

## The Final Exam

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Once upon a time, about a year and a half ago, I needed to start an AD&D campaign. I didn't really want to have them all meet in a bar. I didn't want them to just automatically start knowing each other, or any of those other standard beginnings. I wanted this campaign to be something special; I tried to give it a special beginning. Here's what I came up with...  
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### THE FINAL EXAM

A campaign introduction for 1st level characters.

#### SET-UP:

The party (or what is to be the party) is a group of close friends who are going through their respective adventuring schools at the same time. Through the infinite powers of arbitrary coincidence, they are all graduating at approximately the same time.

The schools work together to arrange the "final exams" for the graduating students. The type of exam varies. Some involve actual missions, some involve intellectual challenges, and some involve artificial situations mundanely created. Then, there are the final exams for those suicidal twerps who decide to be adventurers. For them, something special is created...

What has been done for the party is this: The mage's guild owns a special magic item. It is a gem which can create illusions in the area around it. The illusions do illusionary damage, and when an illusion kills someone, that person merely goes unconscious. The party has had spells cast on them which cause short-term amnesia. Then, an illusion was created in the passages under the mages guild. Finally, the party was cut loose.

The effect will be: The party will find themselves in an underground room. They will not know where they are or why they are there, but they will remember their capabilities, and that they are friends. From there, the test will begin.

#### GM-ING THE ADVENTURE:

The first thing to remember about this adventure is that its main purpose is to spook the PC's. It is, unless the party is really sharp, too tough for a first level party to survive. The combination of memory loss and the almost inevitable PC death will probably spook the hell out of them. And well it should.

The reason that the party is being given this exam is that their teachers want the PCs to learn caution and humility. They want to teach the party that greed can kill, and that there are things the party cannot defeat. (Think about the potential attitude problems of first level characters and you'll probably see why this may be necessary.)

In this adventure, all monsters (except for the lizard) act as intelligently and nastily as possible. Pull out all the stops, and make them REALLY horrific and nasty. Monsters will chase the party through the corridors, but will stop before entering another room.

#### THE EXAM:

The exam itself is only three rooms, with connecting corridors. The walls are stone, and the rooms have torches on the walls (the party may find this peculiar; so be it.) so light isn't a problem. The rooms ceilings are 20' high; the corridors are 10' high. The stone in room one is finely dressed; the rest of the stone looks natural.

#### ROOM ONE: (THE GEM ROOM)

This room is a dome, 50' in diameter. It has two exits, on opposite sides of the room. Each is a corridor. The party starts next to one corridor. If they try to walk down this corridor, they feel a strange, irresistible urge not to. No matter what they try, they can't go down it (this corridor leads to an area not covered with illusion. The creators of the exam created this mental block.)

In the middle of the circular room is a small pedestal with a large diamond imbedded in the top. This is the diamond used to create the illusions. The party will be unable to pry it loose. However, if they even touch it, a demon ogre appears by the exit they didn't appear by.

Demon Ogre

AC 0 HD 8 hp 50

#AT 1 D 2-handed sword (+2 to hit, +4 damage)

Magic resistance: %50

Has spell abilities as a Type I demon.

The other corridor out of the room goes for 50', and ends at magical darkness. The darkness goes for 20', and ends in a smooth slide downwards. If the party goes slowly through the darkness and feels the walls (unlikely if they're being chased by a demon ogre), they will find a door (unlocked). Both the slide and the corridor lead to room two. The ogre will not enter the darkness.

#### ROOM TWO: (THE LIZARD ROOM)

This is a cavern, 60'x30'. The slide dumps the party at the east end. The corridor beyond the door leads to a secret door in the northwest corner of the room. In the southwest corner is a corridor leading to room three (corridor is 250' long).

In the center of the room is a pile of logs, twigs, bones and garbage, upon which sleeps a giant fire lizard. Poking out of one end of the lizard's nest is a silver rod.

Fire lizard

AC 4 HD 10 hp 50

#AT 3 D 2-12/2-12/3-24

Breathe fire for 2-16 pts (sv. vs. dragon breath for 1/2 damage)

The party entering the room (by either entrance) and moving around (as long as they make a reasonable effort to be quiet) won't wake the lizard. However, getting the rod dislodges some pebbles, and the noise wakes the lizard, which attacks. Any loud noise also wakes the lizard. Note that the southwest corridor is wide enough to let the lizard through.

The silver rod is silver plated wood. It has no unusual properties whatsoever.

#### ROOM THREE: (THE GIANT ROOM)

The corridor from room two ends at furs hanging from the ceiling. Beyond the furs is a large cave (40' x 50') which is the home of a hill giant. Opposite from the corridor is what is apparently the exit of the caverns: a 30' long passage leading to daylight.

Hill giant  
AC 4 HD 8 hp 35  
#AT 1 D 2-16  
Can throw stones for 2-16 pts.

The giant hears the party coming, unless they take great pains to be quiet. It stands between them and the exit, and throw rocks at them. If the party hides behind the furs, the giant throws rocks through (%50 chance of being able to hit someone). If the party hides behind the curtain for three rounds, the lizard from room two shows up and breathes.

The corridor out of the caves has a tripwire halfway down. The person tripping it is struck by huge scimitars coming out of the walls for 2-20 pts. of damage (sv. vs. petrification for 1/2 damage).

When the party charges out of the caves, the first thing they see is the sun, shining blindingly bright. It glows brighter, and white light washes out everything. Then the entire party wakes up, undamaged, in a 50' diameter room with a pedestal in the center. Their mentor walks up and gives them some sort of speech (you can handle this bit). Their memories slowly return. Then they are dismissed to whatever torments you have planned for them.

OTHER NOTES:

Seem arbitrary? Seem cruel? It is. As mentioned before, this whole illusion is an attempt by wiser heads to make adventurers realize what's waiting for them out there. It wasn't created to be fair.

When I ran this, it met a rather positive response. How'd the party do? Well, there were six adventurers. They tried to steal the diamond, and the ogre killed one of them (grabbed the ranger with telekinesis and killed him when he was down). One of them tried to steal the rod, but they fled the lizard. However, they tarried too long by the curtain, and the lizards breath got another. The giant splattered the mage with a thrown rock, and the scimitar trap picked off the last. Two survivors limped out, not feeling overly triumphant.

And, the campaign started on a note of humility. I was pleased.

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