attempt to flee, they may apply a -2 modifier to each roll as the monsters are more likely to prey on the survivors instead of the well-armed and experienced PCs.

After seven nights or once the pack leader is killed, the monsters come no more and the PCs are safe.

THE TERROR BELOW

If the PCs decide to explore the mines, finding the creatures' lair isn't too hard. Blood drips, chewed bones, and body parts leave a clear trail for anyone to follow who can succeed at a **TN 12 PERCEPTION (TRACKING)** test. Four successful checks will lead the PCs from the mine entrance to the monsters' lair. Failure means encountering various obstacles. Roll on the **Mine Hazards** table on the following page.

If the PCs encounter the central monster lair, they will face the monster's pack leader and 1d6 elite monsters. If they defeat the pack leader, any remaining monsters flee the area. The lair is scat-

NIGHTLY ENCOUNTERS

2D6	EVENT
2-3	Nothing, a peaceful night's rest.
4-6	A distant scream is heard as the monsters claim another traveler or hapless local. Investigating the noise yields no discoveries except a bloody spot on the ground where the victim was attacked. No bodies are found.
7-9	Monsters attack. There are 1d6 monsters +1 for every day the PCs have been in the area. If half of the monsters are killed or all of them have lost at least half their health, they will attempt to retreat. These monsters will use stealth and ambush tactics if possible.
10-11	Dark Forces gather. Nothing happens tonight but shadows and noises can be heard nearby all night. The next night the Monsters attack as above but with an extra 1d6 monsters added to their numbers. These monsters will favor speed and immediate attacks to stealth.
12	The pack leader (a Heroic version) of the monsters comes along with 1d6 elite monsters. They will not retreat and if this battle is won the monsters will come no more.

MINE HAZARDS

1d6

EVENT

- LOST IN THE MINES.** Wander for 1d3 hours then make another TN 10 PERCEPTION (TRACKING) test to find the trail again. Roll again on this chart if you fail this test.
- MORTAL REMAINS.** You find the bloody remains of a mine monster's victim. They are partially devoured and long dead. 2d6 SP can be found near the corpse, and at the GM's discretion the body may have small weapons or tools in various states of repair.
- MINE COLLAPSE.** Part of the mine collapses on the PCs, doing 4d6 damage to each of them. A successful TN 13 DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS) test reduces the damage taken by half.
- MONSTERS!** The PCs encounter a dead end with 1d3 mine monsters feasting on a corpse.
- PITFALL.** The ground gives out and drops the explorers into a different part of the mines. Any who fail a TN 13 DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS) or STRENGTH (CLIMBING) test fail to catch themselves or control their fall and take 4d6 damage. However, this result still counts as a successful check for finding the lair.
- Roll two more times and combine the two results. (PITFALL then MINE COLLAPSE, MORTAL REMAINS found with LOST IN THE MINES, and so on.) If either of these two results comes up 6, reroll.

MINE MONSTER		
Abilities (Focuses)		
2	ACCURACY (BITE)	
-1	COMMUNICATION	
4	CONSTITUTION	
3	DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS, STEALTH)	
3	FIGHTING (CLAWS)	
0	INTELLIGENCE	
2	PERCEPTION	
4	STRENGTH	
1	WILLPOWER	
Speed		
15	Health	
13	Armor Rating	
Defense		
WEAPON	Attack Roll	
BITE	+4	2d6+4
CLAW	+5	1d6+7
Special Qualities		

FAVORED STUNTS: Knock Prone, Lightning Attack, Mighty Blow

DARKVISION: Can see in total darkness as if it were daylight.

THICK HIDE: The monsters' hide provides an Armor Rating of 6.

WALL-CRAWLING: The monsters can move on walls and ceilings at their normal Speed.

THREAT: MODERATE

tered with random items from various victims. PCs searching the lair should be rewarded with some silver (2d6 x10) and perhaps an enchanted item or two. If the pack leader was already defeated earlier then the lair will be abandoned.

ADVERSARIES

The monsters from the mine are seven-foot-tall, four-eyed humanoids with thick blotchy white skin, multiple rows of jagged teeth, and four long fingers and toes on their hands and feet that sport two-inch claws. They often appear smaller and slower than they are due to their thin limbs and hunched-over, jerking gait.

ROLEPLAYING TIPS

Make the survivors needy but likable. Keep the focus on the monsters and the threat they pose to keep tension up. The survivors shouldn't be stupid, but they are ill-trained, and after all this time they're too scared and traumatized to deal with the threat the way the PCs can.

The monsters are cunning, but they aren't especially sociable. They can't speak but can communicate with each other through a mix of body language and eerie clicks, growls, and whines. If you can swing it, mimicking the strange noises of the monsters might add a creepy touch. It's recommended that the PCs get to name the monsters if they so desire. They "discovered" them, after all.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

After the monsters are gone, there's still the question of where they came from and if there are more of them around. Some possibilities include:

- The monsters were a magical experiment gone wrong, and after they are dead there are no more. However, the mages who created them might spawn similar twisted experiments.
- The monsters are part of a vast subterranean enclave of creatures. When mining operations broke into their realm the monsters were introduced to the setting.
- The monsters are extra-dimensional horrors that came to this plane of existence through a planar gateway. The gateway is still buried deep in the mine. It is dormant for now, but could be reactivated.
- The monsters were once human, until they were cursed or mutated by dark magic. Even though this current threat is gone, questions remain: What cursed them, and could the process be repeated elsewhere?

If the PCs fled the area without killing the monsters' pack leader, they can still return later and seek to destroy the monsters. They may even receive a reward for their efforts.