



CHALLENGE OF CHAMPIONS IV

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† Magic Items ➤ Monsters ⚔ NPCs 🗡 Objects 👑 Settlements ↗ Traps

“Challenge of Champions IV” is a D&D adventure for a party of four PCs of any level and any character class. Like the first three “Challenge of Champions” adventures (appearing in Issues #58, #69, and #80), this adventure takes place on the outskirts of a major city and can be inserted into nearly any campaign.

You should read the entire adventure before running it. A firm understanding of each of the ten scenarios is necessary for the smooth progress of the adventure and will help you adjudicate alternative solutions the players might devise to each challenge.

BACKGROUND

For the fourth year, the local Adventurers Guild is sponsoring an event to test the skills of teams of adventurers. The contest is open to adventuring teams of all levels of experience.

The contest is to be held in two days’ time at the edge of the city. Teams have already begun forming and registering for the contest. Some have gone through one or more of the previous Challenges of Champions, while others are new to the contest.

Each team must be registered at the guild headquarters in the city by sundown the night before the contest. The team members must each provide the guild with their name, character class (for record-keeping purposes only, since the scenarios are no longer geared toward specific character classes), and team name. They must also sign a form absolving the Adventurers Guild of any responsibility in case of injury or death. Contestants are given the opportunity to sign up in advance for either a *raise dead* spell (950 gp) or a *resurrection* spell (1,410 gp), to be used in the event of their death during the course of the Challenge. (The guild officials explain that the final

scenario is potentially lethal this year.) PCs wishing to use this service must pay in advance; the money is returned at the end of the event if they come through unscathed.

Finally, all contestants must pay the entrance fee of 5 gp unless they’re already guild members, in which case the fee is waived (a benefit of membership, as the guild is quick to point out). If the PCs aren’t yet members, they get to hear the standard sales pitch: For a mere 25 gp per year, the Adventurers Guild provides the PCs with a wealth of information, including beneficial contacts and a slight discount on standard adventuring gear. Other benefits can be added as you see fit. Possibilities include offering expendable magic items (scrolls and potions) at a reasonable cost, as well as providing a place to sell the various treasures recovered while adventuring.

The four winners of the contest are each granted a lifetime membership in the Adventurers Guild, as well as the trophies and prestige associated with such an honor.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

A team of four PCs enters the Challenge of Champions, a competition composed of ten scenarios testing their adventuring capabilities. At the end of the contest, the scores of all contestants are ranked to determine the winning team.

CHARACTER HOOKS

The PCs could enter the contest for several reasons. They might overhear other adventurers talking about the fourth annual Challenge of Champions and decide to enter on their own. One of their rivals

might form a team of contestants and dare the PCs to enter the contest to see which team performs better. If the PCs have already joined the Adventurers Guild, they might have competed in a previous Challenge and be eager to give it another go. A newly formed adventuring band might enter the Challenge to establish a reputation, possibly as advertisement for future employment.

FOR THE DM

The contest itself is a series of ten scenarios, each designed to test the resourcefulness and cohesion of the adventuring group. The scenarios are set up so as to be of equal difficulty to everyone, regardless of level. In other words, a 20th-level sorcerer should have no advantage over a 1st-level one. In addition, an attempt has been made to negate any advantage those contestants who went through previous Challenges of Champions might have over those who are experiencing the contest for the first time.

THE RULES

Team members must show up in regular clothing (armor is not permitted). Weapons cannot be brought to the contest grounds; those scenarios involving weapons have them prepositioned. The same goes for magic items of any type. Spellcasters cannot cast any spells they've prepared on their own; all spells used in the contest must be cast using the *rings of spell storing* provided as part of a scenario. This allows all spells to be cast at the same level, negating any advantage high-level spellcasters have over low-level ones. Contestants are not allowed to take items used in one scenario to any others. Those spellcasters with familiars are not allowed to bring them into the contest, nor can druids or rangers bring their animal companions.

All PCs are inspected by a guild wizard using *detect magic*, and those attempting to smuggle magic items into the contest are immediately disqualified. Likewise, the guild proctors have no qualms against ejecting contestants who try casting unauthorized spells during the scenarios. (Some spellcasters think they can sneak a spell past the proctors if they use their Silent Spell, Still Spell, and/or Quicken Spell metamagic feats. No one's managed to successfully pull it off yet, though.) Finally, the use of psionic powers is prohibited during the scenarios.

An unscrupulous adventuring group might devise an elaborate plan to circumvent the rules. For example, a group might plant one of their party members in an earlier group. When the spy makes it through the scenarios, he or she can use the *sending* spell to communicate the solution or clues (if the early

group didn't solve the scenario) to the later group. Such devious tactics shouldn't be "automatically" detected. If the PCs are clever enough to outsmart the Adventurers Guild's thorough precautions, they'll probably be seen as a boon to the organization anyway. If characters manage to pull off a cheat you didn't expect, try not to punish them outright. This is a contest of wits and ingenuity, and finding a novel way to circumvent tricky obstacles is part of what being an adventurer is all about.

A PC attempting to smuggle an illegal object into a scenario can make a Pick Pocket check opposed by the searching guild member's Search check, with a -4 penalty as all guild members are wary of such shenanigans. Items receive a bonus to the Pick Pockets check at determined by their size (+1 for Small, +2 for Tiny, +4 for Diminutive, and so on). PCs who cheat and are caught after the fact are removed from the Challenge and their points are nullified from all scenarios in which they participated. The remaining PCs are free to recruit a replacement member before continuing with the rest of the contest.

At the start of each scenario, the official (a member of the Adventurers Guild overseeing the proper operation of that particular scenario) briefs the team on the starting equipment they can use, and the team can inventory the items to ensure everything is in place. Command words to any magic items requiring them are normally provided at this time (unless determining the command word is part of the puzzle). Once the team is satisfied that all equipment is in place, the official begins reading the briefing, and the clock starts ticking. The briefing consists of the goal the team must try to accomplish, as well as any special rules for that scenario. The team has 15 minutes to accomplish each scenario.

THE HINT

A new addition to this year's Challenge of Champions is the introduction of "The Hint." If a team is stumped as to how to complete the goal of a given scenario, they can ask for "The Hint," and the guild proctor then reads them a prepared statement that should give them a clue as to how best to proceed. The team can ask for "The Hint" at any time during the scenario, but it must be a unanimous decision by all team members (or at least those team members who haven't been declared "dead" for that scenario). Once "The Hint" has been given, the team can earn a maximum of only half the normal points for completing the scenario goal (5 points per surviving character instead of the normal 10). In the unlikely event that one or more PCs successfully complete the scenario goal before the rest of the team decides to invoke "The Hint," they earn their full 10 points,

while those completing the goal after the reading of “The Hint” each receive 5 points. Note also that the specifics of “The Hint” for each scenario have already been decided by the guild proctors, and thus it’s possible that “The Hint” might address a part of the scenario that the contestants have already figured out on their own.

WHEN TO RUN THE ADVENTURE

If your players’ adventuring group does not have a full complement of four team members, the PCs can recruit one or more NPCs from the hopefuls milling about the contest. See the “Rounding Out the Team” sidebar for more information.

A word of caution: Although this adventure can be played with one DM and one player (with the player running all four team members), that puts the onus of coming up with solutions on the lone player. This isn’t unfeasible; it’s just easier to solve the scenarios with input and ideas from several people. The odds of a team doing well increases with the number of active players participating.

On the other hand, this adventure can be used on a night when some players can’t make it to the gaming session. Rather than have someone else run their characters in their absence or go on an adventure without their PCs as part of the team, you can split the four NPCs in the “Rounding Out the Team” sidebar between the players who are available and use them as a competing team. That way, those players who didn’t make it to the gaming session don’t have their PCs lagging behind in experience points.

RUNNING THE SCENARIOS

At the beginning of each scenario, show the players the map or diagram corresponding to that event (permission is granted to photocopy these player handouts for personal use only). Allow the players to read the appropriate spells in the *Player’s Handbook* and magic item entries in the *DUNGEON MASTER’S Guide*, but remind them that not all of the starting equipment is necessarily needed to complete each scenario’s goal. Once all of the players have had a chance to review their starting equipment, give them the task briefing. Once the briefing begins, track the time. The players have 15 minutes for their PCs to accomplish the task. This is 15 minutes in real time, not “game time.” (This system is much easier than tracking all 150 rounds in each 15-minute period for each of the 10 scenarios.) However, some tasks the PCs must perform to complete a scenario goal take a bit of time, and for those tasks the approximate time to complete them is provided, often with a modifier, under the heading “Time Constraints.” Whenever a

player announces that her PC is performing that task, determine the length of time it takes and subtract that from the 15 minutes of the scenario. For example, if it takes 30 seconds to secure a rope properly, tell the players that time has been used.

The “school solution” is provided to each scenario. This is the way the designers at the Adventurers Guild anticipate the goal will be accomplished. However, it is by no means the only, or even the best, way to complete the scenario. It is provided so you can see one method to accomplish each goal, in the event the PCs fail to accomplish it and the players don’t think it can be done. Be flexible in all cases, and allow a good idea an appropriate chance of success. Some avenues of approach are not good methods to employ, however, and many specific “bad ideas” are provided as examples of what won’t work.

The guild official proctoring each scenario is responsible for ensuring the safety of its participants. While many of the scenarios place the contestants in danger of physical harm, the official has been provided with a means of countering that danger; for example, several scenarios involve climbing up or down sheer surfaces, and the guild wizards proctoring those scenarios are ready to cast *feather fall* immediately upon signs of trouble.

Other dangers are more artificial, like falling into a pool of “lava.” In any scenario, the official has the power to declare any PC “dead” at any time, and he does so if he has to save the PC or if the PC commits a “lethal” act (like falling into “lava”). PCs who have been declared “dead” are not allowed to participate further in the scenario in which they “died,” and they receive no points for that scenario. They are allowed to watch their teammates finish the scenario without them, but any assistance on their part, whether it be actual participation in accomplishing the scenario’s goal or even shouting suggestions from the sidelines (this includes the “dead” character’s player offering advice to the other players) are grounds for disqualification of the entire team. Once the team moves on to the next scenario, any “dead” PCs are restored to “living” status and continue as before.

Many of the scenarios are puzzles. As part of the spirit of the Challenge of Champions, you should require your players to figure out the solution themselves. After all, figuring out the solutions is the whole point of these scenarios. However, most people roleplay to play their characters, not themselves; the PCs have “lived” entirely different lives and have memories of entirely different experiences than the players. In each scenario, some potential uses for skills are provided if your players begin to get frustrated or they ask you whether one of their skill might help. Skill checks are generally



SCENARIO 1

unnecessary to successfully complete a scenario, but they can help give PCs a clue.

As the PCs complete each scenario, record their scores on the score sheet provided. This makes it easier for the players to see how they are doing, and more importantly, lets you tally the final scores when the fourth annual Challenge of Champions is over.

PLAYERS' INTRODUCTION

Read or paraphrase the following to the players when their characters are ready to begin:

The day of the contest, the teams are led to the large, multicolored tent where the initial briefings are given. This year, there are a total of 15 teams competing. Before the contest officially begins, some of the teams pass around a sign-up sheet for a betting pool. Not all teams have entered the pool, and there is no pressure to do so, but those interested are putting up 100 gold pieces per team, and the winners (among those in the pool) go home with the pot. "This year, I'm sure to win," declares

Bisquayne, a long-time competitor, as he hands you the sign-up sheet for the betting pool. "Care to contribute to my winnings?"

The betting pool has become a tradition among many of the Challenge of Champions competitors. Since the Adventurers Guild has no interest in providing monetary rewards for winning (that's not why they've designed the contests), several contestants have taken it upon themselves to provide their own cash reward. The betting pool serves as a sort of "back-up prize" as well—even if the PCs don't win the contest this time around, there's a chance they might at least get to take home some money. So far, nine of the teams have each put in 100 gp, so if the PCs decide to enter, the pot will be 1,000 gp. Of course, since the contestants aren't allowed to bring anything with them to the contest, none of the teams actually have the money with them, but the other teams help ensure that the losers pay up when the contest is over. Read or paraphrase the following once the PCs have had a chance to interact with some of the other contestants and made a decision whether to participate in the betting pool:

Farthingale, the heavy-set guildmaster officially running the Challenge of Champions, shows up at the tent and everyone gets down to business. Farthingale goes over all of the ground rules and answers any initial questions. After that, each team's name is entered on a slip of paper, and the names are drawn randomly out of a small chest to determine the order in which the teams will compete. Your team is number ten.

At this point, go over all of the rules with the players and answer any questions they might have. Once the players are ready to proceed, and assuming none of the PCs plan on smuggling illicit items into the contest, read or paraphrase the following:

Team #1 is led away to start. You are left to wait until your team's turn; with over 2 hours to kill, you amuse yourselves by wandering through the guild's display tents, examining various weapons, armor, and adventuring gear. Everywhere you go, people offer you their best wishes in the upcoming event. Finally, you are approached by a guild page. "It's about that time," he says, and escorts you to the starting tent. Inside, you are greeted by two guild members: a thin-faced wizard named Kuthbar, who casts *detect magic* on your team in search of illicit magic items, and a red-bearded fighter named Jayme, who gives everyone a thorough frisk, looking for smuggled items like lockpicks.

If any of the PCs have tried sneaking forbidden items into the contest, they're probably discovered at this point (see "Rules" above for information on how to conceal hidden items) and ejected from the Challenge without being reimbursed their entrance fees. (Money paid in advance for *resurrection* or *raise dead* spells is returned, however.) Allow guild officials time to take 20 on Search checks, and don't be afraid to give them hefty circumstance bonuses. A player whose PC is ejected can use one of the four extra PCs in the "Rounding Out the Team" sidebar instead of his normal character. This also allows the other team members (those who didn't try to cheat) to compete in the Challenge rather than be disqualified along with their foolish partner.

Read or paraphrase the boxed text for the first scenario when the PCs are ready to begin.

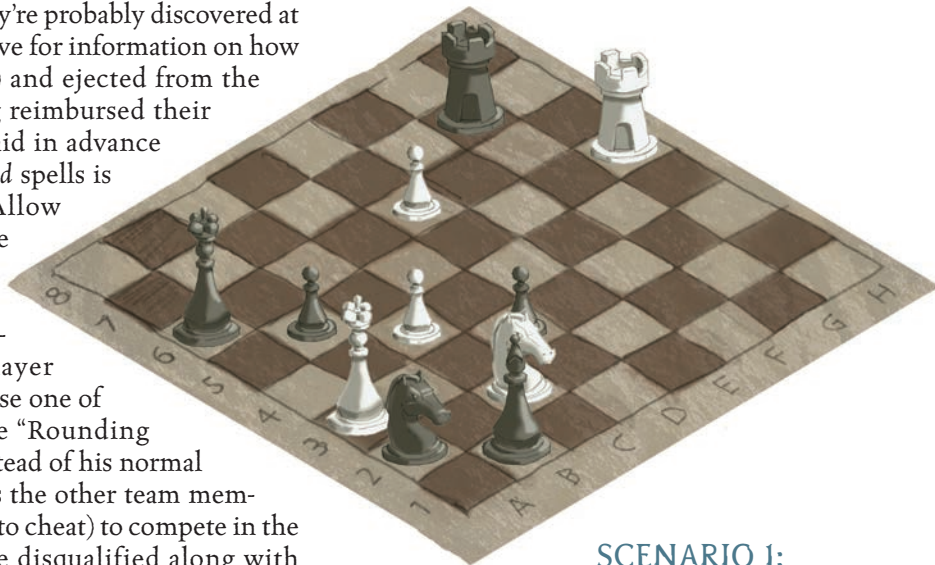
SCENARIO #1: CHESS, ANYONE?

Jayne leads you through a door and into a 20-foot-square room. A 10-foot-square pit occupies one corner and a round chess table, some 4 feet wide, the other. There you are met by Julian, the guild wizard in charge of the first scenario. "Good day to you," he says. "Your starting equipment consists of two bags in the corner: one black, one white. One is a *bag of devouring*, the other a *bag of holding* (type I). It's up to you to determine which is which, but the *bag of holding* contains an *immovable rod* and a 10-foot length of rope. Both should prove useful in accomplishing your task: namely, getting safely to the bottom of the 50-foot-deep pit.

"The sides of the pit are completely smooth, so any attempt to climb down is sure to end in failure. Also, please note the spikes at the bottom of the pit, which we've taken the liberty of coating with a deadly contact poison. If you can get down there safely, you should be able to walk carefully around the spikes, but I wouldn't advise just jumping in. In fact, I can pretty much guarantee that anyone jumping in without a way of slowing their fall will be declared dead for the rest of the scenario."

"If you don't feel up to the challenge, perhaps you'd rather spend the next 15 minutes playing a quick game of chess? No? Then you may begin."

The room and pit are both lit by *continual flame* spells. The 4-foot-diameter chess table is wooden and supported by a single, sturdy, central leg. The chess-



SCENARIO 1: PLAYER'S HANDOUT

board is painted on the tabletop, with the pieces set up as if in the middle of a game (see accompanying diagram). Neither of the two magical bags bears any distinguishing marks.

SCORING

10 points per PC who makes it through the exit door at the bottom of the pit by the end of the time limit.

SOLUTION

The PCs observe the placement of the chess pieces on the board, reading off each piece of the same color in sequence, from low numbers to high. The black pieces spell out the words "bad bag," while the white pieces spell out "cache." The PCs open the white *bag of holding* and remove the *immovable rod* and the rope. Tying the rod securely to the side of the table leg, one PC holds the chess table over the edge of the pit and activates the *immovable rod*. While the table hangs motionless in midair above the pit, one PC climbs onto the table's leg, sitting cross-legged, while the other three PCs pile onto the top of the table. The PC on the leg deactivates and reactivates the *immovable rod* in short bursts, allowing the table to drop only a few feet at a time, and the PCs make it to the bottom of the pit in that fashion. Once at the bottom of the pit, they carefully make their way past the spikes and out the door.

The walls are smooth enough to be considered unclimbable (see the *Player's Handbook*, page 65).

THE HINT

"There is a clue in the placement of the chess pieces."

TIME CONSTRAINTS

It takes 2 rounds to tie the *immovable rod* securely to the leg of the chess table with the rope (or to tie any two items together). It takes about 1 minute 30 seconds to descend the pit on the table as described. Time spent deciphering the hidden message on the chessboard should be accounted literally.

DM NOTES

When the PCs open either of the two magic bags, nothing can be seen inside. Similarly, turning the *bags* over to “dump” their contents has no effect; it’s only when a PC reaches into a *bag* that they’ll know which *bag* is which (unless they solve the clues hidden in the chessmen’s locations on the board). A PC reaching into the *bag of devouring* is pulled into the bag and declared “dead” for the rest of the scenario. (Actually, both bags are really *bags of holding*, but the black one—the “*bag of devouring*”—has a guild wizard positioned inside it, ready to pull in any PC who reaches inside the bag.) Of course, once a team member has been “devoured,” it should be obvious to the other players that the white bag is the one they want.

If the PCs think to turn the bags inside out (and do so without reaching a hand inside the “*bag of devouring*”), the contents spill out of the *bag of holding* and are accessible for use. The black *bag* spills out the guild wizard hidden inside, but he wears a *ring of invisibility* and instantly *teleports* out of the chamber with a spell readied with the Silent Spell feat.

The rope is only 10 feet long—long enough to tie the *immovable rod* in place but little use in climbing down the 50-foot-deep pit.

A monk of 8th level or higher can use her slow fall ability to jump down the pit without harm; by keeping in touch with the wall of the pit, she’ll avoid landing on a spike, which are clustered toward the center. This, of course, allows her to earn 10 points for the scenario but does nothing toward aiding her teammates. Anyone else jumping (or falling) into the pit has a *feather fall* spell cast upon them by Julian and is declared “dead” for the rest of the scenario—a victim of the poisoned spikes. This includes clever PCs who try climbing into the *bag of holding* and having another team member drop them into the pit; in such cases, the guild proctor declares the *bag of holding* (it holds up to 250 pounds) pierced by a spike and ruptured, destroying its contents and causing anyone inside it at the time to achieve “dead” status. Note that occupants who do not exceed the *bag’s* 250-pound cargo limit can hold their breaths and ride down in the bag using the tactic described in the solution. Naturally, the spikes aren’t really coated in poison, nor are they even really there; they are *permanent images* cast by guild wizards.

If the PCs are unable to get safely to the bottom of the pit within 15 minutes, Julian casts *feather fall* on them and pushes them over the edge of the pit. They earn no points for the first scenario and are sent on to the second.

SCENARIO #2: HELL TO PAY

Walking through the door at the bottom of the pit, you are met by a guild rogue named Luther who escorts you down a corridor to the next scenario. “You just descended down one pit,” he declares. “For the next scenario, the goal is to climb out of another.” You enter the door at the far end of the corridor and step into a 20-foot-square room with a prominent magic circle etched into the floor. All sorts of magical symbols surround the circle, and five burning candles provide the illumination. Luther locks the door behind him.

“Okay, here’s the situation,” he explains. “You’re in the unenviable position of being at the bottom of this 30-foot-deep pit, where an evil necromancer performs his unholy rituals. Fifteen minutes from now, an osyluth devil will appear in the middle of the magic circle and receive his payment for prior services rendered. The payment consists of 500 pieces of gold, kept in one of these unlocked chests”—here Luther indicates two small treasure chests lined up against one wall—“as well as four metal flasks of *sovereign glue*, kept in the other chest. Oh, and of course anyone still in this room when he appears. I’d do my best to make sure that you’re not here when the barbed devil shows up, as his appetite is noteworthy. Of course, judging from the smoothness of these walls, climbing them is going to be difficult at best. Still, see what you can do. Good luck!”

The room is illuminated by five burning candles spaced equidistant around the 18-foot-diameter magic circle etched into the floor. In addition, some light spills from the top of the pit.

The two chests are identical—each 2 feet long, 1 foot deep, and 1 foot tall. The room has no ceiling.

SCORING

10 points per PC who makes it up and out of the room by the end of the 15-minute time limit.

SOLUTION

The PCs open the chests and pour the gold pieces on the floor. They open up the vials of *sovereign glue*, drip a drop onto each coin in turn and stack them onto each other, making stacks of 50 coins. A pile of 50 coins glued together forms a cylinder a little

SCENARIO 2

over 6 inches long; ten coin cylinders can be produced from the golden trove.

The PCs then use the *sovereign glue* to adhere one of the chests upside-down to the side of one of the walls as high up as they can reach. Getting a boost up from his companions, PC #1 steps onto the makeshift platform thus created. The other PCs pass up the other chest and the “coin cylinders,” and PC #1 uses the *sovereign glue* to adhere them to the wall as well, creating another platform out of the second chest and a series of handholds and footholds that allow the PCs to climb up the wall and over the top.

The walls of the pit are unclimbable, as they were in Scenario #1.

THE HINT

“You might not have a ladder, but at least you have the rungs.”

TIME CONSTRAINTS

Assume it takes 1 second to glue coins together per coin involved, so gluing all 500 coins into “rungs” of a set length takes 500 seconds, or 8 minutes, 20 seconds. Of course, there are four vials of *sovereign glue* and four PCs, so with two PCs at work gluing coins together, it takes 4 minutes, 10 seconds; three PCs do complete the task in 2 minutes, 47 seconds; four PCs take 2 minutes, 5 seconds. It takes a full round for the *sovereign glue* to set, but this occurs while other coins are being glued to the top of a stack; by the time all of the rungs are ready to be used, the *sovereign glue* will have set.

When gluing the “ladder” into place along the wall, assume it takes 1 round to glue a “rung” (whether a stack of glued coins or a chest) in place and another to climb up onto it. Thus, it takes the PC doing the gluing 24 rounds (2 minutes, 24 seconds) to form a “ladder” of twelve rungs. The other PCs can then climb up at half their speed (see the Climb skill rules on pages 64–65 of the *Player’s Handbook*).

Thus, if only one PC assembles the “rungs” together, he can be out of the pit in a total of 10 minutes, 44 seconds. The other PCs would then climb up at half their normal movement rates. If there were two characters building rungs, the first PC could be out of the pit in 6 minutes, 34 seconds after he first started gluing the



coins together.

With three PCs assembling rungs, the first PC leaves the pit after 5 minutes, 11 seconds.

With all four PCs assisting in the “rung assembly line,” it takes 4 minutes, 29 seconds for the first PC to climb out of the pit.

DM NOTES

Be sure to note how many “rungs” the PCs make, and ask the players how high they’re gluing each “rung.” With careful planning, they won’t run out of “rungs” before they reach the top of the pit.

PCs using shorter “coin-rungs” (for example, if they opt to make 50 “rungs” of only 10 coins each) might require a Climb skill check (DC 10) to climb to the top. Failure by 5 or more points signifies that they fall off, taking 1d6 points of damage per 10 feet fallen.

At the end of the time limit, an osyluth materializes in the middle of the magic circle, as promised. (Again, it’s just a *polymorphed* guild wizard.) If the PCs haven’t exited the room by then, he points to each in turn and says, “Okay, you’re dead, and you’re dead, and you’re dead, and you’re dead,” then flies them,

SCENARIO 3



one at a time, to the top of the pit. The PCs earn no points for this scenario and are sent to the next.

Levitating Adventurers Guild workers use *universal solvent* at the end of each team's passage through Scenario #2 to restore the starting equipment to its original condition and location before the next adventuring team begins this scenario.

SCENARIO #3: ARE THOSE TEETH REAL?

Exiting the second scenario, you are met by a guild wizard named Mussfinch. "The next scenario calls for you to split up," he informs you. "I'll need you to designate yourselves as team members 1, 2, 3, and 4."

Once you've decided who's who, he continues: "You'll each be taken to a different platform along

the four corners of a large room, where you'll each find a single potion vial. I won't tell you which potion is which—that's for you to figure out—but one is a *potion of spider climb*, one's a *potion of blur*, one's a *potion of water walk*, and the last is a vial of poison. Do please be careful, will you? That poison is lethal. One of you will also begin with a 10-foot length of rope, and another with an *immovable rod*. You'll find out who gets what once you're each on your platform.

"Your goal for this scenario is to make it up to and through the small opening in the ceiling of the room. The ceiling is 20 feet above your starting platforms.

"Oh, one final thing: You'll find the platforms are 20 feet above the floor of the room, and with good reason: There's a nasty gibbering moulder with snapping teeth lurking down there. As you might expect, anyone falling down there with it will be declared dead. Since the babbling of a gibbering moulder can drive a person insane, here are four sets of earplugs. For your own safety, please keep them in for the duration of the scenario. Since you won't be able to talk to each other with earplugs in, if you want the hint, get on your knees and hold your hands together in a penitent fashion. If I see all four of you in such a position, I'll provide the hint telepathically. Ready? Begin!"

The room is 20 feet wide, 20 feet long, and 40 feet high. The starting platforms are at the midway point between floor and ceiling, and each platform has a 3-foot-high metal railing preventing the PCs from falling off. A gibbering moulder sits in a blob on the floor, gnashing its many teeth. In the middle of the ceiling is a 5-foot-square opening. The room is lit by *continual flame* spells.

Each PC starts with a different-colored potion vial stoppered with a cork, upon which are written three letters as shown below. PC #1 also begins with an *immovable rod* (clearly labeled along its side), and PC #2 has a 10-foot length of rope.

PC	Color of Vial	Letters on Cork
#1	white	RAT

#2	pink	A L L
#3	silver	I O N
#4	blue	I T E

Important Note: As the PCs' ears are sealed with earplugs, the players cannot talk to each other during this scenario. They'll have to use gestures, sign language, and anything else they can improvise.

SCORING

10 points per PC who makes it through the ceiling opening by the end of the 15-minute time period.

SOLUTION

The PCs each make known the three letters on their potion-vial corks. (Various methods for doing this are described below under "DM Notes.") Placing the

letters together in the proper order forms the word "alliteration." Using this clue, PC #3 quaffs the silver *potion of spider climb*, removes any footgear, and walks along the walls to each of the other PCs in turn and carries them to the opening in the ceiling.

The walls, floor, and ceiling are all smooth and unclimbable.

THE HINT

Since the PCs can't hear Mussfinch while they're wearing their earplugs, he holds up a sign reading "ALLITERATION."

DM NOTES

A PC cannot let others know what's written on her vial by simply showing the cork to them; the letters

ROUNDING OUT THE TEAM

If the PCs are short a teammate or two, they can meet up with any of the four PCs described here. These extra PCs are 1st-level characters who have avoided signing up together as a team because they fear they don't have the experience needed to perform well in the contest. Each one would be more than willing to join a more experienced party, though.

Feel free to use these extra PCs to fill out the party for the purpose of this adventure; once the adventure is over they can either stay on as NPCs or go their separate ways, as best fits your campaign. In any case, you shouldn't use the extra PCs to provide input during the scenarios. The contest is designed to challenge the ingenuity and resourcefulness of the players, so no help should be forthcoming from you via these extra characters.

☛ **Darvin, Male Half-elf Sor1:** CR 1; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 7 in. tall); HD 1d4+3 (includes Toughness feat); hp 7; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (touch 13, flat-footed 10); SA spells; SQ half-elf qualities; SV Fort +0, Ref +3, Will +3; AL CG; Str 9, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 13, Cha 15.

Skills: Appraise +5, Concentration +4, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Spellcraft +7, Spot +3. *Feats:* Toughness.

Darvin has a tendency to spout an endless stream of disgusting jokes, especially "dead kobold" jokes. Despite his quirky sense of humor, he's dependable and forthright.

☛ **Mirkysh, Male Gnome Brd1:** CR 1; Small Humanoid (3 ft. 5 in. tall); HD 1d6+2; hp 8; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 12 (touch 12, flat-footed 11); SA spells, bardic music; SQ gnome qualities, bardic knowledge; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +5; AL NG; Str 8, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 15, Wis 13, Cha 16.

Skills: (24) Alchemy +8*, Appraise +4, Diplomacy +4, Hide +9*, Listen +7*, Perform (buffoonery, comedy, melody, storytelling) +7. *Feats:* Dodge.

*Skill totals include all racial and size bonuses.

Khrys is a friendly gnome with a shaved head who enjoys performing in taverns and pubs. Khrys's vocal performances always improve after a few mugs of brew.

☛ **Bhessy, Femal Half-Orc Bbn1:** CR 1; Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft. 2 in. tall); HD 1d12+1; hp 13; Init +1; Spd 40 ft.; AC 11 (touch 11, flat-footed 10); SA rage; SQ half-orc qualities; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +0; AL CN; Str 17, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 9.

Skills: Climb +7, Intimidate +3, Jump +7. *Feats:* Power Attack.

Bhessy has a willingness to use fists as the cure-all solution to life's dilemmas. She's especially sensitive about her name, and she'll jump down the throat of the first person to make a cow joke in her hearing.

☛ **Waresh, Female Dwarf Rog1:** CR 1; Medium-size Humanoid (4 ft. 4 in. tall); HD 1d6+2; hp 8; Init +2; Spd 20 ft.; AC 12 (touch 12, flat-footed 10); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ dwarf qualities; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will -1; AL N; Str 11, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8.

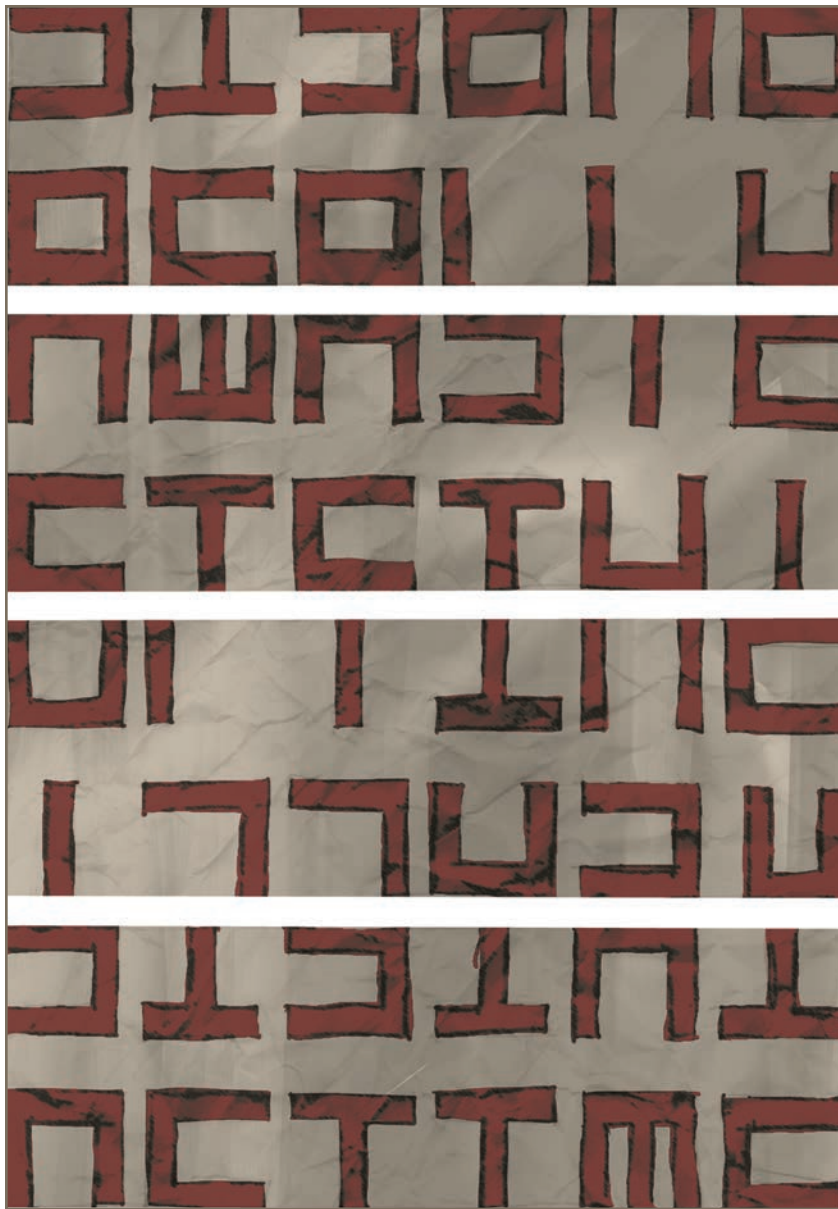
Skills: (32) Appraise +2*, Climb +4, Craft +2* (for stone or metal items only), Hide +6, Intimidate +3, Move Silently +6, Open Lock +6, Pick Pocket +6, Search +4, Spot +3. *Feats:* Endurance.

*Skill totals include all racial bonuses.

Waresh the dwarf has numerous facial piercings that make her look more intimidating. They include her nose, both ears (multiple times each), eyebrows, lower lip, and tongue. Watters scowls frequently but is really a big softy.

The statistics above describe the four extra PCs as they appear for the fourth annual Challenge of Champions. If you wish to make them permanent additions to the party, you'll have to outfit them with weapons, armor, spells, and the like, but these concerns are outside the scope of this adventure.

SCENARIO 4: PLAYER'S HANDOUT



are too small to make out from 20 feet away. One solution is to write the letters in the air with a finger.

Throwing a vial (or its cork) to another PC requires a successful ranged attack against AC 10 on the part of the thrower and a successful Dexterity check (DC 10) on the part of the catcher. If either roll fails, the thrown object falls to the floor below and is lost.

Lip-reading the letters spoken by another PC is possible with a successful Read Lips check (DC 15). If this works, have the speaker write down his or her three letters on a scrap of paper and pass it to the lip-reader so the other players don't also gain the information.)

Note that if you have fewer than four players running the four-person team, each player should only be provided the letters on one cork until such time as the PCs manage to communicate with each other. Finally,

be sure you don't ruin the silence effect yourself by writing the letters down or reading them aloud to each player. Small pieces of paper with each letter combination written on them can be used to circumvent this danger.

If none of the above methods works, the PCs can always travel to each other and compare vials. PC #1 can stand on the railing at the eastern edge of his or her platform with the *immovable rod* in hand and jump toward PC #2, activating it when he or she begins to fall. (Refer to the Jump skill on page 70 of the *Player's Handbook*; the PCs can only make standing jumps due to the size of the platforms.) PC #2 makes a lasso at one end of the rope and throws it to PC #1, who maneuvers it over the activated *immovable rod*. PC #2 ties the other end to the railing if desired. PC #1 deactivates the *rod* and is pulled up onto PC #2's platform, where the two can compare vials. PC #1 then jumps toward PC #4, activates the *immovable rod* in mid-air, and throws the end of the rope to PC #4, who then secures the rope and hauls PC #1 over in the manner described above. The same system is used to get PC #1 over to PC #3.

The alliteration clue refers to the first letter of the potion type and the color of the vial. Thus, *blur* goes with blue, *poison* with pink, *spider climb* with silver, and *water walk* with white. All of the potions' effects function as though cast at 5th level.

Any PC who drinks the vial of poison is declared dead for the rest of the scenario. Fortunately, the "poison" is not truly lethal (despite its terrible taste). In addition, anyone removing their earplugs is declared dead. While gibbering mouthers normally cause *confusion* and not death, this was one of the constraints of the scenario.

The gibbering moulder is, in fact, a *polymorphed* guild wizard. It does not attack with the typical gibbering moulder attacks but makes a big show of snapping its teeth at the PCs. *Mussfinch* casts *feather fall* on any PC who falls toward the floor; that PC is declared dead for the rest of the scenario,

and any equipment carried is also out of reach of the other PCs.

A *dispel magic* removes the lingering effects of any potions before the PCs move on to the next scenario.

SCENARIO #4: EYE FOR AN EYE

“You’ve made it this far,” says Scarrolupio, the guild wizard proctoring the fourth scenario. “Now you must do a bit of climbing.” He leads you toward a large totem pole, carved into which are four iconic images of animals. The totem pole rises up from a sand pit, stands about 40 feet tall, and is placed near a wall of similar size.

“You see carved before you representations of various beasts of legend. Your goal is twofold: First, you must remove the top beast’s left eye and replace it with this”—here he hands you a globe of red glass. “Second, you must each make your way to the top of the totem pole, where you can step off to the top of the wall and proceed to the next scenario. There’s a set of stairs on the other side of the wall. Note, however, the extreme smoothness of this side of the wall; I can guarantee that none of you will be climbing up it. No, climbing the totem pole is the way to go, and just to make it interesting, we’ve taken the

liberty of greasing the pole, making it unclimbable without help of some sort. Fortunately, you’ll find a 50-foot length of rope at the top, so climbing up should be significantly easier for the last three team members.”

Scarrolupio pulls a set of four cards from inside his robe, as well as a small hand mirror. The cards each have runes along their longer sides. “You might need these,” Scarrolupio says. “There is a secret message in this scenario that could make your task considerably easier, if you can figure out what it says.”



SCENARIO 4: PLAYER’S HANDOUT



This entire area is lit with *continual flame* spells. The totem pole is 40 feet tall and 5 feet from a 40-foot-tall, unclimbable wall.

Important Note: You should present the players with the four “coded message cards” at the beginning of this scenario. You should also provide them with a small mirror, so they’ll have everything their PCs have while attempting to decipher the hidden message.

SCORING

10 points per PC who makes it to the platform at the top of the totem pole within the 15-minute time limit, provided the eye has been removed and replaced with the red glass orb.

SCENARIO 4: SOLUTION

SOLUTION

The PCs ignore the cards and look to the totem pole itself for the real hidden message: The four animal totems depicted on the pole are comprised of reflected letters (when read sideways) that form the words “break mirror.” The PCs break the mirror, which causes a 40-foot ladder to fall out of an extradimensional space inside. This enables the PCs to place the ladder against the totem pole, braced at the bottom so it doesn't slip away, and climb to the top to switch the eyes. The PCs can then place the ladder against the wall and climb up over the top.

THE HINT

“Ignore the cards.”

DM NOTES

The four coded message cards and the mirror are an attempt to lead astray those who have participated in previous challenges and try to use those experiences to their advantage. (In earlier Challenges of Champions, similar coded messages are reflected in a mirror to spell out clues, and other scenarios have hinged upon the secret message revealed when placing “coded message” cards together in their proper order.) This time around, some of the “hidden words” have been placed upside-down in relationship to the others, but regardless the cards are not necessary for the scenario's completion. In fact, the message formed by the cards is:

THIS IS (inverted Card D over inverted Card B)

REALLY (Card A over inverted Card C)

A WASTE (inverted Card A over Card B)

OF TIME (Card D over Card C)

PCs are free to try to climb the totem pole without the rope, but the grease on the totem pole makes it unclimbable.

Once at the top of the totem pole, removing and replacing the glass eye is a simple matter.

If PCs get close to making the leap of looking to the totem pole for clues (such as by looking at the pole reflected in the mirror, or simply

examining the pole closely), allow them a Spot check (DC 20). PCs can take 20 on this roll, but it costs them 2 minutes. If the check succeeds, feel free to give them a clue, such as, “You see something strange in the totem pole. It almost look like the creatures carved into the pole have another shape.” If PCs specifically say they're looking for a written clue in the totem pole, allow them a Decipher Script check (DC 20) or a Search check (DC 25). PCs can take 20 on these checks, but doing so takes 2 minutes, which should be subtracted from their total time limit.

SCENARIO #5: ELF HIVE

“Tired of climbing up and down yet?” asks Justin, the gruff guild fighter proctoring the next scenario.

SCENARIO 3: PLAYER'S HANDOUT

"Well, you'll like this next scenario, then, 'cause it's all on the same level—no climbing involved. Here, gather 'round, and I'll tell you what's up."

Justin leads you around a corner to the starting area of the fifth scenario. Ahead of you is a narrow passageway with a floor constructed of hex-shaped stones. At the far end stand two statues of peculiar hybrid creatures with the eyes, wings, and bodies of bees, and the upper torsos and heads of elves. Each statue holds a drawn bow aimed in your direction. "Screwy looking things, huh?" remarks Justin. "Well, they're the guardians of this here elf hive, and they'll kill you if you step outta line."

"Here's the deal: This section of corridor is filled with magic traps, see? Them tiles are all pressure sensitive, so them guardian thingies can tell where everybody is. Only one person on a hex—that's the rule. Break the rule and you're dead. Also, some of them tiles have got bee-elf larva growin' under 'em, and the guardians don't like it when you step on a grub. So step on a grub hex, and you're dead."

"Fortunately, all them hexes detect as magical. If you step on a safe hex, a number'll appear in the middle of the hex. That shows how many grubs lurk under hexes next to the one you're standing on. Remember now, there's only one grub under each of them grub hexes, so if a '2' pops up on a hex, it means two of the hexes touching that one's got grubs under 'em. Got it? Right then. To make it easy on you, all of them first hexes is safe to stand on, I'll tell you that much."

"One final thing: Four of the hexes have magic keys on 'em. You can't see 'em 'cause they're invisible right now, but each key will appear when you stand on the hex it rests on. You each have to get yer own key, 'cause you each need to be holdin' a key to pass by the statues at the end of the hive. You got that? Then let's go!"

The entire area is lit by *continual flame* spells. The hex tiles are each 5 feet in diameter. The walls in the corridor are completely smooth, foiling all climbing attempts.

SCORING

10 points per PC who gets past the statues within the 15-minute time limit.

SOLUTION

The PCs each stand on a different hex at the front of the hive, note the numbers on the hexes they're standing on, and use logic to determine which hexes are safe to step on. They make their way across the hive in such a fashion, picking up the keys as they come across them, and each PC passes to safety with a key in hand.

THE HINT

"Once you've determined where all the grubs are, adjacent to a given hex, all the other hexes adjacent to that one are safe."

SCENARIO 3: SOLUTION

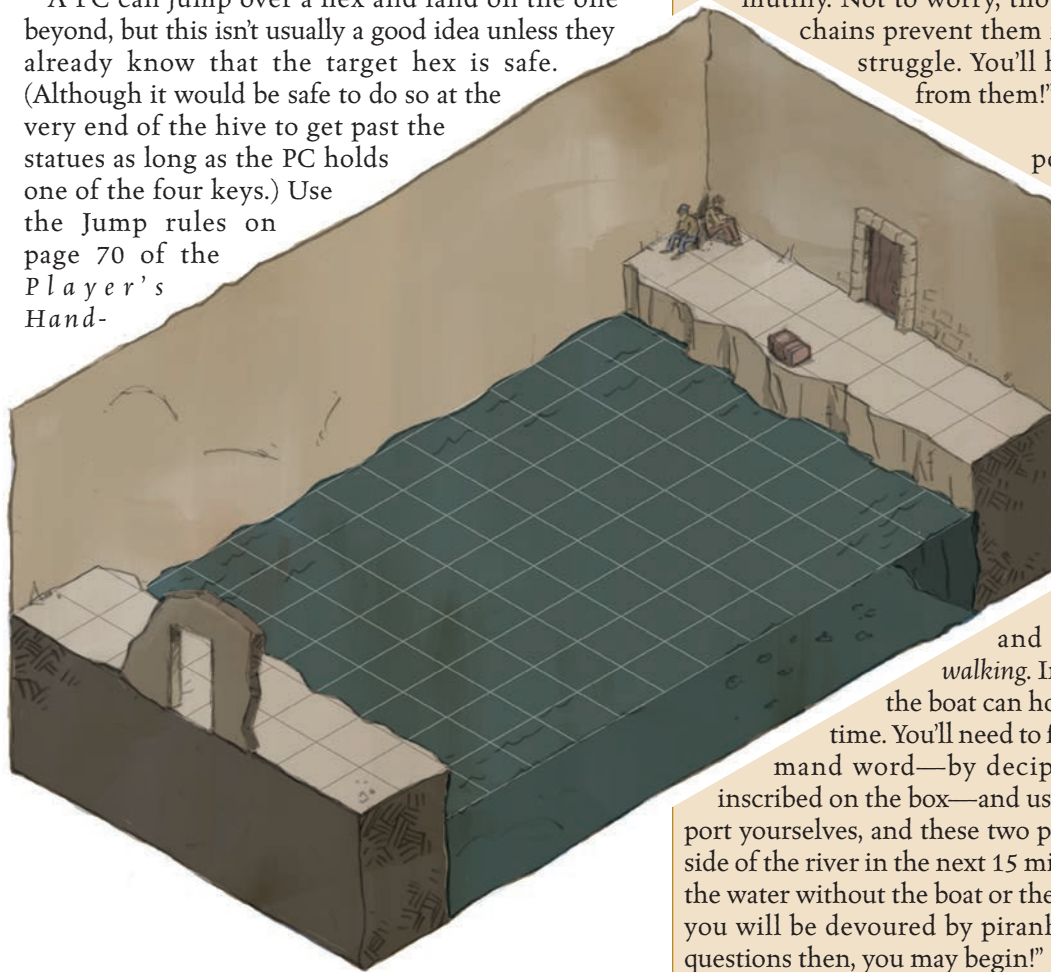


DM NOTES

There are two scenario maps: The first one is for the DM, showing the location of the grubs, the keys, and the numbers that appear on each hex. The second (blank) map is for the players, so they can fill in the numbers on the hexes as their PCs step on them. Have each player tell you the location of their PC on the hexes, and tell them what number appears when they step onto a safe hex (or describe how they're "vaporized" when they step onto a "grub" hex).

If a PC steps onto a "grub" hex, or multiple PCs stand on a single hex, the statues fire bolts of magic energy (resembling *magic missiles*) at the offenders, automatically striking them. PCs struck are instantly rendered invisible, magically silenced, and telekinetically levitated through the illusory ceiling of the room. To the other PCs, it appears as though their teammates were disintegrated. If the "vaporized" PC was carrying a key, it is also lost. Naturally, "vaporized" PCs are declared dead for the rest of the scenario. Stepping onto a "grub" hex does not clear it; anyone stepping onto the same hex later is also "vaporized" by the statues.

A PC can jump over a hex and land on the one beyond, but this isn't usually a good idea unless they already know that the target hex is safe. (Although it would be safe to do so at the very end of the hive to get past the statues as long as the PC holds one of the four keys.) Use the Jump rules on page 70 of the *Player's Handbook*.



SCENARIO 6

book to determine the success of a jump.

Once a key has been used to get past the two statues, it is rendered nonmagical. Thus, it cannot be passed back to another PC to allow him or her safe passage. Each of the PCs must use a different key.

SCENARIO #6: SEASICK SAILORS

You are met by Father Quespin, another guild cleric. "Good day, Team Ten," he says, leading you through a door and into the area where the next scenario is held. This one involves water: A 100-foot-long pool stretches from wall to wall. "The water," says Father Quespin, "represents a piranha-filled river. The goal this time is simple," he says. He indicates a pair of young men in sailors' garb, both of whom look rather ill. They are shackled together at the wrist by a 6-foot chain. "You must transport these two seasick sailors, and yourselves, to the far side of the river. I'm afraid the sailors are not in any condition to assist you, so you'll have to do all of the work. Nor would they help you in any case, for they're being sent to trial for attempted mutiny. Not to worry, though: Those magic chains prevent them from putting up a struggle. You'll have no problems from them!"

Father Quespin points out your starting equipment: a small wooden box, upon which are inscribed several words and an outer ring of miscellaneous letters. "This box is a *folding boat*," he explains. "It currently holds four rings: Three nonmagical rings and one *ring of water walking*. In its rowboat form, the boat can hold four people at a time. You'll need to figure out the command word—by deciphering the clues inscribed on the box—and use the boat to transport yourselves, and these two prisoners, to the far side of the river in the next 15 minutes. If you enter the water without the boat or the magic of the ring, you will be devoured by piranha. If there are no questions then, you may begin!"

SCENARIO 6: PLAYER'S HANDOUT



This scenario takes place in a large, open-air arena and thus has natural lighting. The pool of water is a uniform 10 feet deep.

SCORING

10 points per PC on the far side of the river at the end of the 15-minute time limit, but only if the two seasick sailors have been transported there as well.

SOLUTION

The PCs examine the inscription carved into the box, which reads "Come, human, die by sword or spear." Examining the nineteen letters in the outer ring circling the inscription, the PCs note that all of the letters of the alphabet are represented except for B, E, H, I, S, U, and Y. Removing those letters from the phrase in the inscription above reveals "COMMAND WORD ORPAR." When the word "orpar" is spoken aloud, the box unfolds to form a rowboat (10 feet long, 4 feet wide, 2 feet deep) with a single pair of oars. Two PCs ferry the sailors to the other side of the river, then one returns to fetch the other two PCs.

THE HINT

"If the letter's not in the ring, it's not in the middle."

TIME CONSTRAINTS

Rowing the boat across the river requires a successful Strength check (DC 10). Two PCs can each take an oar, with one PC assisting the other's Strength check

(use the Aid Another rule on page 135 of the *Player's Handbook*). PCs can also take 10 on this check, if they desire. The boat has a speed of 10 feet per round. Crossing the river with the *ring* is probably faster, since most PCs have higher speeds than the boat. An average human (speed 30 feet) can run across the river in a single round.

DM NOTES

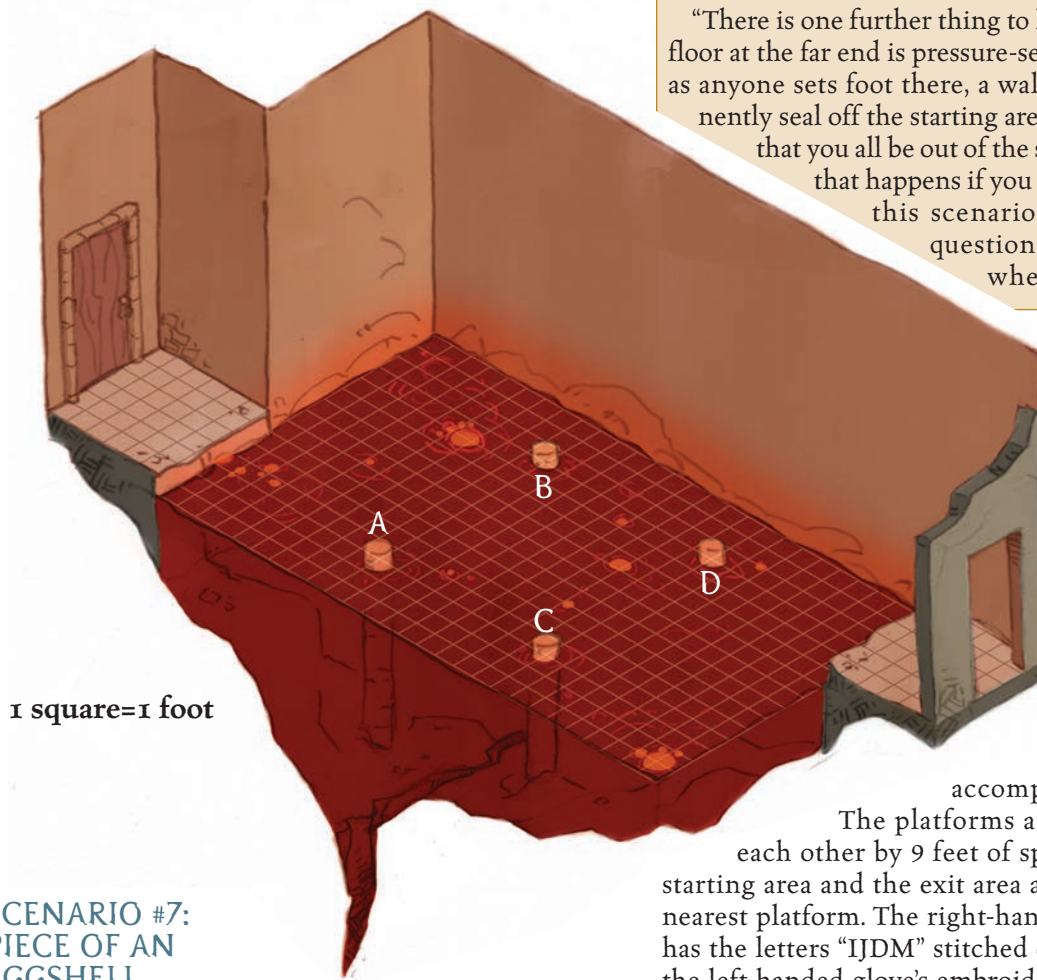
At the end of the time limit, only those PCs on the far side of the river earn points, and then only if both sailors have been shuttled across. It's in the team's best interest to get both sailors across in the first trip, so if they run out of time, at least one PC earns her points. (If there isn't enough time to return to the starting shore, pick up the remaining two PCs, and make it across again before the end of the time limit, it's actually a better strategy to "abandon" the last two teammates and earn 20 points for the team.)

The PCs can also accomplish their goal in a single trip. Since only one of the rings is magical, one PC puts on all four of them to ensure the *water walk* ability. That PC carries another PC on his back, while the other two PCs and the seasick sailors use the boat to cross the river.

Because of the "deadly piranhas" inhabiting the "river," any PC who enters the water outside the boat is pronounced "dead," although no piranhas are actually present. The boat can only hold the weight of four people; if five or more people pile into it, the boat sinks and everyone in it is declared "dead." Similarly, a *water walking* PC can carry only one person on his back without sinking into the water and being devoured by the piranhas. This prevents a particularly strong contestant from grabbing the two prisoners and crossing the river with the *ring of water walking* if the party can't figure out the command word to the *folding boat*.

Allow PCs who ask about the clue engraved on the *folding boat* to make a Decipher Script check (DC 18) to notice the missing letters (don't tell them which letters are missing, though). Finally, anyone who succeeds at a Use Magic Device check (DC 25) can open the *boat* without a command word (consult the "Activate Blindly" option of Use Magic Device on page 76 of the *Player's Handbook*). While this circumvents the truly time-consuming portion of the challenge, clever PCs shouldn't be punished for using the skills in which they're trained.

SCENARIO 7



1 square = 1 foot

SCENARIO #7: PIECE OF AN EGGSHELL

A guild wizard named Mercurio is waiting for you at the end of the sixth scenario. “You have made it this far,” he says. “Now, you must cross a pool of lava to deliver a valuable spell component to a desperate wizard. The spell component is this small piece of eggshell, taken from the egg of a red dragon immediately after it hatched.” Mercurio hands you the eggshell fragment about the size of a human hand.

“Note the layout of the pool of lava,” says Mercurio. “There are four small stone platforms rising up out of the pool, each 1 foot in diameter. To assist you in your crossing, here is your starting equipment: Two 10-foot-long wooden boards and two *gloves of storage*. One glove holds a *ring of spell storing* loaded with an *endure elements (fire)* spell, and the other holds a homunculus trained to attack everyone but its master. I won’t tell you which is which, but note the stitching on the back of each glove. Also, be careful with the boards! They can only support the weight of one of you at a time. And naturally, anyone falling into the lava will be declared dead immediately.

“There is one further thing to keep in mind. The floor at the far end is pressure-sensitive, so as soon as anyone sets foot there, a wall drops to permanently seal off the starting area. I would suggest that you all be out of the starting area when that happens if you wish to succeed at this scenario. If there are no questions, you may begin when you’re ready!”

This area is lit by multiple *continual flame* spells. The lava pool is 6 feet deep, with four stone platforms projecting 1 foot above the lava. For ease of identification, the projections are labeled A, B, C, and D (see the accompanying diagram).

The platforms are separated from each other by 9 feet of space, and both the starting area and the exit area are 9 feet from the nearest platform. The right-handed *glove of storage* has the letters “IJDM” stitched on the back, while the left-handed glove’s embroidery reads “THNB.”

SCORING

10 points per PC who crosses to the exit area at the end of the 15-minute time limit.

SOLUTION

PC #1 places one of the boards from the starting area to D, walks to D with the other board, places it from D to C, and walks to C. PC #2 walks to D, removes the board connecting to C and repositions it to reach B, then walks to B. PC #3 walks to D, picks up the board from the starting area and passes it to PC #2. PC #2 places the board from B to A and walks to A. PC #3 walks to B, removes the board connecting to A, repositions it to connect D and the starting area, and returns to B. PC #4 walks to D, removes the board connecting to the starting area and passes it to PC #3. PC #3 reconnects the board from B to A, then passes the board connecting B and D to PC #2. PC #2 uses the board to connect A and the exit area, and walks to the exit. PC #3 walks to A, removes the board connecting to the exit, uses it to connect A to C, then returns to B. PC #1 walks to A, removes the board connecting A to C, uses it to connect A and the exit

SCENARIO 8: PLAYER'S HANDOUT

area, and exits. PC #3 walks to A, removes the board connecting A and the exit area, walks to B, and places the board to connect B and D. PC #3 walks to A. PC #4 walks to B, removes the board connecting B and D, and passes it to PC #3. PC #3 places the board to connect A and the exit area, and PC #3 exits, followed by PC #4.

THE HINT

"The gloves are unnecessary for the task at hand."

TIME CONSTRAINTS

Rather than worrying about how long it takes to place a board into position, have the players simulate the time it takes by stating each separate action. For example: "I pick up board 1 and place it between the starting point and stone D" would be 1 round. "I pick up board 2 and walk to stone D" would be another. Picking up a board, setting down a board, and walking across a board are all move-equivalent actions. A PC can take two move-equivalent actions in a round.

DM NOTES

The two *gloves of storing* are red herrings; neither is needed to complete the scenario. (In fact, the letters on the gloves stand for "It Just Doesn't Matter" and "This Has No Bearing.")

The homunculus is stored in the right glove, and the *ring of spell storing* is in the left. The *endure elements (fire)* spell has no real effect on the scenario, for anyone falling into the "lava" submerges below the surface and is declared "dead" by drowning, if not by burning. Naturally, the "pool of lava" is just an illusion; any PC falling through the illusory lava lands on a cushion of soft sand, taking no damage.

PCs with good Jump checks can leap from pillar to pillar. The first jump can be taken as a running long jump, while the others would be standing long jumps. Landing on a pillar after such a jump should require a Balance check (DC 20) to avoid falling in the lava.

Creature: If the PCs release the homunculus, it attacks, biting each PC in turn in an effort to put



them to sleep with its venom. Note that PCs who succumb to the sleep venom might end up snoozing through the rest of the scenario!

Unlike most scenarios, which feature *polymorphed* guild wizards as part of the scenario, this is a real homunculus. It belongs to Mercurio, and he can order it to desist at any time. The homunculus breaks off from combat and flies away if it takes any damage.

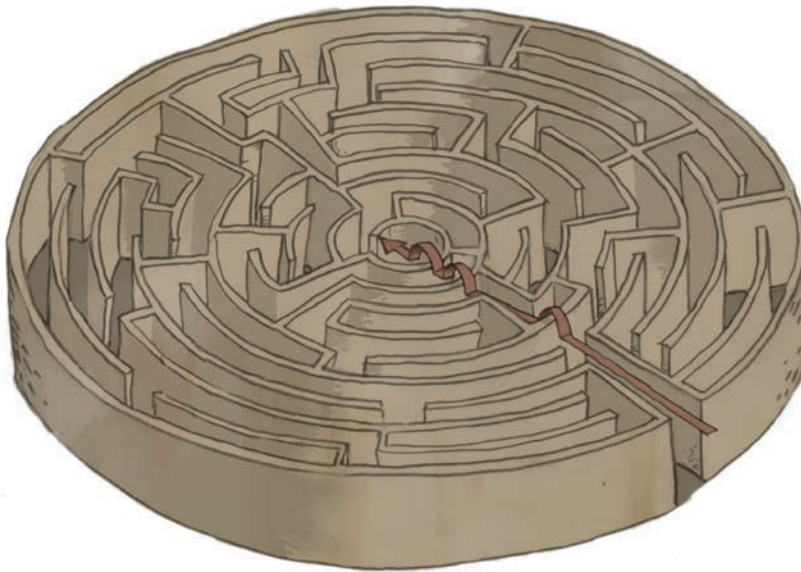
➤ **Homunculus:** hp 11; *Monster Manual* 120.

If the PCs attack and kill the homunculus, Mercurio takes 2d10 points of damage (and probably curses to himself at the loss of a week's work), but he's of high enough level that this is merely an inconvenience. Once the PCs move on to the next scenario and before the next competing team starts scenario #7, Mercurio quaffs a curative potion or two and "loads" another homunculus in the *glove of storing*.

SCENARIO #8: ASPHYXIA TE

You are greeted by Parnival, the guild cleric proctoring the next scenario. He offers each of you a drink of water, filling four glass mugs from a rain barrel. "This next scenario challenges your ability

SCENARIO 8: SOLUTION



to navigate a maze," he says. "The good news is that you'll get to see the layout ahead of time." He removes a small cloth from the wall and drops it on the floor to reveal a painted diagram of a circular maze. "The bad news is that you can't take it with you, so you'll have to memorize the route you wish to take ahead of time. To further complicate matters, at the center of the maze is an unstoppered *eversmoking bottle*, which has caused smoke to cover the central area of the maze, as shaded on the map. Here is the stopper. You need only place it back on the bottle, say the command word 'begone,' and exit through the door at the center of the maze. There is no illumination within the maze, so here are two *everburning torches*. You have 15 minutes to complete this scenario. Begin!"

While there is a 20-foot-high ceiling in this area, the walls of the maze are only 10 feet high, allowing the smoke from the *eversmoking bottle* to spill out in the shaded area of the map. Allow the PCs a Spot check (DC 12) to notice the height of the walls in proportion to the ceiling if they don't ask about it (it's something the characters would notice, but not something many players might think to ask about).

Important Note: Once the PCs enter the maze, take the scenario map away from the players.

SCORING

10 points per PC who makes it through the door in the center of the maze by the end of the time limit.

SOLUTION

The PCs rip the cloth into fourths, creating four handkerchief-sized scraps. They dip their cloths into

the water, wring it out, and study the maze diagram.

After entering the maze, the PCs go straight until they hit the first wall. Then, rather than try to navigate the maze by memory (and using the aphorism "the shortest path between two points is a straight line"), they climb over the walls in their way.

The PCs can toss one of their *everburning torches* over the first wall (to provide illumination on the other side), then boost one another up and over that wall before continuing in a straight line until the next wall. They repeat the procedure, and then again with the wall immediately beyond that one, entering the central chamber. Once there, they locate the *eversmoking bottle* and seal it with the stopper.

THE HINT

"You'll breathe easier through a wet filter."

TIME CONSTRAINTS

When the PCs navigate the maze, you should give the players a description of what their PCs see and a list of their options. Refrain from providing cardinal directions like "north" or "south," referring only to "right," "left," and "straight." This not only puts the onus of figuring out where the PCs are on the players, but the time it takes for you to verbalize their options helps simulate the length of time it takes for the PCs to actually navigate the maze. A short example follows (the example assumes the PCs have tried to memorize their way through the maze instead of climbing over the walls):

DM: "You proceed straight ahead for several paces, then can either turn left or continue going straight."

Player: "We turn left."

DM: "You turn left and follow a corridor that curves slightly to the right. After a time, you can turn left or continue going straight."

Player (forgetting the correct route): "We go straight."

DM: "You continue on, and the corridor turns right, then right again. After continuing on a short distance, it comes to a dead end."

While by no means a perfect system, the central portion of the maze has been divided up into sections (you really can't call them "squares") by red

lines. Assume each red section is the equivalent of a 5-foot square for movement purposes. This makes it easier for you to judge when the PCs must make their smoke inhalation saving throws (see “DM Notes” below).

If the PCs begin climbing the walls, keep track of the number of checks they make to monitor the time. It is recommended that once the PCs finish studying the map and head into the maze, you begin initiative, with all the PCs going at the same time. This will enable you to accurately keep track of elapsed time as the PCs make their way through the scenario.

DM NOTES

Normally, a PC must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) each round she breathes heavy smoke; the DC increases by +1 each additional round. (See the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide*, page 89, under “Smoke.”) If the PCs are holding wet cloths over their faces, they gain a +4 circumstance bonus to their saves. A PC who chokes for 2 consecutive rounds takes 1d6 points of subdual damage. Once a PC has taken more subdual damage than she has hit points, she falls unconscious. Note that a PC can hold her breath (for a number of rounds equal to her Constitution score, and for more rounds after that time has expired if she makes successful Fortitude saves) when entering the smoke to delay having to make saves to prevent smoke inhalation (see “The Drowning Rule” on page 85 of the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide*). But once a character fails a Fortitude save, instead of beginning to drown, she must start making saving throws to prevent smoke inhalation.

Climbing over a wall requires a Climb skill check (DC 15). Note that two PCs can use the Aid Another action to help a climber. If one character has already climbed to the top of the wall (which is 1 foot wide—point this out when the first PC reaches the top of the wall) and is leaning down to help someone below, as many as three PCs can use the Aid Another action. Note that a PC hanging over the edge of a 10-foot wall and dropping to the ground takes no damage. The same is true for anyone who makes a successful Jump or Tumble check (DC 15) to reduce the damage, but anyone foolish enough to leap from the top of a 10-foot-high wall takes the standard 1d6 points of subdual damage.

Note that nimble PCs can attempt Jump and Balance checks to leap from wall top to wall top. This doesn't prevent smoke inhalation, but it can provide PCs with darkvision a good “lay of the land” outside the smoke-filled portion of the maze. Calculate Jump checks based on distance (see the Jump skill description in the *Player's Handbook*), and require leaping PCs to make a Balance check

(DC 20) to avoid falling off the wall after making a landing. PCs who fall take the normal 1d6 points of subdual damage. Jumping into the smoke is possible, though difficult, for PCs who think they've memorized the layout of the maze. If a PC attempts such a feat, impose a –10 circumstance penalty to the Jump and Balance checks to represent the difficulty in gauging distance correctly when effectively blind.

Once inside the central area, a PC can find the *eversmoking bottle* with a successful Search check (DC 12). Once the bottle is stoppered, the smoke dissipates within 10 rounds. The door out of the maze is magically locked, but it opens to the command word “begone” (said when the *eversmoking bottle* is stoppered). On the other side of the door is a set of stairs leading up to the next scenario.

Even if two PCs succumb to smoke inhalation, they still earn their 10 points for the scenario if the other two PCs can drag them out of the door after stoppering the *eversmoking bottle*. This encourages teamwork among the group members.

If the PCs wind up lost in the maze or succumb to the smoke, they are rescued by guild clerics and escorted to the door at the center of the maze. Any subdual damage is healed by the clerics so the PCs can immediately proceed to the next scenario.

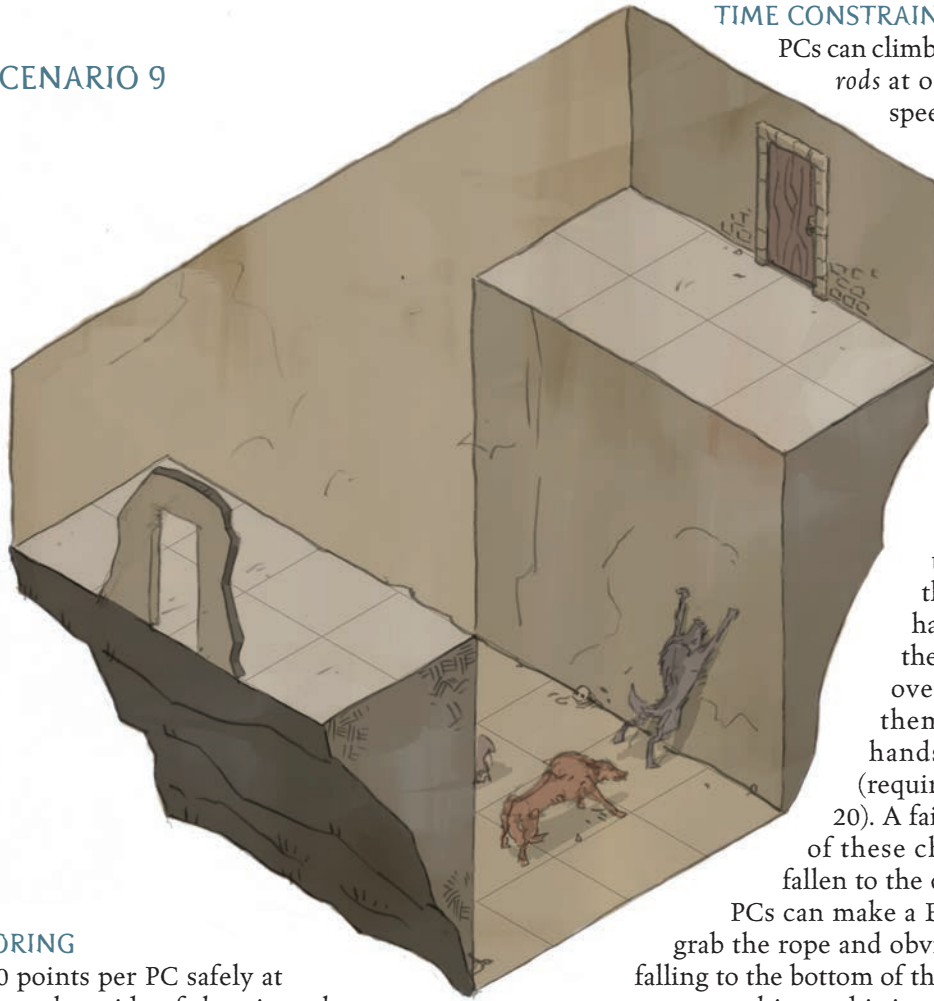
SCENARIO #9: CANINE CROSSING

You are met by Lydric, the guild cleric in charge of the ninth scenario. He leads you to one side of a large pit 20 feet deep, 20 feet wide, and 20 feet long. There are three vicious dire wolves in the bottom of the pit, gnawing on some humanoid bones.

“Your task this time is simple,” says Lydric. “You need only cross the pit without being savaged by the dire wolves. Anyone attacked by them will immediately be declared dead. To aid you in accomplishing your goal, here is some starting equipment: One 12-foot length of rope, one *immovable rod*, and a *ring of spell storing* holding an *invisibility to animals* spell. Please note that there are two other items of possible usefulness: another *immovable rod* and another 12-foot stretch of rope. Unfortunately, you'll find the second *rod* down with the wolves, and the second rope on the far side of the pit. Please note the smoothness of the walls; climbing them is simply not possible. Good luck to you!”

The starting area is only as wide as the pit. The entire area is lit by *continual flame* spells. The ceiling is 10 feet above the floor of the starting area and 30 feet above the floor of the pit.

SCENARIO 9



TIME CONSTRAINT

PCs can climb up a wall using *immovable rods* at one-quarter their normal speed. They cross the rope at half their normal speed.

Again, it is helpful to break into initiative once the actual actions start, keeping track of elapsed time accordingly.

DM NOTES

Crossing the rope can be done several ways. PCs can opt to make a Strength check (DC 10) to pull themselves along the rope (either hand-over-hand while they hang from the rope, or by hooking a leg over the rope and pulling themselves along with their hands), or tightrope across it (requiring a Balance check, DC 20). A failure by 5 or more on any of these checks means the PC has fallen to the dire wolves below. Falling

PCs can make a Balance check (DC 18) to grab the rope and obviate such a disaster. A PC falling to the bottom of the pit has a *feather fall* spell cast upon him and is immediately declared “dead” (savaged by the wolves). Fortunately, the dire wolves are *polymorphed* guild wizards and won’t actually harm the fallen contestants. A PC under the effects of the *invisibility to animals* spell is not automatically detected but takes 1d6 points of subdual damage and 1d6 points of regular damage from the fall; guild wizards keep track of this character and save their *feather fall* spells for those PCs not protected.

If more than one PC tries crossing the rope at the same time, a PC holding the end of the rope must succeed at a Strength check (DC 20 if there are two people on the rope, DC 25 if there are three) or have the rope slip from her grasp. Any PCs on the rope fall to the wolves below and are declared dead (again, excluding the PC protected by the *invisibility to animals* spell).

PCs might also attempt to Jump the pit partway, using the first *rod* to halt their fall (a Strength check against DC 5 is required to avoid losing one’s grip on the *rod*). They can then attach the first length of rope to the *rod*, and swing back and forth until they reach the other side (provided they jumped far enough). In this case, assume it takes 2 minutes for the last three

SCORING

10 points per PC safely at the other side of the pit at the end of the 15-minute time limit.

SOLUTION

The PC with the *ring of spell storing* casts *invisibility to animals* upon herself or another PC (designated PC #1, regardless). PC #1 takes the *immovable rod* and is lowered into the pit with the rope. The rope is dropped into the pit with her. She retrieves the second *immovable rod* and uses it and the first *immovable rod* to climb up the wall on the far side of the pit. She then retrieves the other 12-foot length of rope, ties both ropes together, and ties one end of it to the middle of an *immovable rod*. She then throws that end of the rope back to the other PCs, holding on to the other end of the rope as she does so. The PCs in the starting area activate the *immovable rod* at arm’s length over the pit, then take turns climbing across the rope while PC #1 anchors the other end with the second *immovable rod*.

THE HINT

“You can climb the wall with the rods.”

SCENARIO 10

PCs to swing across one at a time. If the PCs don't tie themselves to the rope, they need to make a Strength check (DC 5) to hold on while swinging.

SCENARIO #10: DEATH POTENTIAL

At last, the final scenario is upon you! "I'm so glad you've made it this far," says Marilyssa, the guild cleric proctoring the last scenario. She looks at your score sheet, then hands it to you.

At this time, give the players the score sheet with their current scores recorded. Once each player has seen the team's scores, Marilyssa begins describing the last scenario:

"You need only cross the narrow bridge spanning the cliff you see before you, puzzle out the magic lock that seals the door in the cliff face opposite us, and exit through it. If you make it, you'll find a set of stairs that leads to the cheering crowd above. If not . . . well, come with me."

Marilyssa leads you to the edge of the cliff. "Believe it or not, we've had complaints about our scenarios not being dangerous enough. I'm sure you've noticed the artificial nature of most of the threats you've faced so far. I suppose there's a case to be made about not putting forth your best effort if you know that no harm will befall you if you fail, but frankly, I'd rather err on the side of caution.

"Nonetheless, it was decided that this last scenario should present some real danger. Therefore, in the waters below swims a hybrid creature: part bloodsucking tick, part tadpole. We call him a tickpole. I'd caution you to keep your footing. Anyone falling into the water will be attacked and probably devoured. I'm prohibited from intervening; if you fall in, you're on your own, although we will attempt to restore the lives of those who signed up for our *raise dead* or *resurrection* offers." She looks down sadly. "There's already been one . . . incident. You don't have to continue with this; just say the word and we'll quit right here."

If the PCs opt not to continue, they earn no points for this scenario. Tally the totals earned for the first nine scenarios and continue with "Concluding the Adventure" below. If they choose to go through Scenario #10, read or paraphrase the following:

"Well then," says Marilyssa, "The mechanics of the lock ahead are simple: There are ten rods, labeled 1



through 10, that must be inserted into the appropriate holes for the door to open. It's up to you to figure out which rods go into which holes, but there isn't much room on the bridge, so you might want to examine the door one at a time. Once the rods are in place, put your hand on the plate on the right of the door. If you've placed the rods correctly, the door will open. If you haven't . . . well, I hope you're good swimmers. If you're ready, you may begin."

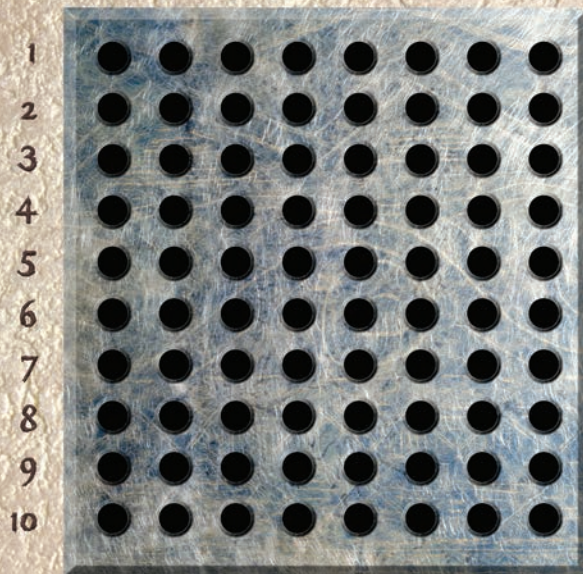
The "bridge" crossing the water is 10 feet long but only 2 feet wide. The water is 10 feet below the level of the door and at least 10 feet deep. The tickpole swims back and forth across the length of the pool like a hungry tiger pacing in a cage. Each metal rod is 4 inches long and half an inch thick.

SCORING

10 points per PC who makes it through the door within the time limit.

SCENARIO 10: PLAYER'S HANDOUT

Beware of TICKPOLE



ELF HIVE = L-5
SEASICK SAILORS = C-6
PIECE OF AN EGGSHELL = P-7
ASPHYXIATE = C-8
CANINE CROSSING = K-9
DEATH POTENTIAL = O-10

The numbers correspond with the numbers on the rods, while the letters refer to the letters in the word "TICKPOLE" on the warning sign. The ten rods must be placed as shown in the DM's diagram.

THE HINT

"Your score sheet holds the answer to the puzzle."

DM NOTES

Once a PC places all ten rods into holes, he can attempt to activate the opening mechanism on the door by placing a hand on the plate. If the rods are in the correct sequence, the door swings inward and the PCs can exit. If any rod is in the wrong hole, the bridge instantly vanishes. (Although illusion magic makes it look like a plank of wood, it's really a narrow energy field similar to a *wall of force*.) Any PCs standing on the bridge at that time fall into the water and are attacked by the tickpole. While the tickpole is in fact a *polymorphed* guild wizard, rather than just simply having Marilyssa declare the PC dead for the rest of the scenario, hidden guild illusionists

SOLUTION

The solution is derived by looking at the titles of the ten scenarios on the PCs' score sheet. Each scenario title has the solution phonetically imbedded in it, as follows:

CHESS, ANYONE? = E-1

HELL TO PAY = L-2

ARE THOSE TEETH REAL? = T-3

EYE FOR AN EYE = I-4

TABLE 1: TEAM SCORES BY SCENARIO

TEAM NAME	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Griffons	30	40	30	30	40	40	40	40	40	20	350
Amazons*	40	40	40	20	40	40	40	0	40	40	340
Dangerseekers	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	0	30	20	330
Four Horsemen*	40	20	40	40	30	0	40	40	40	20	310
Clan of the Claw*	40	20	20	30	40	20	20	40	40	30	300
Shieldbreakers*	40	40	20	40	40	0	40	40	30	0	290
Orcbusters	40	20	40	40	40	0	40	10	40	5	275
The Fearless Four*	30	30	30	30	40	10	30	0	40	20	260
Team Pegasus*	40	20	30	40	40	0	40	0	40	0	250
Alleycats*	40	20	30	40	40	10	20	0	40	0	240
Burly Musclemen*	0	20	30	30	40	0	40	0	40	5	205
Heartbreakers	40	0	20	30	40	0	20	0	10	0	160
Devil Dogs	0	40	30	20	0	0	10	40	0	0	140
Bisquayne's Final Army*	40	0	10	10	30	0	0	30	0	0	120

*These teams were part of the betting pool.

SCORE SHEET

TEAM NAME: _____

	SCENARIO	PC #1	PC #2	PC #3	PC #4	TOTAL
#1	CHESS, ANYONE?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
#2	HELL TO PAY	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
#3	ARE THOSE TEETH REAL?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
#4	EYE FOR AN EYE	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
#5	ELF HIVE	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
#6	SEASICK SAILORS	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
#7	PIECE OF AN EGGSHELL	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
#8	ASPHYXIATE	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
#9	CANINE CROSSING	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
#10	DEATH POTENTIAL	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
	TOTAL	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

create a convincing display of the fallen PCs being ripped to pieces by the guard-beast. (Meanwhile, the real PCs are escorted out of the pool via a hidden underwater exit point.) Marilyssa, for her part, looks anguished at the PCs' apparent demise. One round after blinking out of existence, the bridge reforms and is ready for the next attempt.

Make sure you point out that there is no ledge for the PCs to stand on, so whoever is working on the lock is also standing on the bridge. The door is set right into a tall cliff face 80 feet high.

Because of the nature of the phonetics involved, the following are also accepted locations for the rods: **E-3** instead of **T-3**; **E-6** instead of **C-6**; **E-7** instead of **P-7**; and **E-8** instead of **C-8**.

Allow PCs a make a Decipher Script check (DC 20) to realize that the names of the events sound funny—almost as if there are more words within the titles. If one of the PCs says the name of an event aloud in any context, allow the other characters a Listen check (DC 20) to receive the same clue.

CONCLUSION

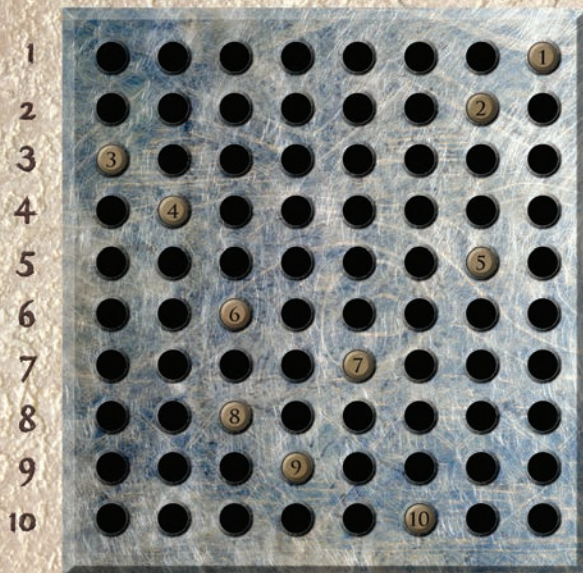
Once the PCs have finished all ten scenarios, their scores are tallied. To compare their results with those of the other teams, consult Table 1.

The characters are escorted to a tent similar to the one where they first gathered. There, they can meet the members of the other teams, who press the PCs for information on how they did. Common questions include, "Did anyone get 'killed' during the scenarios, and if so, how many times?" (The current record is held by Bisquayne, who died no less than four times during the scenarios—twice killed by his own disgusted party members.) The questions continue as everyone tries to gauge their success against that of the PCs. As more teams finish every 15 minutes, the questions and conversation begin again.

A guild representative reminds the PCs that they are free to roam the area until all the contestants have finished the contest. Vendors of all types sell their wares from their carts, and there are guild exhibits set up in tents all along the way. They are warned not to discuss the specifics of the scenarios with anyone other than the competitors who have likewise finished.

SCENARIO 10: SOLUTION

Beware of TICKPOLE



At long last, all the teams make it through the scenarios, and everyone is ushered outside to a waiting audience, eager to hear the results of the contest. The contestants are arranged in a semicircle around a wooden platform. Up to the platform steps Farthingale, the rotund guildmaster of the Adventurers Guild. He says a few opening remarks praising the prowess of this year's competitors, and then begins the awards ceremony. The third place team is called up first, followed by the second place team. The members of the second and third place teams each receive brass medals that note their place in the contest over an engraving of the Adventurers Guild crest. The team's name and the date is also etched into each medallion. Each medal is worth about 1 gp.

Finally, the overall winning team is announced. As Farthingale calls the team up to the stand, applause rips through the audience as they cheer for the winners. The members of the winning team each receive a brass tickpole trophy engraved with their names, their team name, year, and "Challenge of Champions IV" along with the Adventurers Guild crest. It's worth 50 gp. Each member of the winning team also receive a lifetime membership into the Adventurers Guild.

However, there are other, less tangible benefits to having participated in the fourth annual Challenge of Champions. Since the Adventurers Guild keeps

records of everyone who enters the contest, those who did particularly well might be asked to join future guild expeditions. (This can be an easy way to draw the PCs into further adventures.) In addition, other competitors might end up as close friends, cohorts, or full-fledged party members (or hated rivals, which might be more fun) as a result of their meeting with the PCs during the contest.

The contest officially concludes, and the celebration begins in earnest. Vast amounts of food and drink are consumed, musicians and entertainers are kept busy until the wee hours of the night, and the Thieves' Guild is kept hard at work overseeing the payment of the numerous bets that were placed on the various competitors. Amid all of the carousing, Farthingale is overheard to comment to one of his associates, "Whew! These contests are getting harder and harder to come up with!"

EXPERIENCE AWARDS

The "Challenge of Champions" series is a bit different from most adventures in that the scenarios are artificial; the PCs are in no real danger, no matter what the guild illusionists would have them believe. In addition, there is very little treasure compared to standard D&D adventures. An attempt has been made to make the scenarios equally challenging to PCs of any level, as successfully completing a scenario's goal depends more upon player creativity than PC combat abilities or spell repertoire. Thus, rather than assess Encounter Levels (ELs) to each scenario and base the PCs' earned XPs on them, it's suggested that you simply multiply each PC's final score by 10 and award that many XPs. Thus, a PC with a perfect score of 100 gains 1,000 XPs for the experience of having braved the fourth annual Challenge of Champions. Ω

Johnathan M. Richards is an Air Force Major currently stationed at Fort Meade in Maryland. He is perhaps best known in the RPG community for his Monster Hunters "Ecology" articles in DRAGON Magazine. This is his first appearance in DUNGEON since it converted to 3rd Edition.