

Setting up a Proper Dungeon

D. H. Boggs, June 2013

Part I – What for?

In the storied history of D&D, the names of Greyhawk, Blackmoor, and the Jakallan underworld cast long shadows. These are the great campaign dungeons upon which the game was built and to this day are pointed to as examples of the megadungeon concept, an ever-present underworld challenge that a party of adventurers can always go back to when other avenues have become tiresome or unproductive. Around these depths, many believe, the early campaign worlds revolved and evolved. The rules of OD&D, Holmes D&D, and Moldvay D&D, all point towards such dungeons as the intended, default setting which will be the most common source of adventure and experience for a given group of players. As far back as 1975 in an article in the European fanzine *Europa 6*, Gary Gygax listed "The location of the dungeon where most adventures will take place;"(p18), as the 3rd step of things one must create when setting up a D&D campaign. Game designer Luke Crane of *Burning Wheel*™ fame observed, "...while the original designers may have wanted an inclusive and expansive design, their best rules focused on underground exploration and stealing treasure.My assertion is that none of those rules were as well-designed or well-supported as those for the core activity of dungeon crawling." (<https://plus.google.com/111266966448135449970/posts/Q8qRhCw7az5120>)

While I don't fully agree with Mr. Crane, there is an undeniable emphasis on dungeoneering in D&D. It is somewhat of a puzzle then, that when TSR began to publish adventure "modules", they were nothing like the dungeons described in the rules. Throughout the 1970's and 80's, one adventure module followed another, yet they were more like wilderness lair adventures than a campaign dungeon. A wilderness lair adventure will typically be a location with a single theme – a bandits den, a wizards tower, etc., with a limited area to explore and a single goal, such as freeing a princess or discovering a lost mine, capable of occupying the attention of only a game session or two. Adventures like B1, *In Search of the Unknown*, or C1 *The Hidden Shrine of Tamoachan*, are places for the players to visit, loot, and leave. These adventures from TSR and contemporaries don't invite the players to return again and again and they lack another key feature of the campaign dungeon; namely they don't expect different characters of different levels to go to or to avoid levels of the dungeon (more on this below). The expectation underlying those old modules is that a single band of adventurers will enter the dungeon (if there is one) and press on until the bad guy is vanquished or some other goal achieved. True, TSR did publish *Dungeon Geomorphs*; (maps mostly) and *Monster & Treasure Assortments*, which together could be used to create a random dungeon with a little work, but it certainly doesn't present a finished example ready for play.

It has often been observed that those such as myself who came to the game when adventure modules were already available, learned the game as much from the modules as from the rules. B2 *The Caves of Chaos* which came with my boxed set of Moldvay Basic is a series of semi-distinct wilderness lairs and no dungeon at all. Most of the other modules of the era do have a dungeon level or two, but these are still very much in the wilderness lair model, that is as a place to raid once or twice until some mission objective has been achieved, ending its' adventure potential. Even *The Temple of Elemental Evil*, which would seem to be a perfect opportunity to present a campaign style dungeon, doesn't veer from the wilderness lair paradigm. It is just a little bigger – though at only 4 levels deep, not that much bigger and otherwise fairly typical as a lair to be raided and conquered in a session or three. Mention should also be made of Judges Guilds' *Caverns of Thracia*, but again it is only 4 levels deep, not the 6+ levels we see repeatedly recommended in the rules and section illustrations. Wee Warriors *Palace of the Vampire Queen*, considered by many to be the first published adventure module, has 5 dungeon levels, almost

making the 6 level minimum, and was for a time sold through TSR, but was (and remains) a very rare product from an obscure company.

B3, *The Lost City* is a notable and singular exception for TSR. It has the intent and potential to be a true campaign dungeon, provided the Dungeon Master actually fills out the "optional" levels and areas left intentionally blank. Despite this do it yourself aspect, B3 is at least something representing a dungeon like those described in the rules. The other obvious exception to the dearth of true campaign dungeons is the well known Blackmoor dungeon, published in 1977 by Judges Guild with excellent and easily expanded maps down to 10th level. However, Blackmoor dungeon suffers greatly from its' very brief and often cryptic key, sometimes at odds with the notes on the maps, and the almost total lack of any clear directions on lining up it's multiple entrances and stairways. The Key is further confused in that the first 6 levels were stocked in 1976 and the next 4 are from the pre D&D era circa 1972. None of these issues are insurmountable problems for an experienced and resourceful DM, but they are certainly less than ideal features for an exemplary model of a campaign dungeon.

Surveying the published TSR era material, there simply isn't any good model of a proper, by-the-book dungeon.

You might think this is all just interesting trivia, but there are some valid reasons to think otherwise; reasons that go to the heart of the games' design. Now I'm not going to say there is a right way or wrong way to play the game, but I will say that there is value in seeing the game unfold as the designers originally envisioned, and not perhaps, in the flash bang direction marketing took it. I think this is largely true of any game. There are literally thousands of variant versions of chess, for example, but few would argue against the idea that it is valuable to know how to play standard chess before trying various chess variants. By the same token, for a player to make legitimate claims and comments regarding the rules of chess, one would expect them to be conversant with the standard form and not base their critiques and preferences solely on experience with a variant.

The difference between campaigns built from TSR and TSR approved adventure modules and those campaigns built around a deep multilevel dungeon may not seem very apparent to those of us weened on modules, perhaps to the point of denying any distinction at all. Nevertheless there is a real difference. Campaign dungeons as described in the rules have a structure and content intended to mesh with character growth and class balance.

Consider the rules as given in original D&D (1974 – hereafter "OD&D"). We are given instructions for what level of monster should be encountered at a given depth, and, perhaps most importantly, given instructions on how much treasure should be there. Following these instructions will result in the player characters growing in levels at a particular rate and acquiring certain types of items at a particular rate, especially magic items. Not following these rules will result in – something else. This is especially true as regards the acquisition of magic items and the type acquired, which can and will have a very big impact on character abilities and growth. It depends on the Gamemaster of course, but chances are the ad hoc campaign will tend a lot more toward Monty Hall goodies divy'd out to all characters in a manner far different than the underlying character class designs were anticipating. Consider this quote from Gary Gygax found in the *Dungeon Masters Guide*, "...the MAGIC ITEMS table is weighted towards results which balance the game. Potions, scrolls, arms and armor are plentiful....this is done in order to keep magic-users from totally dominating play...what they gain from the table will typically be used up and discarded {while items for fighters are permanent}....This random determination table needs no adjustment, because

of it's weighting, and weighting of the MAGIC ITEMS table....this is carefully planned so as to prevent imbalance in the game." (1979: 120, 121)

The treasure tables Gygax refers to in AD&D are not greatly changed from those in OD&D. So we see that treasure distribution is intended by design to go hand in hand with character growth. The hodge-podge of goodies found in a typical module adventure can result in skewed classes. In particular, the oft heard complaint that Fighters are underpowered relative to the other classes arguably is a direct result of not sticking to this facet of the rules. The rules given for the creation of the campaign Dungeon, on the other hand, distribute treasure and magic in conformity with the design expectations of character growth and keep the Fighter class from being overshadowed by spellcasters.

Part II Creating the Thing.

To build a campaign dungeon as intended we have to return to the heart of the game's design and the original Dungeons and Dragons rules – mostly, with some clarification and commentary derived from some related 1970's era material where relevant. One would think this is a straightforward exercise, but not quite.

First, comes the maps for at least the 6 level minimum recommended in the rules and shown in the section drawings of various editions. Here's a little secret – the maps don't really matter. Sure you should have cool features and a few curve balls, hidden doors, maze like passages, etc. Ultimately though, the maps should have at least a dozen or two rooms per level and be easily expandable. Exactly how the rooms and corridors are laid out isn't a game maker or breaker.

The next thing to do is create a key; that is to write a number in each significant location space on the map and write a corresponding number in a notebook. A method used by TSR that works well as long as there are less than 100 rooms on a level is to key by the hundreds, so that first level rooms are all 100's, 2nd level all 200's and so forth. All that really matters is that a numbering system is used that will be easy to follow during the game, whatever system that may be.

The referee must then place the lairs of any special inhabitants, but only if the dungeon adventure features them. Special placements are only needed for pre-designed scenarios, such as hunting down the vampire queen who terrorizes the locals, or searching out cultists who kidnapped the heir to the kingdom, etc. Once any special lairs have been placed, the remaining dungeon can be stocked. Here again we face some confusion, as different guidelines are given in different published sources. Since this article is about sticking to the expectation behind the design of the rules, we will only look at the initial guidelines published for the original game by its' authors, Gygax and Arneson.

By the book, the method is to use a d6 as follows. "...for every room or space not already allocated. A roll of a 1 or 2 indicates that there is some monster there." (*Underworld & Wilderness Adventure*, 1974:7) That means 1/3 of the rooms on every level of the dungeon will have a monster. That's perfectly fine, but there is a second method some may like better from Arneson's notes in the First Fantasy Campaign (1977:44). Again using a d6, but increasing the chance of an inhabited room with dungeon depth, as shown in the table below:

Dungeon Levels	Die roll Indicating a Monster	Percentage Of Rooms Inhabited
1, 2	1	17%
3 – 6	2,3	33%
7+	4-6	50%

So Arneson's chart has the same $1/3^{\text{rd}}$ of the rooms occupied by a monster as the standard rules, but only for the mid range dungeon levels of 3 to 6. Deeper levels are more densely occupied while the upper two levels are much more barren. I for one, prefer this more nuanced approach, but it's entirely a matter of preference.

Once the method of determining the percentage chance of occupation is chosen, the next step is to roll for each room in the dungeon. Usually, I just mark an "m" for monster in pencil on the room key. At this point the referee is just noting which rooms are occupied and which aren't.

After rolling for each keyed entry, the next step is to count the occupied rooms and calculate the percentage of the total. In theory it should equal the desired percent – 33% by the book. If the dice are having an off day, producing numbers way off the expected frequency, the referee should figure out how many occupied rooms are needed and add or subtract spaces to get the right amount. For example, if dungeon level 4 has 100 rooms and the dice only produce 25 occupied with a monster, another 8 rooms should be marked as occupied to achieve the desired $1/3$ frequency.

Part III Choosing the monsters

Next we move to adding in the bad guys, and here is where we begin to run into snags in the process. The basic idea is "successive levels, ...of course, should be progressively more dangerous and difficult." (*Underworld and Wilderness Adventure*, 1974:6) With each level down, tougher monsters with more hit dice become more common. How that principle should work is implied, for example in calculating experience points. "Gains in experience points will be relative; thus an 8th level Magic-User operating on the 5th dungeon level would be awarded 5/8 experience." (*Men and Magic*, 1974:18) Notice that the dungeon level is presumed to indicate its' difficulty, such that the same 8th level magic user "operating" on the 8th level of the dungeon would receive a full experience point award, because the magic-user would be facing opponents of a strength equal to the characters' (more on this equality below).

Taking these passages together, the design principle seems fairly straightforward: the level of the average monster encountered on any given dungeon level, should equal the dungeon level number. So, dungeon level 3 should have mostly "level" 3 monsters, dungeon level 4 should have mostly level 4 monsters, and so forth. Page 18 of *Men and Magic* further explains "monster level" as the monsters' Hit Dice rounded up, meaning, in our level 3 case, monsters whose Hit Dice range from 2+x to 3. A Similar definition is again given in the Sleep spell on page 23.

Okay, now let's bring into the discussion the actual table in OD&D that is supposed to be our guide for determining the level of monsters by dungeon level; the "MONSTER DETERMINATION AND LEVEL OF MONSTER MATRIX" on page 10 of U&WA. This table is supposed to be used both for wandering monsters and for random dungeon level stocking, but there are some caveats with using it.

By the book, the method is to roll a d6 for each occupied space of a given dungeon level and look on the table to see what level of monster is present. The next step is to turn to the series of 6 tables on page 10 and 11 that list 10 to 12 specific monsters by level. So, for example, under level 1 we find listings for such monsters as skeletons, centipedes, and bandits.

Unfortunately, several of the monsters listed have no description elsewhere in the original rule books, while others that are detailed in the books are missing from the tables. That shouldn't present too much of a problem, since a Dungeon Master could easily add to or swap the monsters listed for other monsters of the same monster level, if the "monster level" in the tables were the same as "monster levels" as determined by hit dice. But they aren't.

For example, all the monsters listed as being level 3 monsters in the tables on pages 10 and 11 of U&WA, ought to have 2+ to 3 hit dice in order to really be level 3 monsters. Some of the ten entries do have this expected hit dice range, but the table also lists Hero (HD 4), Swashbucklers (HD 5+ 1), and Ochre Jelly (HD 5), as being level 3 monsters. Also listed are giant snakes and giant spiders, monsters for which it is hard to know how many hit dice they have since they lack descriptions in the rulebooks.

What's happening here is a contradiction in how a monster level is defined – one is by somewhat arbitrary placement on an the lists of U&WA pages 10 and 11 dividing a selection of D&D monsters into 6 different "levels", and the other is levels determined by number of hit dice, per the instruction on page 18 of M&M. In the first instance, there is no guide nor any obvious pattern to how the monsters in the 6 monster level lists were chosen, making each level list nearly impossible to expand or change in any meaningfully consistent way. We could ignore these wonky monster level lists entirely, and just go by hit dice, but then the "MONSTER DETERMINATION AND LEVEL OF MONSTER MATRIX" table itself no longer functions as intended or covers the range of monsters it should. Using the table as written without the accompanying "monster level" lists on page 10 & 11 of U&WA will generate wild results, with no monsters of more than level 6 (5+ to 6 Hit Dice) no matter how many levels deep the dungeon goes. That means no purple worms, giants, trolls, vampires, or mature dragons, in your dungeon, ever. Of course, these monsters are found in the "monster level" lists. So. Clearly trying to use this table with new or customized monster lists based on the hit dice method has some serious limitations.

The only real option is to use the table as written with the monsters as given in U&WA, but that too has drawbacks. For one thing, few DM's would be content to use only the exact ten to twelve monsters listed for each level, and for another these tables will not produce dungeon levels that match the average monster level by hit dice, as the earlier quoted passage from the experience point description imply they should. If you just average the rolls on the "MONSTER DETERMINATION AND LEVEL OF MONSTER MATRIX" table, these results are obtained:

Level	Average Monster Level
Level 1	2.1
Level 2	3
Level 3	4
Level 4,5	4.5
Level 6,7	5.2
Level 8+	6

The level of monsters on the first 3 dungeon levels are level +1, and at dungeon level 6, the monster level actually drops below the dungeon level number

Averaging the HD per level of the listed monsters from the 6 "monster level" tables of U&WA produces this table:

Monster Level Table	Average Monster HD*	Monster Level by HD
Level 1	.7	1
Level 2	2	2
Level 3	3.5	4
Level 4	4.2	5
Level 5	6.17	7
Level 6	9.25	10

*For monsters lacking statistics, like giant hogs and giant snakes, I assumed their HD equaled the level they were listed under.

So, as an example, dungeon level 3, using the "MONSTER DETERMINATION AND LEVEL OF MONSTER MATRIX" will give call for an average of a level 4 monster, but a "level 4" monster, according to the accompanying monster level lists will have an average of 4.2 hit dice. This means that a 3rd level dungeon stocked with this table will have an average of monsters normally thought of as 5th level monsters (HD4+).

None of this is meant to stop Dungeon Masters from using the tables and lists in U&WA, but those who do need to realize what results they will get.

One might wonder if a reworked monster stocking table was created for the publication of AD&D, and the answer is yes. Buried on page 175 in Appendix C of the Dungeon Masters Guide is a d20 revision of the "MONSTER DETERMINATION AND LEVEL OF MONSTER MATRIX" table (1979:174) relabeled the

DUNGEON RANDOM MONSTER DETERMINATION MATRIX, followed again by lists of monsters by "level". This table and the accompanying monster level list is basically an expanded version of the OD&D procedure. Its major improvement is a method which the Dungeon Master can use to customize the monster "level" lists – which again are not based on the familiar hit dice method, but instead are defined by an experience point range into which they must fall. For example, a level 3 monster must be worth between 51 to 150 experience points, so the Dungeon Master can safely substitute any monster within the given xp range. Thus, AD&D presents a new and competing method of determining monster "level", which some referee's may find preferable, and could be reverse engineered for use with the OD&D table, if desired.

However it is worth noting that when the math is worked out for these AD&D tables, as I did for the OD&D tables, they still don't quite match average monster "hit dice level" with dungeon level, but the results are closer. Perhaps a more significant drawback is that the possibility of much more powerful "wild card" monsters on lesser dungeon levels is non-existent.

That lack of variation in the AD&D table brings us to another little secret to consider about monster level and dungeon levels. Hinted at in that passage from U&WA page 11, "If the level beneath the surface roughly corresponds with the level of the monster", is the expectation that while the average monster should usually be of the same level as the dungeon, there should also be some variation. Anecdotally, those old dungeons are said to have sometimes featured some wild encounters, such as the overpowered vampire Sir Fang wandering the upper levels of Blackmoor dungeon as shown in the 1976 Gencon version, published in *The First Fantasy Campaign*. Fortunately that same publication provides us with a guide to exactly how we can achieve this kind of a "wild card" variable in the dungeon. In a paragraph discussing some of the methods he used to employ for stocking the various dungeons in the duchy of Blackmoor, Arneson mentions that "...there was always a 1/6 chance that a higher (stronger) creature was present in any given room... also... a chance the weaker creatures would be present." (*First Fantasy Campaign*, 1977:30).

One sees the same sort of wide variation in the stocking tables of the 1977 *Monster & Treasure Assortment*. This odd duck of a publication comes at the twilight of the OD&D era as both Basic D&D and the first AD&D books were being released. However it does not strictly conform to any of the previous or upcoming rule sets. For example, it eschews the use of hit dice, and instead adopts a somewhat confusing "to hit AC9" statistic, and some of the monsters have other, unusual or unique characteristics. Nevertheless, the stocking tables follow the well established principle of tougher monsters as it goes down, with some occasional big differences. These notable variations include a Gelatinous Cube (HD 4) on dungeon level 1, werebears (HD 6) on dungeon level 2, trolls (HD 6+3) on dungeon level 3 or Elves (HD 1) or Green Slime (HD 2) on level 9, and so forth. The M&TA booklet doesn't give any specific guidelines on how this range of variation was generated, but it's clear that some chance of almost any level of monster was allowed when the tables were created.

Alright, given all of the above issues with the OD&D and AD&D monster stocking tables and their specialize way of defining monster "levels", Dungeon Masters may prefer to use the new table I made when preparing the *Champions of ZED* rules, adhering to the "dungeon level = average monster level" principle layed out in the OD&D text. I created the table to use the more familiar definition of monster level by HD and followed the dungeon level breakdown of the earlier version of the "MONSTER DETERMINATION AND LEVEL OF MONSTER MATRIX" table found in the *Beyond This Point be Dragons* (aka Dalluhn) D&D draft manuscript, which is only slightly different from the published table in U&WA. I

also added one “wildcard” column to conform with Arneson’s dictum of a 1/6th chance of virtually any level monster.

The Champions of ZED table:

Level Beneath the Surface	Dice Result (d6)					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	HD ≤1	HD ≤1	HD 1	HD 1-2	HD 1- 2	1D12+2 HD
2	HD 1	HD 1-2	HD 2	HD 2	HD 2-3	1D12+2 HD
3	HD 2	HD 2-3	HD 3	HD 3	HD 3-4	1D20 HD
4-5	HD 3-4	HD 4	HD 4-5	HD 4-5	HD 5	1D20 HD
6-8	HD 4-6	HD 5-6	HD 6-7	HD 6-8	HD 7-8	1D20 HD
9-11	HD 6-9	HD 8-9	HD 9-10	HD 10	HD 11	1D20 HD
12	HD10	1D4 +10 HD	1D4 +10 HD	1D4 +10 HD	1D4 +10 HD	1D10 HD
13+	1D6 +10 HD	1D6 +10 HD	1D6 +10 HD	1D6 +10 HD	1D6 +10 HD	1D10 HD

One of the benefits of this table is that it is no longer dependant on the monster level lists on U&WA p10 & 11, but can be used with any monster the referee likes, simply by using monster HD. Of course, the CoZ table is just one possible way of getting the desired average monster level results and referees are encouraged to tweak as desired, or to use the D&D or AD&D tables if that’s really preferred.

In fact, for referees who may want something a little tougher, I’ll offer another table just as old school based - enter the DUNGEON! Tavis Allison wrote an excellent post on the *Mule Abides* blog where he has this to relate, “The Dungeon! board is grouped into six levels, with stairs indicating a change between levels. Each level has its own set of monster and treasure cards. On the sixth level, you may loot the the King’s riches, but fantastic wealth is guarded by equally potent monsters. Working out the appropriate ratio of risk to reward by level was clearly a priority for Megarry. ” (May 7, 2012)

The idea that Dave Megarry might have worked out and applied his own approach at a time when Gary and Dave seemed to just be winging it, set off sparks in my head. I set to work using the list of monster cards from 1975 version of the Dungeon! game, because this was the oldest set for which I had data, and it reportedly contains only a few variations from the original set, which should have only a negligible effect on the numbers. I assigned the hit dice as given in OD&D when known to the Dungeon! monster. Some of the Dungeon! critters don’t have OD&D stats (giant snakes, for example) or they are a range, such as 8-12 HD for giants. In these cases I picked an approximate HD by comparing the target numbers given in Dungeon! for this monster, with the target numbers of monsters with known HD in OD&D. This is also the reason for the one exception I made to the D&D stats with the Purple Worm, which in D&D is a 15 HD monster but which I counted as a 10 HD monster because the Dungeon! target numbers match closely to those of other 10 HD creatures.

When I worked it all up, I found an average increase of 1.85 HD per dungeon level. However this average is misleading. It is more accurate to treat the increase from level 1, to level 2 as a 1 HD increase and all others as a 2 HD increase. Ignoring level 1 yields an average of an even 2 HD per level for dungeon levels

2 through 6. (Interestingly, that is a progression that closely mirrors the average hit dice of the monster level tables of U&WA pages 10 and 11, as shown in the earlier table.)

These figures are no doubt a bit rough, but, I think, plenty close enough to determine the pattern of the average of 1 HD monsters for level 1, 2HD monsters for level 2, increasing by +2 HD for the average monster on all subsequent levels. Using this information, we can create a Megarry, Dungeon! style stocking table, complete with Arneson "wildcard" column, as follows:

Level Beneath the Surface	Dice Result (d6)					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	HD ≤1	HD ≤1	HD 1	HD 1-2	HD 1- 2	1D12+2 HD
2	HD 1	HD 1-2	HD 2	HD 2	HD 2-3	1D12+2 HD
3	HD 3-4	HD 4	HD 4	HD 4	HD 4-5	1D20 HD
4	HD 5-6	HD 6	HD 6	HD 6	HD 6-7	1D20 HD
5	HD 6-7	HD 7	HD 7	HD 7	HD 7-8	1D20 HD
6 -7	HD 7-8	HD 8	HD 8	HD 8	HD 8-9	1D20 HD
8-12	HD10	1D4 +10 HD	1D6 +10 HD	1D8 +10 HD	1D10 +10 HD	1D10 HD
13+	1D6 +10 HD	1D8 +10 HD	1D8 +10 HD	1D10 +10 HD	1D10 +10 HD	1D10 HD

Alright, so the aspiring dungeon creator has a number of choices of tables to use for monster stocking and ultimately it will be a matter of preference which to use. One consideration may be the planned depth of the dungeon, however. For a shallower dungeon, say one of only six levels deep, a less granular table such as the Dungeon! Style one given above or the U&WA "Monster Determination" table might be the best way to go. With a deeper dungeon, one of 10 or 12 or more levels, it may be better to consider a finer grained table such as the AD&D DUNGEON RANDOM MONSTER DETERMINATION MATRIX or the Champions of ZED one given earlier.

Once the Dungeon Master has settled on which monster level per dungeon level stocking table they prefer for their dungeon, the next step is to go back to the key and roll the monster level for each occupied room. Write down the monster level or monster hit dice in pencil on the key.

Part IV – Treasure.

Distribution of treasure is again not quite as straightforward as it at first would seem. The rule is to roll a d6 for each numbered space. If a monster is present, a result of 1-3 indicates treasure. If there is no monster, only a 1 indicates treasure. Simple enough. The problem is what treasure to place and how it relates to the monster in the room. Page 7 of U&WA gives a great table, increasing in wealth and magic

as the dungeon deepens. Although the table immediately follows the rule regarding rolls of 1 indicating unguarded treasure, its actual use is specified only as "To determine the kind of treasure" and might reasonably seem to be intended to be used for all treasure in the dungeon, not just unguarded treasures. If so the immediate question arises regarding whether or not this table then replaces the treasure tables given elsewhere as a monsters Treasure Type. Treasure types in OD&D are "Lair" treasures, found only in the monsters home, and may be wildly different from the treasure table on page 7. In the *Monster Manual* Gygax tells us, "The use of Treasure Type to determine the treasure guarded by a creature in a dungeon is not generally recommended." (1977:5)

At first blush that would seem to suggest that lair treasures, as indicated for Treasure Type have no place in the dungeon. However, one can immediately see how that doesn't make much sense. Old school dungeons sometimes had whole levels given over as the lair of a tribe of orcs or giants or ghouls. Even more telling, many the creatures given Treasure Types are almost always only found in dungeon lairs. For example, it is hard to see how the Treasure Type C of a minotaur is going to be anywhere other than in a dungeon labyrinth. In *Adventures in Fantasy*, Arneson tells us that within a dungeon "Each group...would have a lair, in which that group's loot (if any) would be located." (1979, book 1, page 21)

Taking a closer look at Gygax's statement from the *Monster Manual*, notice he refers to "a creature", not a group or lair. Some of the monsters placed on a level will surely be occupying a lair, as Arneson's statement tells us, while many others will be just passing through, or temporarily guarding some treasure, or something else, and we can safely assume that it is these out-of-lair travelers Gygax had in mind. Neither a half dozen hobgoblins hired by an evil high priest to guard a temple, nor a wererat hunting through a pile of refuse for food are going to have a lair treasure stashed nearby. If the creature encountered is not in it's normal den or a typical home for the creature type then of course it makes no sense for it to have a lair treasure.

Nevertheless there is still a chance that any given room in a dungeon could have a hidden treasure in it, a treasure that may be unguarded or that any monsters present may not even be aware of, and that is precisely what the U&WA treasure table is for. While the principle is perhaps not well explained in the rulebooks, the first TSR adventure module written as a teaching tool for beginning players and Dungeon Masters, *In Search of the Unknown*, makes the intent much clearer, "...quite a number of places will simply be empty, while others may hold a monster with no treasure, or, rarely, a treasure without a monster guarding it. In the latter instance, the unguarded treasure will likely be well-hidden (as indeed any treasure can be) or concealed to make the room appear empty. Finally, in some instances, a room may contain a monster (being in his lair) as well as a treasure he is guarding, either wittingly (if it is his trove) or unwittingly (if his appearance there was only coincidental)." (1976:24).

So, when setting up the distribution of treasure in a dungeon space, the first step is to simply mark on the key that there is a treasure present. Later, when the exact type of monster, if any are present, has been determined, the referee will then decide if the treasure is part of a lair trove as determined by Treasure Type. If the monster is not in a lair or the room is empty, then the treasure is probably hidden (and possibly trapped!) and its content should be determined using the "kind of treasure" table from page 7 of U&WA.

Part V – Choose the Monsters, Lairs, and Themes

Okay, so far our dungeon key tells us which rooms have monsters, what hit dice level they are, and whether there is a treasure present. Now, for each room occupied, it is time to pick a specific monster of the level indicated. To do this, it is really useful to have a list of all the monsters you are using in your campaign organized by hit dice and or level, depending on the method being used. If the dungeon master is using the monster level as determined by hit dice method per M&M page 18, then all the 1HD and/or 1HD+ monsters should be in one list, 2HD in another list, and so on. In other words, the referee should make their own list of monsters by level just like the monster level lists on page 10 and 11 of U&WA, but organized according to hit dice rather than into the 6 categories of OD&D or 10 categories of AD&D.

It's possible to roll dice and pick the dungeon inhabitants randomly off such lists, but I'd advise against it unless you want a nonsensical "funhouse" kind of gaming experience. Instead, it is time to be creative again.

Take a close look at the dungeon maps and your monster level list, and choose the monster from the list to fit. As you are doing this, decide which, if any, of these spaces are lairs and which are not. If several occupied rooms with monsters of a similar level are close together, consider creating a lair. For example, let's say a three rooms near each other on the first level of the dungeon are occupied by a 1 HD or less monster. The referee could choose to make each room part of an orc lair, perhaps even rearranging which rooms are occupied to better fit the lair. Now is a time to imagine encounters and make appropriate adjustments to occupied spaces, keeping in mind the need to adhere closely to the desired overall percentage of occupied spaces expected for the dungeon level.

Additional features of the map should also be taken into account when planning lairs. Spaces can be rearranged or redrawn as necessary. Many lair monsters will need a means of entering and exiting the dungeon not shared with other monsters, and the lair itself must obviously be sufficient in size for its' inhabitants. Also, as Arneson, advises in *Adventures in Fantasy*, "As a guideline there should be no more than 1-10 groups on a level of the Underground and probably no closer than 100' of passages (unobstructed) each with some egress to the outside unless they are not alive or a carrion eaters." (1979:26)

The process of choosing monsters for a dungeon level will often (but not always) go hand in hand with choosing a theme for the level. Gygax tells us that "Each level should have a central theme and some distinguishing feature...". (*Europa* 6-8, 1975:19) Themes can be either very specific or fairly general. Some themes may simply be a feature of the map itself, for example, a level dominated by pools, lakes, and underground streams, but in many cases the theme of a level will be the type of monsters present. For example, the theme of the first level may be that it is a haunted crypt of skeletons and zombies.

Note that up to now I have said nothing about the number of monsters in a given encounter. The fact is that the rule for what to do with monster numbers appears to have been in flux when the rules for creating dungeons were developed. Observe this note from *Monsters & Treasures* regarding the Number Appearing statistic "Referee's option: Increase or decrease according to party concerned (used primarily only for out-door encounters)." That's a very curious parenthetical comment considering a number of the monsters listed are dungeon monsters, rarely if ever found "out-doors". Giving encounter numbers for encounters that will never or almost never occur seems nonsensical. The comment is made more interesting still when compared to the corresponding statement from the earlier *Beyond This Point be*

Dragons D&D draft: “*Referee's option: Increase or decrease *numbers* according to *the number of adventurers in the party concerned*.” (Book I:8 italics mine) The notable difference here is that the draft says nothing about “out-door encounters” and makes that whole parenthetical statement in the final version seem to be a last minute change. However, we see that same principle of adjusting monster numbers to the size of the adventuring party in this now familiar passage from page 11 of U&WA, “If the level beneath the surface roughly corresponds with the level of the monster then the number of monsters will be based on a single creature, modified by type (that is Orcs and the like will be in groups) and the number of adventurers in the party.” The U&WA text here refers to wandering monsters, but the corresponding text in BTPbD (Book II:12,13) seems to refer to all dungeon monsters. Thus, through comparing these passages, a case can be made that the dungeon stocking rules were originally developed with the intention of not specifying pre-determined monster population sizes, adjusting instead to stronger or weaker numbers based upon the size of the adventuring party, but as D&D developed the idea was steadily dropped, perhaps for rules simplicity.

With this in mind, referees can choose to either specify exact numbers (3 ghouls in the room) or choose to leave it vague (the room has ghouls), as a matter of preference, and still feel confident they remain within the guidelines of the game. Personally, I like to specify the range of numbers possible (2-24 ghouls) in most cases but otherwise leave exact numbers up to the referee actually running the adventure. In that case, hit points for monster will be rolled when needed, as we see Gygax doing in this combat example from *The Strategic Review* “Round 2: Initiative goes to the Hero... There are 8 orcs which can be possibly hit. An 8-sided die is rolled to determine which have been struck. Assume a 3 and an 8 are rolled. Orcs #3 and #8 are diced for to determine their hit points, and they have 3 and 4 points respectively..” (Summer 1975 vol 1 No.2:3)

Part IV – Determine Treasure Content

Once all the monsters lairs and themes are set, it is time to roll the dice and consult the tables for the specific treasures at each location indicated, using the monsters Treasure Type for any “in lair” treasures, and the U&WA table for all non lair treasures.

There is a last consideration to be addressed at this point about lair treasures in dungeons. Let’s suppose our intrepid referee has created a lair of orcs and has one room in the lair where a treasure has been indicated. So the Dungeon Master then turns to Treasure Type D, as indicated for orcs, rolls the percentile dice for each entry, and comes up with nothing, zip, and zero. Does that mean the room has no treasure? No, since a treasure has already been determined to be in the room, there is indeed a treasure there. What it means is that the orcs themselves have no treasure, so that the treasure that is present is a hidden or otherwise inaccessible one which the orcs are either unaware of or unable to use. In this case, the referee should use the U&WA table to create the treasure and invent a reason why the orcs aren’t in possession of it themselves.

By the same token, if a referee decides a location or several locations populated with monsters is a lair, but no treasures have been indicated in any of the rooms, then no roll for treasure type should be made. The Dungeon Master should only roll for treasure in spaces already determined to have it, regardless of whether it is a monster lair or not.

Part V – Dressing

So now we have a proper campaign dungeon filled with monsters and treasures, but it is still largely a blank canvas, an outline in black and white. The Dungeon Master can now add a back story, and the sights, sounds, and smells of this mysterious underground. There's tons of advice on this sort of thing, widely available, including even whole books of random tables for those who want a little help, so I won't delve into the particulars of dungeon dressing here, except to mention tricks and traps.

In the original set of OD&D rules, tricks (like rotating walls and teleportation rooms) and traps (like covered pits and descending ceilings) are to be chosen judiciously and placed as desired by the referee to fit the type of locale. A wizard's labyrinth will likely contain a lot more such things than a troll's cave. The 1976 *Dungeon Geomorphs*, suggested 1/6th (16.7%) of numbered locations should have a trick or a trap. (p1) Presumably that's about an 8% chance for a trick and an 8% chance for a trap. While this may be useful as a general guideline, most referees would be well advised to place tricks and traps in a frequency and of a style consistent with the theme of the dungeon level.

The tricks and traps themselves, to take a bit of advice from the 1977, J. E. Holmes (editor) *Dungeons & Dragons* rulebook "...should not be of the "Zap! You're dead!" variety but those which a character might avoid or overcome with some quick thinking and a little luck. Falling into a relatively shallow pit would do damage only on a roll of 5 or 6 (1 - 6 hit points at most) but will delay the party while they get the trapped character out." (p39)

Another concern with traps is that they not be a hazard to the dungeon's normal inhabitants. For this reason, tricks and traps will often be located in out of the way and low traffic areas, such as "at the end of a passage that dead ends." (AiF 1979:22)

Thought should also be given to where and how treasures are hidden and whether or not they are trapped. Again, there exists a lot of published guidance on the subject including some really good random tables in TSR's *Monster & Treasure Assortment*.

Part VI – Step by Step

Let's summarize each step:

- 1) Create Maps for a minimum of 6 levels.
- 2) Make a key in a notebook with a line or two for each numbered room.
- 3) Place any special lairs, if desired.
- 4) Roll the dice for each room to see if there is a monster there using whichever method (1/3rd By the book or Blackmoor's variable chance by dungeon depth) preferred. Make sure the percentage of occupation is close to what it should be, and if not, add or subtract occupied rooms.
- 5) Where monsters are present, roll on the Monster Determination By Dungeon Level (OD&D), or the Dungeon Random Level Determination Matrix (AD&D) table or one of the substitute tables provided above to find the monster's level or hit dice and level and write the information down next to the room number in the notebook. Use whatever notation you like.
- 6) Check each numbered space for the presence of treasure, allowing a 1 in 6 chance for treasure in uninhabited rooms, and a 3 in 6 chance where monsters are present.

- 7) Create specific details for the monsters by choosing exact monsters from lists organized by monster level or hit dice; decide which monsters may be in lairs and determine an overall theme for the level. If needed, rearrange a few rooms and add new map features.
- 8) Roll for exact treasure content, using either the lair treasure type or U&WA tables as appropriate. If no treasure is indicated in a lair then no treasure is present. If treasure is indicated in a lair but the Treasure Type rolls produce no treasure, roll again on the U&WA treasure table and assume the treasure is unknown or inaccessible to the lair monsters.
- 9) Add a backstory, tricks, traps and other dungeon dressing as desired.

And that's how to create a proper campaign dungeon.

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