

Old-School Gazette

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This Old-School Gazette gives you four brand-new tricks to test your player's wits. Are they ready for the clock-statue of the red hall, the test of three, the dark pool, the jacob's ladder and the rude spittoon? Also, expect to see a few more tricks and traps in following issues of the Old-School Gazette to help keep your players always on their toes. So enjoy this fifth Old-School Gazette and look forward to many more!

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Some of you may be unaware of OSRIC™. Go and download the product from the above link and then come back. As you can see from the above, OSRIC™ is a freely available, OGL role-playing system that pays homage to the style of role-playing games we grew up playing. The Old-School Gazette is designed to support the OSRIC™ system by releasing compatible material, not only to players and Game Masters, but to other publishers as well.

We're very excited to start the Old-School Gazette. We plan on featuring monsters, magic items, spells, and anything else you can think of relating to old-school gaming via the OSRIC system. Have any ideas? Send an e-mail to josephbrowning@gmail.com and let us know your thoughts! And yes, it's a paying gig. *smile*

TRICKS AND TRAPS TO TEST YOUR PLAYERS!

The Clock-Statue of the Red Hall

At the end of a long hall of red-painted brickwork, the party will find a stone statue ten feet tall, depicting a monkey holding a great stone dial five feet in diameter. Around the perimeter of this round tablet, numbers have been incised crudely into the rock, from one to twelve. The number twelve is at the top, and the numbers run in order in a circle around the dial. At the center of the round tablet there are two pointers of forged iron, one of them shorter than the other. These pointers can be turned freely to point at any of the numbers on the dial. The pointers move independently of each other, allowing them to point at two different numbers.

Obviously, the stone statue's dial is a clock face, but the position of the hands has nothing to do with measuring the passage of time. Rather, the clock dials can invoke a variety of magical effects depending upon what is done with them.

The key to figuring out how the statue works is not to think of time at all, but to sum up the numbers indicated by the two hands; an even number generates a generally positive result from the statue, an odd number generates a generally negative result. After any character moves the clock hands (and releases them in the new position), the monkey's mouth opens and issues a deep, ringing chime, calling forth the magical effect (see table, below). The chime is only audible within the red hallway, so it will not summon curious wandering monsters, although if the party is all gathered in the red hall they might not realize this. Any character can make up to three tries at setting the "clock," but after this the hands will not stay in place for that character: they will simply spin back to the twelve-o'clock position as soon as they are released. Any number of characters can try their luck with the clock, but each will only ever get three tries.

The table on the following page may be used to determine what the statue does when the hands are turned from the twelve-o'clock position.

The Clock-Statue of Red Hall Results:

Die Roll	Sum of numbers is even	Sum of numbers is odd
1	The character gains 1d6 extra hit points that last for 24 hours.	The character makes an uncontrollable, piercing monkey-screech every third turn. A saving throw against spells applies each time the character tries to stifle the monkey-noise, but the character is automatically cursed and receives no saving throw to avoid its general effect. The curse ends after 24 hours have elapsed.
2	A randomly determined weapon owned by the character begins to glow. This weapon gains +1 to hit and to damage for a period of 24 hours.	The character is cursed with a penalty of –1 to hit and –1 on damage for a period of 24 hours.
3	One week's worth of delicious rations appear at the character's feet.	A randomly determined ability score is reduced to 9. If the ability score is already 9 or lower, it is lowered to 6 instead of 9. If the ability score is already six or lower, the monkey statue will take pity on the character and there will be no effect at all. This curse lasts for a period of 24 hours.
4	The character gains control of a Wizard Eye for a period of 6 hours	The character insists upon walking backwards for a period of 24 hours. No saving throw applies.
5	One of the character's ability scores (randomly determined) increases to 18 for a period of 12 hours.	For a period of 24 hours, any weapon used by the character has a 50% chance of breaking when it scores a hit on an opponent. Magical weapons are not affected and may be safely used.
6	The character is healed of all damage. If the character is not wounded, the character instead is cured of all diseases and all poisons are removed from his system. If the character is not wounded, diseased or poisoned, he becomes affected as if by a <i>sanctuary</i> spell for a period of 6 hours. The <i>sanctuary</i> spell does not end until the character has attacked three times.	For a period of 24 hours, the character must make a saving throw against paralysis before going into combat. If the saving throw fails, the character is affected as if by a <i>hold person</i> spell.

The Test of Three

The statue of a hooded man stands in a forgotten corner of the dungeon, covered in dust and cobwebs. Its two hands are held out in a friendly, welcoming gesture, but if anyone thinks to check out the expression on the face beneath the hood it will seem rather menacing. If the dust is blown or wiped from the statue's face, the party will discover that the statue's eyes are made of glass; otherwise the dust makes them appear to be stone like the rest of the statue. Magic may be detected from the statue, but it is not possible to discern its nature or power by any means at all.

If a character grasps the statue's hands, the eyes within the statue's hooded face light up with a mad, amber glow. Within the eyes there are numerals instead of pupils; the numeral "1" floats in each eye when the statue awakes. As this happens, the statue's hands will sud-

denly clamp around the character's hands in an iron grip. It is not possible for human strength to break free, for the statue's grasp is magical as well as physical.

The statue speaks at this point, uttering the following rhyme: "Try as you might, you cannot get free; thrice you must challenged be; or grasp these hands for all eternity."

If the player states that his character tries to lift the statue's arms (or makes some other attempt to move that would result in the statue's arms being raised), he will discover that the arms rise quite easily. As soon as the arms are lifted, the numbers in the statue's eyes spin, each one stopping at a randomly determined number between 1 and 6. The numbers generated in the statue's eyes determine a particular result. After the

character has lifted the arms three times (gaining three results in total) the statue releases its grip and it returns to its former quiescent state.

The results of the rolling eyes are determined by rolling a d6 for each eye, adding the results, and checking on the table below to see what happens.

If, once any particular character has already undergone the test of three, he tries to grasp the statue's hands a second time, the eyes will light up but the

numbers in them will both be "0." Roll once on the results table, but ignore any results over 7 (do not roll a second time; the statue simply does nothing if the roll exceeds 7). Other characters may try the test and will get the normal results.

If a character dies in the Test of Three, the statue will let go of the corpse's hands and let the lifeless body slump to the floor. The light in its eyes will turn blood red - for just a moment - before they fade once again into lifeless orbs of glass.

The Test of Three Results:	
Die Roll (2d6)	Result
2	An electric shock runs through the statue and the character, inflicting 3d6+3 points of damage to the character and also to anyone else touching the statue at the time.
3	An electric shock runs through the statue and the character, inflicting 3d6 points of damage to the character and also to anyone else touching the statue at the time.
4	An electric shock runs through the statue and the character, inflicting 2d6+2 points of damage to the character and also to anyone else touching the statue at the time.
5	An electric shock runs through the statue and the character, inflicting 2d6 points of damage to the character and also to anyone else touching the statue at the time.
6	An electric shock runs through the statue and the character, inflicting 1d6 points of damage to the character and also to anyone else touching the statue at the time.
7	An electric shock runs through the statue and the character, inflicting 1d4 points of damage to the character and also to anyone else touching the statue at the time.
8	The character receives an additional 1d2 hit points, either healing wounds or remaining as extra temporary hit points for 1d12 turns. In addition to the healing, the statue's mouth opens to reveal a gem (25 gp value).
9	The character receives an additional 1d4 hit points, either healing wounds or remaining as extra temporary hit points for 3d6 turns. In addition to the healing, the statue's mouth opens to reveal a gem (75 gp value).
10	The character receives an additional 1d6 hit points, either healing wounds or remaining as extra temporary hit points for 3d6 turns. In addition to the healing, the statue's mouth opens to reveal a gem (200 gp value).
11	The character receives an additional 1d6+2 hit points, either healing wounds or remaining as extra temporary hit points for 3d6 turns. In addition to the healing, the statue's mouth opens to reveal a gem (300 gp value).
12	The character receives an additional 3d6 hit points, either healing wounds or remaining as extra temporary hit points for 3d6 turns. In addition to the healing, the statue's mouth opens to reveal a gem (500 gp value).

The Dark Pool

In the dark recesses of a dungeon beneath the earth, one finds a circle of cut and mortared stones forming the boundary of what might be a shallow pool – or might be a deep well. It is impossible to gauge the water's depth, for it is murky and dark. If some of it is dipped up in a hand or helmet, it can be seen that the

murkiness is not caused by algae or suspended sediments – the water itself is opaque, stained with some unknown, dark pigmentation.

The water is only two feet in depth, and it contains six items hidden beneath its surface. Because of the wa-

ter's dark color, the items cannot be found unless the water is tested with a pole, sword, hand, or some other means of fishing around.

The water itself is completely harmless; it is no more and no less than colored water. The six items beneath its surface, on the other hand, are quite unusual. Each item is sealed within a small clay amphora (a jar with a narrow neck, two handles, and a somewhat pointed base). When any of the amphorae are dredged from the pool, it will be clear that there is something other than liquid within, although the amphora's narrow neck is too small for the items to be removed or seen without breaking the clay jar. The contents of the six amphorae are as follows:

1. An amulet worth 15gp. It is made of copper, and has acquired a smooth patina that makes the metal appear green.
2. Two six-sided dice made of ivory. These may be rolled once into the midst of enemies, and will cause

1d4 segments of surprise to anyone within 30ft. The effect may be used three times. If a member of the party rolls the dice within 30ft. of himself he will be affected by the magic, spending about twelve seconds in a confused stupor. No saving throw applies to the use of these dice. The ivory dice are worth 400gp per remaining charge, or are worth 400 experience points (not per charge).

3. A jade statuette of a demon that explodes for 1d10 points of damage when it is exposed to the air outside the amphora (by uncorking or breaking the jar). The radius of the explosion is 10ft.

4. A platinum coin (5gp)

5. A gem (25gp)

6. A small glass sphere the size of a marble that explodes for 1d6 points of damage in a radius of 10ft when it is exposed to the air outside the amphora (by uncorking or breaking the jar).

Jacob's Ladder

A Jacob's ladder is a versatile trick, and because it works in real life it is an excellent challenge for lower level parties. With a few added features, a Jacob's ladder can become a dangerous challenge even for a higher-level party.

The ladder is a simple rope ladder, angled upward rather than hanging straight up and down. From the last rung at the top and bottom, the ladder's two parallel ropes join together, and that single, joined rope is secured at the ladder's anchor-point. Thus, the ladder is secured like an angled hammock, but instead of a wide piece of canvas there is only a narrow rope ladder between the anchor points. A Jacob's ladder is extremely hard to climb, because it flips over very easily. If the reader has never seen one of these at a renaissance festival or a summer camp, imagine trying to crawl upward along a sixty-foot long hammock with the wide cloth sheet replaced by a rope ladder. It is very difficult to manage.

For adventurers trying to cross one of these obstacles, the easy solution is simply to cut the bottom anchor-point so that the ladder falls straight, and then climb it vertically as a normal ladder. Although it will likely spin about a little bit, since it is anchored at the top with only a single rope, it will be a climb that anyone can manage fairly easily. Thus, to use a Jacob's ladder as a dungeon trick requires the game master to somehow remove the option of cutting that bottom rope. This is easy to do. So, rather than presenting only one specific "variety" of a Jacob's ladder trick, this entry is written to present a number of ideas.

First of all, if the Jacob's ladder is the only way across a gap or chasm, cutting the anchor point on the party's side will cause the ladder to fall to a vertical position, but on the other side of the chasm. That can get one of the characters across, if he's willing to ride the ladder as it swings, and take the impact of colliding with the opposite wall. This is actually a nice way to let the party's thief shine: swinging across a chasm to get a traditional rope across from the far side makes for a dramatic tale to spin in the local tavern after the adventure is done and the treasure brought home. This arrangement makes very nice little challenge for a lower-level party of adventurers; not hard, but not without risk – and exciting.

In general, though, if you want to force the players to either send their characters across or really use some ingenuity to circumvent the ladder, the main thing is to figure out ways to make it useless when the nearby anchor point is cut. One way to do this is to use the ladder for a descent rather than for an upward climb. Again, a thief might swing across on a cut ladder, but the impact is going to be harder on the other side. Or, (for an ascent or descent) the far anchor point could be held just over a blade by the ladder's tension. In this case, the ladder will work normally when there is tension between the two anchor points (tension holds the rope above the blade), but if the full weight of the ladder is pulled downward, the rope on the far side will be pulled down against the blade and severed. Cutting the close anchor point and letting the thief swing across is going to pull the rope down onto the cutter (disastrous for the thief), but if the party crosses the lad-

der normally, the rope will still be held tight over the top of the blade, never touching it.

Another possibility is to attach the far side of the ladder to a heavy counterweight instead of a solid anchor such as a wall. If the close anchor point is cut, there will be nothing holding the counterweight, and the entire ladder will slither away, pulled up by the counterweight.

Another trick, perhaps a slightly cheap one, is to make the "ropes" metal cables that just can't be severed.

And a final possibility, of course, is to use magical components or strange situations to make a Jacob's ladder trick challenging regardless of how the party deals with the ladder itself. Slippery bars, shifting/moving anchor points, and other such added difficulties will make the ladder more of a challenge to the numbers on a character sheet; opponents firing arrows or a set of tools that can be used as a substitute for the ladder are problems and opportunities that challenge the skill of the players.

Three game mechanisms for handling a Jacob's ladder are provide here: one for a situation where the GM wants to use lots of dice rolls for an exciting sense of risk to each player, and two quicker sets of rules, one using a straight chance of falling and the other using saving throws to take level into account. All three systems treat the ladder as something that gets progressively more difficult the farther one travels along it.

The first system for resolving travel across a Jacob's ladder is as follows:

Every ten feet traveled along a Jacob's ladder requires a successful "dexterity check," rolling dice against the character's dexterity score: if the result of the roll is less than or equal to the character's dexterity the result is success. Rather than rolling a d20 in this case, however, a number of d6 are rolled depending on how far the

character has gone along the ladder. The first round (or 10ft) requires a dexterity check using 2d6. The second round requires a check using 3d6, then 4d6, etc. If the ladder flips, a saving throw vs breath weapon is required to avoid falling. It is still possible to move up or down the ladder hand over hand after it flips, but each roll of the dice against the character's dexterity score will be at a +1 (thus making it more likely that the number rolled will exceed the dexterity score). Failing the dexterity check when moving hand over hand results in a fall with no saving throw.

A simpler resolution for traveling across a Jacob's ladder is simply to assign a 1 in 6 chance of falling in the first 10ft, a 2 in 6 chance of falling in the second 10ft, etc. Obviously, since this would make a fall inevitable very quickly, the GM might choose to assign a progressive 1 in 8 chance, 1 in 12 chance, or some other way of making it possible to get across a longer ladder.

Another quick resolution is to make the challenge into a series of saving throws (whether progressively more difficult or not is up to you). This method takes the character's level into account, although most parties of higher level will obviously just circumvent this sort of risk by using magic items or spells.

The last thing to be considered in using a Jacob's ladder is the thief and his climbing ability. Since climbing is the province of the thief, the thief should probably be allowed to scuttle across a Jacob's ladder using his climbing skill, probably at a penalty of, perhaps, 20%. More importantly, the thief would not encounter the progressive difficulties that make the ladder so dangerous for other classes.

Obviously this has been an incomplete and fairly scattered description of how to handle a Jacob's ladder, but in the case of real-world tricks it is usually more useful to present alternatives rather than a fixed, set piece scenario.



Rude Spittoon

This is just an odd piece of dungeon dressing, really not more than comic relief. A well-crafted brass spittoon somewhere in the dungeon spits back if anyone spits into it.

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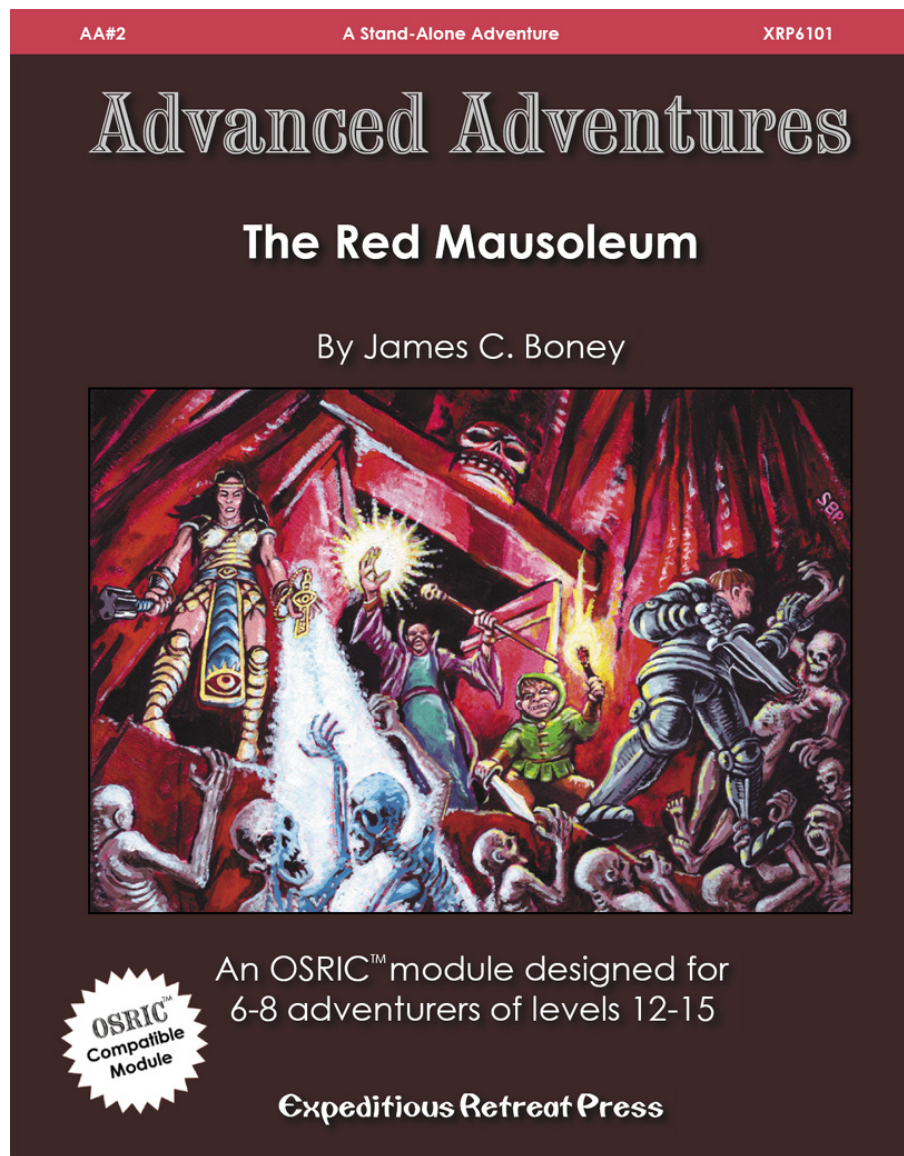
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Advanced Adventures Are Upon Us!



The populated regions north of the Sistermoors have enjoyed over a century of respite from the wars that once plagued the area. However, within the past year, baronial patrols have reported clashes with undead and other dark creatures brave enough to strike out from the moors into the forests of men and elves. The Baron's sage suspects that the undead issue out of the mysterious ancient landmark known as the Red Mausoleum located somewhere on the wild stretches of the moors!

This module includes 16 adventure-packed pages, complete with detailed maps and descriptions, forming a ready-made adventure.

If you enjoy this adventure, look for future releases in the **Advanced Adventures** line from Expeditious Retreat Press.

Coming to Print in October, 2006!