



Dungeons&Dragons

EXCLUSIVE gamer ADVENTURE!

An IQ Gamer AD&D Adventure For Levels 1-3

By Jeff Grubb

OVERVIEW

Warriors of the Gray Queen is an adventure using the Advanced Dungeons & Dragons game system, for low-level heroes. It is a prelude to the upcoming Return to the Keep on the Borderlands adventure from TSR, but Warriors of the Gray Queen is not required in order to play Return. This adventure may be played as a separate adventure or as part of a larger unrelated campaign.

The heroes are recruited by a rather irate curate to recover a recently stolen holy relic. They find the thief but something else has already snagged the relic. The trail leads into the lair of myconids (MIE-co-nids), who are humanoid mushroom-people led by a deformed, mad queen.

ENCOUNTER 1: On the Road to the Keep

Read the following aloud:

Your group of heroes are bound for the Keep on the Borderlands, an ancient outpost that had been a site of many battles with inhuman creatures in your father's age. Now, rumors have spilled out of this rough land that evil lurks anew in the Caves of Chaos, and stolen treasures are secreted away in their lairs. You intend to present your credentials and gain the support of the rulers of the Keep to recover that treasure.

You pass into the rugged uplands that surround the Keep. Oddly-shaped rock formations loom over the trail, and a thick, dark forest sprawls alongside the road. Ahead, there is a group of halted wagons, blocking the trail entirely. An animated figure in clerical robes is visible, waving his arms wildly and berating the caravan-master.

The figure in clerical garb is Curate Fairchild, a burly, officious individual who is red-faced

INDUSTRIAL STRENGTH LIGHT & MAGIC Your party should pack a competent mage or you could be mushroom food. from shouting at the caravan-master. As the heroes approach, they hear the curate sputtering "I can't believe you let it get stolen! What kind of guards do you have here? How incompetent *are* you people?"

The master, for her part, is visibly irritated and embarrassed, but trying not to show it. She says, "These things happen. The thief is probably long-gone by now."

This causes the curate to shout even louder about the incompetence of the caravan guards. At this point, he notices the heroes, who have either stopped to watch, as the caravan



Curate fairchild

Curate Fairchild is a loyal priest in the Church of the Holy Defender, bringing the relic known as the Helm of Perception to the Keep as a gift to

> the chapel there. Also, it is rumored, the mission would get the curate out of the patriarch's hair. The curate believes he is a natural leader, but comes off as being officious, irritating and pushy. Should the heroes invite the curate to accompany them, he will insist that the heroes' first priority is to protect him. He will offer his curative magics to help the heroes, but accom-

pany those cures with lectures about how they should be more careful in the future. A normal adventuring party will consider feeding him to the spiders after about 15 minutes of his company. A smart party will resist the temptation, as he is a useful source of healing magics.

Curate Fairchild (5th-level Priest): AC 3 (Plate Mail): MV 12; hp 20; THACO 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+1/1d6 (Footman's Mace); SZ M (5'9"); ML 12 (Steady); Str 12, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 15, Chr 11; AL LG; XP 420. Spells 1st Level: Bless, Cure Light Wounds (x3), Light, 2nd Level: Find Traps, Slow Poison, Spiritual Hammer (x2), 3rd Level: Remove Paralysis.

Keep. I trusted these fools to guard it, but apparently, one of the caravan guards has made off with it this morning, not more than two hours ago. Now, these idiots want to press on, letting the thief get away! I need some *capable* heroes who can reclaim the helm for me. Are you such heroes?

Curate Fairchild offers 300 gp each for the heroes' services, noting that the money was to

blocks most of the road, or are threading their way around the wagons. The curate points at one of them and says, "You there! Do you want to serve the Church, and earn a small reward as well?"

Curate Fairchild introduces himself. He is

imperious, superior, and at the moment, extremely angry—though not at heroes, rather at the lummoxes and layabouts that serve as caravan guards. Here's his story:

I have been entrusted to bring the Helm of Perception to the chapel at the Keep on the Borderlands. It is a rare and valuable artifact, a holy relic worn by one of the great paladins of my order and was to be enshrined at the



be paid to the caravan-master for safe passage to the Keep. He will go as high as 500 gp per hero involved, if they hesitate. He mentions that any other money they recover from the thief is theirs, as well as any other treasure they discover while trying to recover the helm. In addition, Curate Fairchild provides them with an introduction to the leader of the chapel at the Keep, Abercrombie of the Order of St. Cuthbert, who may reward them further.

The curate will not offer the services of any of the seven caravan guards present, whom he considers incompetents and possible allies of the thief. Nor will the caravan-master offer those services. If asked, the caravanmaster notes that, theft or no theft, there are still goblins and gnolls in these hills, and she has other cargo—food, cloth, and other supplies—to deliver to the Keep.

The curate provides a description of the helm (see page 13). It was being transported in



The heroes may invite the curate to accompany them, seeking his healing abilities in the process. He will accept if asked, though the heroes may live to regret his being along (see Curate Fairchild sidebar on previous page).

The helm's thief slipped away from the caravan early that morning. He was not a particularly expert robber and has left a clear trail through the underbrush to the north and west. There is recently broken brush, tangles of fabric caught in the briars, and thick, rough-treaded boot tracks in the mud. A drunken goblin could follow this trail, so the heroes should have no trouble.

ENCOUNTER 2: The Thief's Fate



As the heroes set out, read the following:

The trail is easy to follow; the thief apparently did not think that anyone would pursue him into the thick underbrush. The thicket soon gives way to a game trail that winds to the north and west. The thief's heavy boots track through the puddles of water dotting the trail. Around you are thick woods of oak and maple with a sprawling copse of wild grape vines and raspberry tangles.

The ground rises slightly, and the path widens into a meadow. There is a low hillock at the far edge of the meadow, with a cavern

4

opening in the hillside. In the center of the meadow is the thief, face down, not moving.

The thief is dead, killed by the trap door spiders who guard the entrance to the cavern. From where the heroes stand, there is no sign of the teakwood box or the helm on or near the body. The myconids drove the spiders back to their lairs and looted the body, taking the helm and leaving the thief's corpse for their watchdogs to consume. There are a number of tracks through the grass leading north from the body to the cavern opening.

If the heroes investigate the body, four trap-door spiders attack them. Two of the spiders have lairs within leaping distance of the body, and the other two scuttle from their lairs to aid them. The spiders get surprise and initiative on the heroes for the first round.

Should the heroes wait and survey the territory, one of the trap doors springs open after about 10 minutes. A spider emerges and drags the body of the thief back to its lair for dinner. The heroes will then either have to decide if they want to recover the body from the trap door spider's lair, a pit about 10 feet deep and 5 feet wide, or move around the meadow to the cavern entrance and completely avoid the spiders—an option that will work, provided the characters are careful.

Trap Door Spider (Huge Spider) (4): AC 6; MV 18; HD 2+2; hp 8,8, 10, 12; THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 SA -6 to Surprise if attacking from hiding, Poison (save at +1 to roll, or paralysis 2d4 turns); SD Nil; SZ M (6' across); ML Average (8); Int Animal (1); AL N; XP 270 each.

ENCOUNTER 3:

Into the Myconids' Lair

When the heroes reach the opening of the

the myconid nest

Myconids are fungus-people, mushroom-shaped natives of the Underdark. They usually desire nothing more than to be left alone by humans and other races so they may farm and engage in meditation among their fellows. This particular nest has been driven mad by the recent incur-



sion of a group of human adventurers. The human adventurers fought their way through the nest to the king myconid. A number of their party fell in battle, and the king myconid attempted to ani-

mate their corpses using the spore that he possessed. He was slain by the party's leader, a female warrior named Amandar, but she, in turn, was affected by the king myconid's spores. She is now a half-living, half-dead creature who has taken up the position of power within the nest; she is the Gray Queen.

Her human personality has had an effect on the shared personality of the fungus-men. The myconids are being driven mad by the presence of the human personality in their group mind. The less-powerful myconids wish to have the Queen removed, but they cannot do it themselves. At the same time, all myconids are more prone to violence while the Gray Queen is alive; they will defend themselves and the nest vigorously. They have, in effect, become more human and are paying the price for that transformation.

cavern, whether by defeating the spiders or avoiding them, read the following:

The cavern is a passage carved into the wet, grassy hillside. The ground around it is soft and damp, and the air that billows out of it is warm and moist. Within the shade of the cavern, huge mushrooms, up to 2 feet tall, sprout from the floor, and shelf fungus lines the walls.

From the opening of the cave, you can see the smashed remains of a wooden box.

As you notice the box, one of the large mushrooms to your right moves.

There are six 1HD myconids standing guard at the entrance. They use the spiders as watchdogs and observed when the spiders killed the thief. Then, they drove away the spiders—the spiders dislike the taste of fungus—and looted the body, smashing open the box and sending the relic to the Gray Queen at the center of the nest.

The myconids are generally pacifistic; they will attack only if threatened or if the heroes attempt to plunge deeper into their nest. If the heroes show they mean no harm—i.e., pull no weapons, try to communicate—these minor myconids will escort them past encounter four on the map of the myconid lair to encounter five, where they will meet with myconids that are capable of communicating with them.

The myconids are hidden among the fungus. The one that moved is obvious, and by noting his appearance, others among the fungus become clearly discernible.

1HD Myconids (6): AC 10; MV 9; HD 1; hp 3,4,5,5,6,7; THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; SA Spore Clouds; SZ T (2' tall); ML Steady (12); Int Average (8); AL LN; XP 65 each.

If the myconids are attacked or if the heroes push their way past them, they emit clouds of distress spores. These spores will alert the rest of the nest to the heroes' incursion.

The smashed box is made of teak, a yellow-brown hardwood, trimmed with gold, and was originally 1 foot by 1 foot by 1 foot. If Curate Fairchild is present, he can identify it as the box that held the Helm of Perception. There is no trace of the helm; it has been brought into the lair to the Gray Queen.

The entrance to the myconid nest immediately branches into two tunnels, one to the right, the other to the left. Both lead to different parts of the myconid farms in encounter four.

ENCOUNTER 4: The Myconid Farms

Note that there are two sets of myconid farms, one on either side of the entrance. The description is similar, but they are two different areas:

The passage curves to the north, and the fungus grows thicker on all sides. Long lines of shelf fungus dotted with greenish mushrooms that give off a sickly radiance stretch before you. There are red-topped fungus dotted with corpse-white ovals, and flameorange mushrooms that look like inverted cones. Some of the larger specimens reach up to 6 feet tall.

Larger fungus-people, about 4 feet tall, move among the mushrooms. They move slowly and ponderously, filling their sacks with mushrooms from these luminous gardens.

The fungus-people in these chambers are of the 2HD variety, and there are four of them in each chamber. They are the farmers of the community and tend to the mushroom estates.

If the 1HD myconids have released their distress spores, then their 2HD brethren will be waiting for the heroes and will attack on sight.

If the heroes somehow avoided the

watch-myconids at the entrance, the farmer-myconids attempt to block their further passage through the lair. They will attack and fight to the death. In addition, they will release their own distress spores to warn the rest of the nest.

If the heroes are accompanied by one or more of the 1HD myconids from the entrance, the 2HD myconids let them pass. However, if the heroes later seek to escape after fighting other myconids, the 2HD farmers will fight. If the Gray Queen is dead, they will let the heroes pass. **2HD Myconids (4):** AC 10; MV 9; HD 2; hp 8,9,10,11; THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8; SA Spore Clouds; SZ S (4' tall); ML Steady (12); Int Average (8); AL LN; XP 120 each.

The 2HD myconids have distress spores and, in addition, have reproduction spores. These spores are the seeds for new myconids. When a myconid of 2 or more HD perishes, they rip open and the spores gush forth in a yellowish cloud. The spores have no effect on humans, but the players don't know this. As the DM, you can call for saving throws from those who kill the

> TO GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE... Not quite. To the myconid lair you go, where madness reigns.



more powerful myconids just to make them worry.

The farms themselves are packed with all manner of mushrooms on all sides, feeding off the wet earth that lines the corridors. The mushrooms are easily uprooted and generally non-toxic, but barreling through them will kick up a cloud of spores. The mushrooms do not burn, but they will smolder, filling the top of the passage with a thick, greasy smoke that slowly drifts out the entrance.

ENCOUNTER 5: The Guardians

The passage opens into a large chamber, with another tunnel similar to yours opposite and a large, vaulted opening to the south. The mush-

rooms are slightly smaller here, and you notice that a number of them are heaped in small mounds. There is a flash of steel beneath one of the mounds and you see the white spur of a leg-bone jutting from beneath the mushrooms.

There are four large fungus-men here, each of them 6 feet tall. They twitch and spasm as they approach you.

These 3HD myconids are the guardians of the central part of the nest. They have the abilities of their less-powerful brethren, plus the ability to release rapport spores. These spores allow the myconids to communicate telepathically through images.

If there are already distress spores in the air as a result of the player characters'



actions, then the 3HD fungus-men attack. Instead of an attack, there is a 20% chance that one of the myconids will aim a cloud of its rapport spores at the hero. If the hero fails a saving throw against poison or chooses not to avoid the spores, he is overwhelmed with images from the maddened fungus men. This will keep the hero in question from attacking the next round, but gives that player character the information of what has happened to the fungus-men. Despite the rapport, the myconids will continue to attack.

If distress spores have not been released, one of the 3HD myconids attempts to communicate with the heroes. Choose the player character that the myconids would assume to be the leader the one in front, the one giving the orders or even the tallest one—and a myconid will raise its arm and blast a packet of spores into the hero's face. The player character may try to avoid the effects, dodging or attacking, but this will result in a general melee as noted above.

3HD Myconids (4): AC 10; MV 9; HD 3; hp 12,13,14,15; THACO 17; #AT 1; Dmg 3-12; SA Spore Clouds; SZ M (6' tall); ML Elite (13); Int Average (10); AL LN; XP 175 each.

Here is what an individual under the effects

of the rapport spores experiences:

A blast of spores smelling of moist cinnamon catches you. Your eyesight clouds for a moment, and in that moment, a doorway seems to open in the back of your mind. Through that portal, images flow.

You see—no—you experience the nest of myconids, the fungusmen. They live in peace, raising their toadstools and shelf fungus and ignoring other races. The



entrance to their lair is protected by some wild spiders, and no one seems to bother them.

Then the invaders came. Creatures like yourself, made of meat and blood and wearing plates of metal. They raided the nest, seeking treasure that they were sure was buried here. The myconids fought,

THE MYCONIDS' LAIR

and many died. Some of the invaders died as well, but the rest pressed on to the heart of the nest.

There they met the leader of the myconids, the king of the nest. He and his inner circle battled the invaders and almost prevailed. At last there was but one survivor, a female warrior. She and the king

FUNGUS AMONG US Plenty of mushroom—but no barley and a whole lot of bad news await you in the myconid lair. myconid mortally wounded each other at the same time. The king released spores to help create a " new king. But instead those spores mingled with the dying flesh of the female warrior and birthed a new creature—the Gray Queen.

The features of a warrior woman whose flesh is gray with



fungus swim before you, and you feel the revulsion that the myconids feel toward her. She is a hellspawn creature, mad even by human standards. She is a part of their group gestalt and is driving them mad as well.

The vision fades almost as quickly as it appears, draining out of your mind like smoke fleeing up a chimney. The last image that you receive is one of desperation; the myconids desire nothing less than freedom from their Gray Queen, whether it be by her death or theirs.

If the heroes are in combat with the myconids, then they receive this particular vision, repeated with greater and greater urgency as time passes. If the heroes are working their way peacefully into the nest, the myconids will communicate the following additional information by spore-induced image telepathy:

The Gray Queen rules from the center of the nest. Either path from this location leads there.

Two powerful myconids guard the Queen. Both are more powerful than the guardian-communicator myconids.

The madness grows more powerful as you near the center of the nest. The lesser myconids cannot approach lest they fall fully under her sway and attack the heroes' party.

Yes, the Gray Queen has the Helm of Perception. She also has another magical item, a sword that glows with an eerie light.

If the heroes defeat the Gray Queen, they will be allowed to leave the nest, provided that they slay only the Queen and her insane inner circle.

Several of the Gray Queen's comrades



fell here, and their bodies were quickly covered with fungus. The heroes may check the bodies if they wish.

The piles of fungus are indeed the bodies of the other party members who accompanied the Gray Queen. All the cloth and flesh have been consumed by the fungus, and the nonmagical metal is rusted and useless. However, there are a number of items concealed within the rot.

A dagger +1

A shield +2

A wand of magic missiles with three charges left.

An emerald ring. The ring is non-magical, but worth 500 gp.

ENCOUNTER 6: The Gray Queen Read the following to the players:

You move south from the vaulted entrance and the walls begin to change. Where earlier the mushrooms were a rainbow of hues, now they are growing darker, appearing almost rotten and black. Patches of luminous mold grow on the larger mushrooms and the vanes along the underside of the larger fungus glow with a pale yellowish light. The passage turns and you see a similar passage across from you. Where the passages meet, there is a short corridor to the north that opens into a larger room.

Give the players time to determine their actions—recon ahead, prepare weapons or spells or merely press forward.

The passage north opens into a large, domed room. The perimeter of the room is littered with great purplish mushrooms that glow with a strange, intense light that hurts the eyes. The vanes beneath these mushrooms radiate a sickly yellowish hue that lights the room.

In the center of the room, a low mound rises, made from what looks like the rotted remains of humans and myconids. Standing atop the pile is a female warrior. She is unarmored, and her bare flesh is a pasty shade of gray mold. She holds a sword in one hand, which glows of its own light. She wears the Helm of Perception.

With her are two other myconids, huge creatures each as large as an ogre, 8 feet tall. They are lumbering, twitching, dark monsters, and their eyes are wide and mad.

The Gray Queen hisses something in an unrecognizable tongue, black bile dripping down the side of her mouth, and she charges. The great fungus-men lurch forward as well, raising fists the size of large tree roots to defend their mad gueen.

The myconids and the Queen will fight to the death. Attempts to communicate with either the Queen or her immediate circle will not succeed. She has been driven insane by her link to the myconid group-mind, and that madness

the Helm of Perception

The helm is a minor artifact that was to be presented to the chapel at the Keep on the Borderlands from the Patriarch of the Church of the Holy Defender. It consists of a golden Grecian-style helmet with two huge reddish gems set over the eyes. The gems are each gems of seeing, and the helm itself functions as a helm of comprehending languages and reading magic. The effects are:

The wearer of the Helm of Perception can see and detect the true nature of all hidden, illusionary, invisible, astral, ethereal or out-of phase objects within its line of sight.

The wearer of the helm has a 90% chance of understanding any spoken or written language.

The wearer of the helm has an 80% chance of understanding any magical writing. This grants the ability to cast spells only if the wearer is a spellcaster.

If the gems are pried from the helm, they and the helm become non-magical, though the

gems are still finely carved and worth 700 gp each.



has spread to the fungus-men as well.

4HD Myconids (2): AC 10; MV 9; HD 4; hp 20,24; THACO 17; #AT 1; Dmg 4-16; SA Spore Clouds; SZ L (8' tall); ML Elite (13); Int Average (8) (Insane); AL LN; XP 270 each.

The Gray Queen (5th-level Fighter turned Myconid Queen): AC 10; MV 12; hp 30; THAC0 13 (adjusted THAC0 12, Broadsword +1); #AT 1; Dmg 2d4+2/1d6+2 (Broadsword
+1, Strength bonus +1); SA Spores; SZ M (5'
11"); ML Fearless (19); Str 16, Dex 12, Con
15, Int 9, Wis 9, Chr 5; AL CE; XP 1,400.
Special Equipment [Helm of Perception].

The myconids have the spore types of their lesser brethren, and in addition, normally have a pacifying spore. However, they will not use them, for they have been reduced to mindless fungal engines of destruction by their proximity to the Gray Queen.

The Gray Queen herself may attack either with her magical sword or with her own fungal spores that she can shoot up to three feet from her hands against a single target. The Gray Queen's spores induce hallucinations. An individual caught by the hallucinator spores, failing a saving throw against poison, suffers violent hallucinations for the next five rounds. The Queen may do this up to five times in the combat before exhausting her spores; however, note that she has several bundles of powder that produce similar effects as well (see below). Roll on the table below to determine the reaction to the hallucinations.

D20 ROLL

1-10 11-15 16-18

REACTION

Target cowers and whimpers. Target stares into nothingness. Target flees in a random direction. Five rounds will take the target back to the farms, though if the heroes are on good terms with the 3 HD myconids, they will attempt to stop the fleeing character. Of course, heroes bolting the nest may still have to deal with the spiders outside. USELESS STRENGTH Swords and armor may prove useless against the Gray Queen's hallucinations.

creature, whether ally or enemy. The Gray Queen carries a number of magical items on her person, including:

Broadsword +1.

Five bundles of powder. These bundles are powders of hallucination and function as the Gray Queen's hallucinator spores.

The Helm of Perception. When the helm is removed, it will be revealed that the Gray

19-20

Target tries to kill the nearest



Queen has no eyes, only patches of fungus.

WRAPPING THINGS UP

With the Gray Queen destroyed, the heroes may loot the room. There is nothing else present besides what the Gray Queen possesses. The myconids are farmers, not treasure-hoarding monsters.

With the death of the Queen and her immediate court, The other myconids will no longer attack. They will attack if the heroes threaten them, but otherwise keep out of the way, hoping that the heroes will take the hint and just leave. They will not thank the heroes; after all, they are humans, and humans caused all this trouble in the first place.

The heroes recover the Helm of Perception and may bear it to the Keep on the Borderlands. If Curate Fairchild is still among the living, he will insist on it and invite the heroes to the

investiture ceremony where he presents it to Abercrombie, one of the leaders of the chapel. Fairchild will even speak a few kind words regarding the heroes' participation in his rescue of the artifact. Abercrombie knows enough of such matters to realize that the player characters are the true heroes, and the player characters will gain the trust of the temple. They may gain free healing at the temple for the remainder of their adventures in the immediate area. And, of course, Fairchild will pay them as promised.

If Fairchild did not accompany them—or, gosh darn, something nasty happened to him in the course of the adventure—then the players have the choice of what to do with the helm. If their characters bear it to the Keep on the Borderlands and present it to the clergy there, they will be well-received, paid for their effort and will get free healing spells for the duration of their adventures in the area.

The heroes may decide to keep the helm for themselves. Be warned, however, that breaking up the helm destroys its magic, and the natives of the Keep have been made aware of what it looks like by the caravanmaster. Wearing the helm within the Keep or trying to sell it or the gems within the Keep will result in immediate arrest.

Should the heroes turn in the helm? Well, it would be the right thing to do. And besides, they can benefit from free healing from the temple. The deadly Caves of Chaos are nearby and rumored to be swarming with all manner of monsters; such allies will prove useful.

But that is a tale of another adventure for *Return to the Keep on the Borderlands*, to be exact. Look for it in your finer gaming stores in June.

Jeff Grubb is a living legend of game design—and a modest one at that. He is one of the co-founders of Dragonlance and the Forgotten Realms, and his credits read like a history of AD&D– Al-Gadim, Mystara, Manual of the Planes and even Spelljammer. He played the original Keep on the Borderlands a long time ago, and is looking forward to its return to another generation of DMs and players.

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