

# MOUNTAIN SANCTUARY

The adventure Mountain Sanctuary appeared in issue #8 of *Dungeon Magazine*. Originally designed for 1st Edition AD&D, I've since updated it for Fifth Edition and placed it in my current Dark Sun campaign setting. Many of the monsters listed here originally appeared in the 1st edition *Fiend Folio*. They are included at the end of this article.

## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The information that follows may be discovered from a variety of sources such as divination spells, rumors, legends, and research.

Arham, a powerful and infamous preserver illusionist, is best known for exploits in the northern Tablelands (with a little in the Hinterlands), but his origins are to be found to the south by the Altaruk Mountains. His parents were of vastly different heritages—his mother was the daughter of a nomadic desert elf chieftain, his father a rugged trapper from the mountains. Their paths crossed during the frequent conflicts between city-states in the Tablelands.

They relocated in Altaruk, the prosperous trade town connecting the two halves of the Tablelands. Arham was born and raised there, with all of the experiences and problems attendant on freeman life in a city slum. Prejudice against his half-elf ancestry, clear evidence of which was in his eyes and ever-so-slightly pointed ears contributed to an overwhelmingly negative environment. Arham grew up to be vicious, distrustful of others, and always seeking power and control.

One old man, however, took pity on the young pariah. The man also saw potential in the lad - an aptitude for the arcane. Arham's schooling in the arts of illusion began at this point. The young man quickly absorbed what he was taught and made good use of it. He allied himself with a band of rough, young thieves, using his illusions to distract victims while his companions relieved them of their valuables.

Adventuring provided an additional occupation. The nearby mountains held many opportunities, and there he found his father's legacy of mountain wisdom most valuable. While others used their resources to spearhead civilization's drive into the wilderness, Arham found it more profitable to join with the indigenous races. He knew several humanoid languages and learned more as he led the counterattack on human settlements. As a result, he gained the staunch support of the humanoids, plus considerable wealth. With these assets, he was able to construct a collection of refuges throughout the wilderness.

The antipathy of his fellow humans was another acquisition. He returned to Altaruk from time to time, often associating with his former compatriots of the light-fingered variety. On one such occasion, he had the misfortune of being caught. The actual offense was minor, but (quite accurate) rumors linked Arham to the raids on homesteads near Altaruk. Because the rumors could not be substantiated, Arham received a relatively light sentence: to be forever exiled from Altaruk and any lands within 5 miles of the trade town.

His wilderness sanctuaries proved quite useful at this point. After continuing his activities with the humanoids for some time, Arham moved on to new urban activities in the north, associating himself with the Black Sand Raiders. He continued his policy of establishing good personal relations with humanoid groups and establishing sanctuaries in the wilderness. From that point, Arham's story becomes part of another tale.

This adventure concerns one of Arham's earlier dens, a mountain sanctuary that he constructed with the help of sligs. After moving north, Arham had little use for this hideout. Groups of snyads and pesties discovered the sanctuary and made it into their own residence. Other small creatures now live there as well. Apart from these diminutive denizens - and a brief visit by Arham's son, Grakhirt - the sanctuary has been untouched for the past five decades or so.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

There are at least two ways to utilize this short adventure. First, the discovery of a treasure map is a great way of bringing characters to the sanctuary. Second, this might simply be used as an encounter to live up an otherwise drab journey across a mountain range. Inventive GMs are certain to dream up other ways of using the Mountain Sanctuary in their campaigns.

## THE SANCTUARY

Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

Traveling a path along a steep mountainside, you find the area ahead obstructed by rubble. Evidently, there has been a rockslide of large proportions, since much more rubble as well as larger rocks and boulders, lay below the path. With your route blocked, you find yourselves obliged to remove the debris. To your surprise, the excavation reveals a passage entering the mountain.

A dwarf or any other character familiar with stone and construction will notice that the passage did not occur naturally. Also, the passage's entrance was once concealed. The camouflaged portal was destroyed by the heavier boulders that accompanied the rubble in the rockslides down the mountain's face.

## WANDERING MONSTERS

Wandering monsters may be found in the dungeon complex. Every 10 minutes that the characters are in the complex, roll a d20. On a roll of 18 or higher an encounter occurs. Roll a 1d6 and consult the Wandering Monsters table

## WANDERING MONSTERS

### d6 Encounter

- |   |                      |
|---|----------------------|
| 1 | 1d2 cave crickets    |
| 2 | 2d6 giant centipedes |
| 3 | 1d4 gremlins         |
| 4 | 1d6 giant rats       |
| 5 | 1d20 swarms of rats  |
| 6 | 1d4 osquips          |

## THE OFFENSIVE

The residents of the sanctuary will prepare and execute an offensive to drive off the intruders. The monsters will begin to plan their strike as soon as they are alerted of the party's presence. The monsters are fairly brave in defending their homes but are far from suicidal. The offensive is likely to become a major melee, but as the monsters sustain casualties there will be an abundance of deserters. They can be expected to regroup, however, and ambush the party from time to time with guerilla-like tactics. The idea is to keep the characters paranoid; they won't know how many of the creatures are left, and the little buggers will pop out of a secret passage and attack whenever a character lets down his or her guard.

## DUNGEON ENCOUNTER KEY

### 1 - MOUNTAINSIDE PASSAGE

The first portion of the passageway is crudely hewn from the mountainside. Small piles of loose stones are scattered about. The quality of craftsmanship improves as one travels further into the sanctuary.

### 2 - SMALL ENTRANCES

These little tunnels (2 1/2' high, 1 1/2' wide) are concealed behind piles of loose stones. Because there are similar piles all along the passage, these will not seem unusual to the characters. Unless the characters are actively searching the corridor, the tunnels are noticed by any characters with a passive Perception of 16 or better.

### 3 - WORKSHOP

Arham used this workshop for making and repairing things. Most of the room's items are neatly placed in the southwest corner. A workbench stands there with two sawhorses beside it. Also on the wall is a hooded lantern made of bone and glass. It is not lit and is empty of fuel. Assorted carpentry tools lie on the workbench and hang on the walls. Sawdust and small scraps of wood litter the floor. In the northeastern corner of the room is a large, sturdy, stone chest.

**Trap.** The chest is locked and trapped; the trigger mechanism is a small lever set in the floor beneath the chest. If the chest is moved or violently disturbed, a ceiling block slides open to dump a small vat of acid in front of the chest. Any creature standing in the square must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 10 (4d4) acid damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much on a success. Creatures standing within 5 feet of the square must also make a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw, or take 5 (2d4) acid damage on a failed saving throw, or no damage on a success.

Detecting the trap requires a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check. If a character succeeds this check by 5 or more, they can figure out how to disarm it, too, requiring no roll to do so. A successful DC 13 Dexterity check using proficiency in thieves' tools unlocks the chest.

**Treasure.** The chest is not very full, and what is there consists of bottle, vials, and flasks. There are two glass vials of murky water, one of holy water, and four vials of acid. All seven vials appear identical.

A small green bottle contains an ingestive poison, a watery green liquid smelling of pine needles. A creature that imbibes the poison must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for 1 minute. A creature that fails its saving throw by 5 or more falls unconscious for 1 hour or until the poison is cured.

Another flask holds a what used to be a strong glue, but has since bonded with its container and is now useless. There are also three potions of diminution inside the chest. The potions are incredibly valuable in the open market if the characters can determine their origin.

### 4 - DINING ROOM

In the center of this room is an oak table surrounded by four chairs. Arham dined here and occasionally entertained humanoid leaders whom he sought to influence. There is nothing of significance in this room. A mildewy curtain of blue cloth divides this area from the adjacent kitchen.

### 5 - KITCHEN

In the kitchen's northwest corner is a fountain of briskly running water. The water comes from an underground stream that surfaces farther down the mountainside. A stone projection from the wall, carved into the shape of a horse's head, delivers the water from its mouth. The liquid then falls into a stone basin, also hewn from the rock. A stone grill covers the 3" wide drain. The grill can be removed, revealing a steel knife wedged between the sides of the drain. Any characters attempting to dislodge or retrieve the knife must make a successful DC 12 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check or the knife will slip from his or her grasp and be carried down into the stream - lost for all practical purposes.

The table by the curtain was for food preparation. Wooden ladles, bone knives, and an obsidian meat cleaver are on it, as well as several small jars of decaying herbs and spices.

A fire pit, over which is a stone cauldron of foul-smelling water, is in the southwest corner. A smoke vent is in the ceiling above the pit. This was a crucial part of the ventilation system; hot air and smoke would rise to the surface through this vent, and fresh air would be drawn down through the vent in the bedroom (area 8). Ashes and cinders lie beneath the cauldron. Within them can be found 3 pp, 8 ep, and a platinum earring set with peridot (worth 25 gp total; its mate is in the giant rats' nest, area 10). Beneath the ashes is a loose stone that functions as a trap door; it leads to the mites' lair (area 13).

### 6 - LAVATORY

The fixtures in this room are a toilet (in the southwest corner) and a bathtub (along the north wall). The toilet empties into the underground stream past the point from which the water flows into the kitchen (room 5), as does the bathtub's drain.

Water for the tub was taken from the spring in the kitchen and was heated over the fire pit. Lying on the floor beside the tub is a pile of rotting, moldy towels and washcloths. Concealed behind the tub is a small tunnel entrance. There is nothing of value in the room.

## 7 - STORAGE

This room was used primarily for the storage of foodstuffs, although some timber (for use in the workshop) is also to be found. Most of the food has been taken away and eaten by the snyads, mites, rats, and the room's current residents. What remains is fairly decayed and entirely unfit for consumption.

Nothing of value to the adventurers is to be found here.

**Encounter.** Living in the room, having made their nests in the sacks of rotting grain piled by the north wall, are a **swarm of spectramice** (see the appendix). Anyone looking around the room will observe an albino mouse or two coming out to see the visitors and squeak at them. The mice are hostile only if they are attacked or if their homes are disturbed (for example, if the characters begin to prod with weapons or search through the grain sacks).

In such a situation, the mice attempt to create a *phantasmal killer* against the first person to disturb them and follow with other illusions (or biting) as appropriate. In designing illusions, the GM should keep in mind the experiences that these mice would have had. For example, they would not create a dragon because they have never seen one. On the other hand, illusions of such monsters as mites, giant rats, giant centipedes, and cave crickets would be quite logical and appropriate.

## 8 - BEDROOM

The door to this room is open. Cobwebs cover most of the chamber. Along the southern wall is a bed in poor condition, having a large amount of mold (not of the monstrous type) on its covers and assorted boring insects infesting its wood.

Three things are under the bed: a trapdoor leading to the mites' den (area 13) and two **giant wolf spiders**. The huge spiders are patiently waiting for their dinner — presumed to be the next mite that ventures out of the trapdoor. When the adventurers enter the room, however, the spiders will instead attempt to make them their next victims.

**Treasure.** Several other items and features of interest to the party can be discovered if the cobwebs are cleared away. In the northwest corner of the room is a small, circular table with a brass lamp sitting upon it. The lamp is bejeweled with five blue gems (azurite, blue quartz, a jasper, a spinel, and turquoise) and is worth 60 gp. Lying on the floor by the table is a rusty dagger with runes inscribed upon the blade, reading "Arham" in the common tongue. The dagger is nonmagical. Hanging on the north wall is a tapestry depicting Arham on the trail outside, viewing the mountains. The tapestry is enchanted to make the image of Arham appear in three dimensions; it quite literally stands out from the rest of the picture. The tapestry is worth 70 gp. It is 6' high, 10' long, and weighs 55 lbs.

**Secret Door.** Concealed behind the tapestry is an entrance to the tunnels inhabited by snyads and giant rats (see areas 10-12). A small air vent leading to the surface is located in the ceiling in the room's northeast corner. Nearby, on the east wall, is a secret door leading to Arham's study. Finding the secret door requires a DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check.

## 9 - SECRET STUDY

Located 10 feet down the secret passage from the bedroom, this chamber was Arham's study. The north and east walls are covered with bookshelves that reach to the ceiling. Most of the shelves are barren and dusty. A few scattered titles, however, were left when the illusionist moved on: a treatise on weather patterns of the sea of silt, a manual detailing the construction of silt ships, an astronomy handbook of constellations, several volumes on humanoid anatomy and physiology (belgoi, slig, gith), and four more texts on whatever topics the GM can dream up. Each book is worth 2 gp to a collector.

In the northern part of the room is a cushioned chair that, despite its age and thick covering of dust, is in quite good condition. A small wooden table holding a bejeweled goblet and a blank parchment scroll is in front of the chair. The goblet, set with six banded agates, is worth 8 gp. Against the south wall is Arham's mahogany desk. An oil lamp is on top of it, along with several feather pens, an inkwell, and five sheets of blank parchment. The desk has four drawers: one contains more blank parchment (37 sheets) and three empty ivory scroll tubes, another holds bottles of colored inks (black, white, red, blue, and yellow), the third is empty, and the last drawer holds a large book. This is Arham's third-level spellbook. It contains the following wizard spells: alarm, color spray, disguise self, illusory image, invisibility, magic mouth, major image, mirror image, phantom steed, silence, silent image, and sleep.

## 10 - GIANT RAT NEST

This chamber is the lair of the sanctuary's **giant rats**. 1d8 of the rodents can be found here when the PCs arrive.

**Treasure.** An assortment of shiny objects collected by the rats is gathered here. Most items are worthless (broken glass, for example), but the valuable things are 9 gp, 8 sp, 40 cp, three gems worth 4 gp each (a carnelian, a citrine, and a zircon), and a single platinum earring set with a small peridot (worth 25 gp total; its mate is in the kitchen, area 5).

## 11 - GREMLIN (SNYAD) DEN

1d6 + 1 snyads (use the **gremlin** stat block from the appendix) can be found here. Even if confronted in their lair, the pesties will flee rather than fight, escaping outside to the mountains if it proves necessary and possible. The GM may allow a biting attack (for 1 piercing damage) for snyads who are cornered by PCs.

**Treasure.** Each snyad carries 3-24 cp. Any item stolen from the characters by snyads will be found here 90% of the time; otherwise, the item in question was in the possession of a pestie who fled the sanctuary.

## 12 - TINY TRAP

This is a simple covered pit trap, of a size appropriate to the creatures who roam the small passages. The bones of the little beings (snyads, a couple of mites, and some rats) litter the floor of the 3'-wide, 5'-deep pit. Also in the trap, alive, is an **osquip**. The osquip is engaged in burrowing its way out, but it will quickly stop to attack anyone who drops in. It arrived here recently, after taking the wrong passage in its search for a repast of rat or pestie.

**Treasure.** Among the bones and litter are 1 gp, 22 sp, 14 cp, and a small aquamarine (worth 21 gp).



## APPENDIX: NEW MONSTERS

The following monsters can be found in this adventure.

### CAVE CRICKET

The basically harmless giant cave cricket is typically only a noisy insect pest.

#### CAVE CRICKET

*Small beast, unaligned*

**Armor Class** 15 (natural armor)  
**Hit Points** 4 (1d6 + 1)  
**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	1 (-5)	7 (-2)	3 (-4)

**Senses** blindsight 30 ft., passive Perception 8  
**Languages** -  
**Challenge** 0 (10 XP)

**Standing Leap.** The cricket's long jump is up to 30 feet and its high jump is up to 15 feet, with or without a running start.

#### Actions

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +1 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d6 – 1) slashing damage.

**Chirp.** The cricket creates a deafening chirp. While chirping, no sound can be heard within 20-feet of the cricket. Creatures are deafened while within this area and casting a spell that includes a verbal component is impossible here. The cricket must take a bonus action on its subsequent turns to continue chirping. The chirping ends if the cricket is incapacitated.

### GREMLINS

Small bipeds, light brown in color and with particularly high dexterity, gremlins live in small passages adjoining dungeon corridors. The entrances to these tunnels are small and usually concealed behind piles of loose stone, making them difficult to detect. They are totally silent and move with great speed, frequently surprising their targets.

Their sole objective in leaving their tunnels and approaching a party of adventurers is to steal small items of treasure - gems, coins, pieces of jewelry, small weapons and the like. They will never attack and will avoid physical combat if they possibly can.

Different variants of gremlins exist including snyads (pesties), mites, and jermlaines. Gremlins have no language, so far as can be ascertained, yet a group will work cooperatively together, and they and the mites appear to be able to gain speedy mutual understanding in their common task.

#### GREMLIN

*Tiny humanoid (gremlin), any evil*

**Armor Class** 13  
**Hit Points** 5 (2d4)  
**Speed** 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)

**Skills** Sleight of Hand +7, Stealth +7  
**Damage Immunities** poison  
**Condition Immunities** poison  
**Senses** darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 10  
**Languages** -  
**Challenge** 0 (10 XP)

**Tiny Thief.** The gremlin can take the Disengage, Hide, or Sleight of Hand action as a bonus action on each of its turns.

#### Actions

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +0 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 piercing damage.

**Rock.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 5/20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 bludgeoning damage.

## OSQUIP

The osquip is a multi-legged hairless rodent-like creature the size of a small dog. Most specimens have 6 legs but some have eight and there are a few rare creatures with ten legs. The creature's hide is a very light yellow - almost colorless - and resembles very pliable leather. The eyes are small and set close together, each being heavily protected by surrounding ridges of hide-covered bone. The jaws are unusually large, the entire bony structure projecting several inches forward of the flesh; in each jaw, there are large spade-like teeth.

The creature will have its lair in the midst of a complex of tunnels beneath the basements of buildings in a town, or in a dungeon. The tunnel system will be quite extensive and the entrances to it, which are too small to permit the comfortable passage of a human or other man-sized creature, will be carefully hidden (the chance of finding them is the same as the chance of finding a secret door). The creature feeds on rats, mice, and other small vermin, though it is a ferocious beast and will always attack without fear, sometimes emerging to surprise a victim from one of the hidden entrances to its tunnel-system.

Its behavior regarding other tunnel dwelling creatures, such as jermlaine, mites, and snyads, is unpredictable. Sometimes it will be encountered acting in co-operation with one or more of these types of creatures; at other times the osquip will invade jermlaine, mite or snyad tunnel-systems on predatory missions.

### OSQUIP

*Tiny monstrosity, unaligned*

**Armor Class** 13

**Hit Points** 10 (3d4 + 3)

**Speed** 30 ft., burrow 15 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	4 (-3)

**Senses** darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 11

**Languages** -

**Challenge** 1/8 (25 XP)

#### Actions

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +0 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (2d6 - 2) piercing damage.

## SPECTRAMOUSE

The spectramouse — also known as the terror mouse and illusion mouse — appears to be a perfectly normal rodent of the albino sort. Curiously, all recorded specimens have been albino; this leads many sages to speculate that there is a connection between the lack of pigment and the creature's magical powers. Spectramice are generally peaceful herbivores, concerned only with food, shelter, and reproduction.

Perhaps as a result of a magical mutation, these intelligent rodents can utilize remarkable powers of illusion when provoked. When more than one spectramouse is encountered, the group is able to cooperate and create even more potent phantasms.

It appears that spectramice communicate through squeaking sounds. Judging by the complexity of some illusions that have been witnessed, this squeak-language must be very complicated. It is believed to have subtle pitch inflections, unable to be distinguished by human ears, that can convey much information very quickly.

### SPECTRAMOUSE

*Tiny monstrosity, neutral*

**Armor Class** 10

**Hit Points** 2 (2d4)

**Speed** 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
2 (-4)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)

**Senses** darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 11

**Languages** Squeak

**Challenge** 0 (10 XP)

**Keen Smell.** The spectramouse has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

**Innate Spellcasting.** The spectramouse's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 11). It can innately cast the following spells requiring no material or somatic components:

At will: *minor image*, *prestidigitation*

#### Actions

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +0 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (2d6 - 2) piercing damage.

## SWARM OF SPECTRAMICE

*Medium Swarm of Tiny monstrosities, neutral*

**Armor Class** 10

**Hit Points** 31 (7d8)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)

**Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing, slashing

**Condition Immunities** charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned

**Senses** darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 11

**Languages** Squeak

**Challenge** 2 (250 XP)

**Keen Smell.** The spectramouse has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

**Swarm.** The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny spectramouse. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

**Innate Spellcasting.** The spectramouse's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 11). It can innately cast the following spells requiring no material or somatic components:

At will: *minor image*, *prestidigitation*

1/Day each: *hallucinatory terrain*, *phantasmal force*, *phantasmal killer*

### Actions

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +0 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (2d6 - 2) piercing damage.