

A Study in Stone

A Fantasy Roleplaying Adventure
For Low-Level Gameplay

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Using this Book

This module is intended for use by a Game Master to direct low-level players through a short wilderness adventure. For any encounter used within, the creatures and numbers encountered should only be used as a rough guide and can be adjusted based on the level or make-up of the party to scale the difficulty up or down. The same rules should apply to treasures, rewards, and difficulty checks – use whatever feels reasonable for the group or to reflect any edits made to the content.

There are a few sections of read aloud text that can be used by the Game Master as a narrative aid, but feel free to skip these or paraphrase for yourself. Reward for this adventure will be left at the discretion of the Game Master. If using an experience point system, players can be granted points based on the monsters encountered throughout.

On occasion new or optional rules may be provided to enhance the game based on the location or situation. These are only intended to add a wrinkle to standard game play and make each scenario unique – if you feel they don't quite fit or you have a better idea on how to handle them modifications can be made. Any unique monster, item, or rule will have details included here, however all other content can be found within the 5th Edition System Reference Document (SRD).

Introduction and Adventure Hook

Read Aloud Text

The alchemist's laboratory is a mess of smoke and ash, but the scene before you is quite clear. The statue of a small gnome stands on a step stool in front of a workbench upon which rests many broken vials and shards of scorched glass. A quizzical look is on the gnome's face – almost one of joy and horror mixed together and frozen in that one fateful moment the reaction completed.

Alchemy is a very strange practice – partially science, partially magic – but the ultimate goal is simple: turn the mundane into the fantastic. Whether that is a search for an ultimate curative elixir or base metals into gold, every alchemist seems ever in pursuit of their lofty goal. This is no different for Tuck Nolgren, a highly intelligent and ambitious alchemist closing in on his recipe for transforming stone to gold.

Tuck is a bit of a loner and hermit, even in the middle of a bustling town. Rarely leaving his lab – and barely sleeping for that matter – Tuck has relied on his assistant, Rupert Peddlesworth, for months now as he has been trying to perfect his admixtures and tinctures used in the reaction. Therefore it came as quite a surprise to the townsfolk when they heard a loud crash from his house followed by Rupert rushing out into the streets screaming for help: "Help! HELP! Poor Tuck has finally done it now." Confused and assuming a major breakthrough, the townsfolk gather around to peer into Tuck's lab horrified at what they see – poor Tuck has turned himself into stone!



Tuck's assistant outlines the events leading up to the current situation. Tuck had been working on a new formula, one he was sure would succeed in his goal of turning stone into gold. As he mixed the reagents and swirled the admixture, something seemed a little off to Rupert, but Tuck remained optimistic and excited. As the mixture bubbled, Tuck was captivated but Rupert wisely took cover. Just in time too as the vials burst forth with strange energy, billowing dark smoke and a fierce heat in a loud cracking explosion. From behind a desk, Rupert peered in horror at the scene in front of him – poor Tuck had managed to turn himself to stone!

Although he is not well versed in alchemy himself, Rupert is a keen understudy and has read many of the texts on his master's craft. Within these texts it tells of a great beast called the Basilisk that is capable of turning anything it looks at to stone. This great lizard then devours the stone, and many great alchemists claim that the fluids in a basilisk's stomach are capable of turning solid stone back into its original organic matter. Such a creature has been rumoured to dwell in the nearby hills, but alas, an alchemist's assistant is no match for such a creature. Rupert offers a reward in exchange for the corpse of the basilisk – if only there would be a hero willing to help in these dire times.

If the quest is accepted, Rupert will provide some basic information about the creature and where it lives based on the rumours he has heard before directing the party out of the city. The way out of the city and through the forest follows an old game trail that many locals use for hiking into the foothills. These woods are quite safe as the noise from the town's industry has frightened many of the animals into the deeper parts of the forest. It is a rather easy and enjoyable walk through the woods to a smaller offshoot of a trail leading to the foothills where a suitable home for their quarry may be found.

The Forest, Caves, and Foothills

Read Aloud Text

Approaching the base of the foothills, the trees begin to thin and give way to rockier terrain with mountains stretching up to the sky ahead in the distance. Finding a small cave in such a vast range would seem an impossible task until you notice something oddly out of place – a statue! After a quick inspection from a distance, it almost seems lifelike and in a state of shock, however parts of it have broken off.

A closer inspection of the statue reveals that this is an average human dressed much like the residents of the nearby village. His face is twisted in a visage of horror and he is frozen in a state of shock, posed as if he was trying to shield his eyes from a terrible sight. Part of his forearm and lower leg have broken off, but those pieces are nowhere to be seen in the vicinity. A closer inspection will reveal some clues the party may find useful. A Medicine Check (DC 12) reveals that the statue was not broken but rather the pieces were bitten off with scratches in the stone matching what would be teeth marks. There are a few claw



marks and footprints in the muddy ground around the statue and these can be followed to the beast's lair with a Survival Check (DC 14).

If the party is able to follow the tracks, this will lead them to the lower mouth of the cave where the basilisk makes his entrance and exit. This entrance can also be found with a thorough search of the area during which a random forest encounter may occur (refer to Appendix A for encounter table).

Alternatively, if the party is not able to follow the tracks or ends up travelling towards the foothills, the second entrance into the cave may be found. This entrance is located at the top of a small cliff of 15-20'. While in the area, signs of the entrance (scuff marks in the ground from the ladder, loose rocks from climbing, and small tatters of cloth at the top) may be perceived with a Perception Check (DC 16 passive or DC 12 actively searching). The entrance at the top of the cliff serves as the entrance to a section of the cave inhabited by a kobold clan using the basilisk and this secret entrance as protection for their warrens. The cliff is easy enough to scale with proper gear or a rope, otherwise a successful Athletics Check of DC 12 will be required to avoid falling and suffering 1d6 falling damage.

Throughout the caves the ceilings are of varying height. Walls and ceilings appear to be formed naturally from rough stone. The majority of the cavern is shrouded in very low light making travel difficult without adequate means of vision.

Optional Rules: The Basilisk's Location

To add some interest and an element of chance to this dungeon, the basilisk may appear in a random location. If choosing not to use this rule, the basilisk will appear in its lair (follow the instructions for that option). Alternatively, you may just choose one of the options instead of rolling to determine the location. Roll 1d100 and consult the table below for location and directions.

1-25: The basilisk is currently out hunting for food in the forest. It will inconveniently return when the party enters its lair and if still alive, the kobolds will close the gate behind it locking everyone inside. If the party does not enter the lair, the basilisk will appear as the party is leaving the caverns.

26-50: The basilisk is in the main chamber of the cavern feeding. If the shriekers are alerted the basilisk will move to investigate the noise and encounter the party in the fungus room (Room #1). Otherwise, the crunching stone of it feeding will be heard as the party approaches. Assuming they are still alive, the kobolds will close their gates locking the party in the main chamber with the basilisk.

51-90: The basilisk is in its lair resting. If the shriekers are alerted or other loud noises are made (such as combat with the kobolds), there is a 50% chance the basilisk will be awakened and encounter the party in the main chamber. If the kobolds are able to, they will close both gates locking everyone in the main chamber.



91-100: The basilisk is out of its lair and hunting in the woods. Actively searching the mouth of the caves (DC 14 Perception Check, before entering or after leaving) will reveal its tracks that may be followed into the forest (DC 12 Survival Check). If the party fails the check follow the tracks, the party loses their way. Add a forest encounter (refer to Appendix A) then roll another survival check to see if they can pick up the trail and repeat this process. After two successful tracking checks or two encounters, the party will catch up to and find the basilisk in a small clearing in the forest.

The Basilisk's Cave

1) This large cavern is moist and slippery as the sound of dropping water can be heard from the centre of it. There is a green slimy algae that grows on the stone here and patches of moss and fungus growing from the sediment and wet peat that has collected on the floors.

Although most of the fungus is harmless and ordinary, there are some that stick out from the rest growing much larger. Throughout the chamber two Shriekers and four Violet Fungus have sprouted and are residing here providing a natural line of defence against intruders. Any inspection of the fungus will uncover a clue to their deadly secrets that would otherwise be missed at first glance – a dull shine of old metal and bones from one of the previous and unlucky visitors to this cavern.

2) This large, central cavern opens much wider and features a very high vaulted ceiling some 40' above the cave floor. Two large columns of stone connect ceiling to floor in this open underground expanse. Another statue, similar to the one encountered in the forest, is found in the room, also with pieces seemingly broken off – a Medicine Check (DC 12) will reveal they were not broken but rather bitten off. A layer of fine stone dust covers the cavern floor and intensifies in the north-eastern side of it.

At the mouth of the two tunnels leading out of this room on the ground level, the kobolds have fashioned a set of gates controlled from above by a crude pulley system. They are fairly well concealed in the darkness, however a careful eye will reveal them if actively searching this chamber (Perception Check DC 13). Once dropped, these gates can be forced open by brute strength (DC 14 Strength Check) or broken by force (AC 12, HP 18).

An additional clue to the kobolds presence here are two small wooden walkways spanning the upper levels of the cavern connected by a small tunnel through the largest stone column. They have been careful to hide these walkways from below and it will require a very keen eye to detect (DC 16 Perception Check).

A steep and rocky cliff on the western side of this cavern leads up the second level and into the kobold's den. Using their gates to control the basilisk's movement, the kobolds sometimes descend into the lower levels of the cavern to pick through supplies dropped by wayward intruders that succumb to the hazards of the cave. This cliff can be scaled, but it



will be guarded fiercely by the kobolds making the ascent difficult (DC 16 Athletics. Also refer to the description of room 5 for the kobold's actions).

If using the optional Basilisk location rules, refer to those to determine the actions of the kobolds as the party enters the main chamber.

3) This small nook serves as the lair and sleeping chamber of the basilisk that resides within the cave system. The stone dust is thicker in the short tunnel leading into the bed chamber which is lined with organic debris. Refer to the section regarding the basilisk's location and behaviour outlined earlier to determine where the basilisk is and how it will act. If choosing not to use the optional rulings, the basilisk will be found here resting after digesting a recent stony meal.

If the party is able to defeat the basilisk, they will need to take its corpse with them back into town for Rupert to harvest the fluids from its stomach. Although the corpse is fairly large and heavy, it proves to not be too inconvenient on the trip back to town.

4) Atop the cliff and through a narrow tunnel is a small lookout station where the kobolds post sentries. Where they don't often get any visitors here, the defences they have constructed are rudimentary at best and fairly simple to avoid. This also leads to rather lackadaisical attitude towards guard duty and there is only a chance (25% or 50% if the party is making loud noises) that the guards will even notice the party's presence nearby or scaling the cliffs outside.

When these guards are alerted, one will scurry off to warn the rest of the clan while the other four stay to defend their turf.

5) This small chamber serves as a basic sleeping chamber for the small clan of kobolds making a home in the caves. At any give time, $2d6 + 2$ kobolds will be encountered going about their daily routines but keeping a watchful eye on the caves. Any creature entering will be spotted by this group and treated as hostile, although they will not act without reason, content to survey and leave the fate of the intruders to the basilisk if possible. Only when provoked, threatened, or invaded will they respond.

This area has access to the main chamber on the lower level (Room #2) via the western cliff. At the top, there are stakes driven into the ground with ropes they lower to make access easier along with some crude defensive measures. When any creature attempts to scale the cliff, the kobolds will leap to action defending their den by dropping boulders or oil and torches over the cliff. An equal amount of kobolds will be manning the oil vats, torches, and boulder piles. Kobolds equipped with torches will require an action to light their torches and will wait to attack until oil has been dropped.

Boulder Drop: Ranged Weapon Attack: +3 to hit, one target directly below the kobold that is scaling the cliff. On Hit: $6(1d6 + 3)$ bludgeon damage.



Oil/Torch Drop: Ranged Weapon Attack: +3 to hit, one target directly below the kobold that is scaling the cliff. On Hit: Hitting with a flask of oil will coat a creature will slick oil making it more difficult to climb (-2 to Athletics checks to scale the wall). Hitting with a torch will ignite any oil that is coating the target causing 2 (1d4) fire damage each turn for three turns or until the creature spends an action to extinguish the flames.

6) This chamber serves as the throne room of Karstik, the chieftain of this clan (Refer to Appendix B for description). Unlike the rest of the caverns, the walls are carved smooth and adorned with rough tapestries making it fitting for the chieftain. Karstik lords over his subjects from a stone throne at the back of the room and is accompanied by two mangy wolves he keeps as pets. Also standing by are two kobold guardsmen (Refer to Appendix B for description) that keep watch at the entrance to the chieftains chamber.

In a secret chamber located in the back of the throne Karstik keeps the treasure of the kobold horde - a small chest containing 240 GP and three small gems each worth 1d10 x 10 GP (DC 12 Investigation Check to find the secret chamber).

Finishing the Quest

After slaying the basilisk, the party will need to return to the town bringing its corpse with them so Rupert can harvest the fluids from its stomach. It is not required for the party to engage the kobolds. Other than acting as outlined in specific situations, the kobolds will remain secretive so as to not reveal their presence. They will defend their lair if approached but otherwise remain observers to the happenings in the cave.

Rupert's eyes light up at the sight of the returning heroes with the slain beast - he greets them in front of the shop before ushering them into a back room. He tosses the party a small bag of gold and gems - 2 Azurite (10 GP each) and 3d12 x10 GP - before dismissing the party and grabbing a small knife to deftly slice and carve into the beast to remove its stomach. Poring through his alchemy manuals, Rupert pays the party no mind while he works furiously to concoct the formula required to cure his master's condition.

His work will continue for 1d4 more days, after which Tuck will happily be back to normal. Although the scope of any further interaction between Rupert, Tuck and the party will not be handled here, feel free to create other role-playing interactions and opportunities. For their aid, Tuck and Rupert will be very thankful so they may offer up some tinctures and potions (either as gifts or for sale) and other employment opportunities may be offered at your discretion.

Appendix A: Random Encounters

While in the forest, the party may have one of the following encounters. The frequency or type of encounter is left to Game Master's discretion but these should overall be used sparingly to keep focus on the actual goal of the quest. Select an encounter from the table, or roll 1d6 and refer to the resulting encounter:

| Roll | Encounter |
|------|--|
| 1 | 1d4 kobolds returning to their den. If it has not been found yet, this could provide the party an opportunity of finding it by secretly following them back to the hidden side entrance. |
| 2 | 2 commoners, lost in the woods on a hiking expedition. These hikers may offer a small reward if provided assistance in getting back home safely. |
| 3 | A hunting party (1d6 hunters, using the Bandit creature block) also in search of the basilisk's den and Rupert's reward. They will act hostile to the players attempting to prevent them from stealing what they believe is rightfully theirs. |
| 4 | <p>A hermit's hut. This small wooden structure is seemingly abandoned and has basic furnishings, but shows signs of recent activity. Unknown to the party, the hermit has become a victim of the basilisk a short time ago and his house now remains vacant.</p> <p>The hermit keeps a few meagre possessions in the hut with a small satchel of gold tucked under the mattress of his bed (20 GP). On the table is an ordinary looking vase containing wilted flowers. Unknown to the hermit, this vase is actually magical in origin and will radiate an aura of Enchantment under a Detect Magic spell (Refer to Appendix C for full description of the Vat of Purification).</p> |
| 5 | A small cave that may be mistaken for the basilisk's lair. This cave is inhabited by a Black Bear that is currently in its den sleeping. |
| 6 | An ivory statue depicting Tymora, goddess of good fortune (or other similar deity in your setting) holding a water vase. A light and seemingly unending stream of water is pouring from the vase and soaking into the ground. Drinking from the stream will grant 5 temporary HP that last for 1 hour. The god's identity will be known to any characters with religious ties, but should be common enough to be identified through an inspection of the statue (Religion Check DC 10). |



Appendix B: Monsters

Karstik

Small humanoid, lawful evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 22 (5d6 +5)

Speed 30 ft.

Skills Medicine +4, Religion +1

Senses darkvision 60ft, passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

| | | | |
|------------|---------|------------|---------|
| STR | 13 (+1) | INT | 9 (-1) |
| DEX | 9 (-1) | WIS | 15 (+2) |
| CON | 13 (+1) | CHA | 8 (-1) |

Spellcasting. Karstik is a 2nd-level spellcaster. Karstik's spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). Karstik has the following cleric spells prepared: **Cantrip (at will):** thaumaturgy, guidance, sacred flame **1st level (3 slots):** bane, command, cure wounds

Pack Tactics. Karstik has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of Karstik's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, Karstik has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Actions

Quarterstaff. Melee Weapon Attack: +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage, or 5 (1d8 + 1)

bludgeoning damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

Kobold Guardian

Small humanoid, lawful evil

Armor Class 14 (leather, shield)

Hit Points 33 (6d6 +12)

Speed 30 ft.

Skills Intimidation +0

Senses darkvision 60ft, passive Perception 8

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

| | | | |
|------------|---------|------------|--------|
| STR | 13 (+1) | INT | 7 (-2) |
| DEX | 12 (+1) | WIS | 6 (-2) |
| CON | 14 (+2) | CHA | 7 (-2) |

Multiattack. Kobold Guardians may make two melee attacks

Pack Tactics. the kobold guardian has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the kobold guardian's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the kobold guardian has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Actions

Battleaxe. Melee Weapon Attack: +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d8 + 1) slashing damage, or 6 (1d10 + 1) slashing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.



Appendix C: Magical Items

Vat of Purification

Wonderous Item, Uncommon

This ordinary looking clay vase has a small crack running down one side. Ancient looking runes are inscribed around the mouth of the vase in a language that is unfamiliar.

When filled with liquid of any kind, the vat will radiate light of varying colour and for varying lengths of time based on the liquid:

- ~ Any liquid that is fetid or diseased: purple light for 1d4 days.
- ~ Any liquid that contains poison: green light for 1d6 hours.
- ~ Any liquid that is otherwise harmful to drink (such as oils): blue light for 1d10 minutes.

Any poisons, diseases, or other harmful substances are cleansed from the liquid when the light fades, leaving drinkable water inside.

