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Dungeon Module JD1 Cess-Pit of the Bog-Mother

by Jeff Dee

AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 1-3



What strange being has taken up residence in the long-ruined swamp-circled castle, and what is its connection with the increase of Orc raids in the region? To find out, our heroes must brave subterranean passages teeming with unnatural creatures of the muck!

This module was originally created as a stretch goal for Jeff Dee's Kickstarter project to re-create his lost paintings from the covers of the classic RPG adventures T1 Village of Hommlet, D3 Vault of the Drow, X1 Isle of Dread, and S2 White Plume Mountain. The author wishes to thank all of his backers, whose support made this work possible.

Included are three alternate introductions to this swamp & muck themed dungeon, stat blocks for the standard creatures which appear herein, complete stats for five unique creatures specially designed for the adventure, and a full-page map.

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CESS-PIT OF THE BOG-MOTHER

This is an adventure for a party of 1st to 3rd level characters. It takes place in a subterranean complex beneath an old, long-ruined castle in a swamp along the coast at the edge of an inhabited region.

A Sea Hag named Mazagga has taken up residence in the deepest underground chamber. An expert in herbalism, she has earned the loyalty of the local Orcs in exchange for supplying them with an herbal concoction. It acts as a healing potion on evil demi-humans, but is poisonous to humans and the friendly demi-human races.

If the players fail to defeat Mazagga her Orc minions will soon take over the region – thanks to the advantage their beloved Bog-Mother has given them.

INTRODUCTION

There are many ways to motivate the party to investigate this site. Here are a few suggestions:

Intro #1: The party is hired by an enemy of Mazagga. The wizard Karos lives in a secluded tower on a nearby island. He drove Mazagga away, and learning of her new lair he hires the PCs to finish her off. He appears to the PCs in a vision, promising them a reward of 5000 gold if they will bring Mazagga's head to him. He can't do it himself, as he is an invalid and a recluse.

Intro #2: The wells in the villages near the ruin have all become foul. This is due to Mazagga's experiments, but all the villagers know is that the ruin appears to be at the center of it all. They have offered a reward of 5000 gold to any party of adventurers who can put a stop to it.

Intro #3: Reports have reached the King that Orcs in this area have gotten access to powerful healing magic, which has given them an edge and made them a threat. The King has offered a bounty of 5000 gold to anyone who can find the source of this healing magic, and bring him proof that it has been eliminated.

APPROACHING THE RUIN

The swamp surrounding the ruin is infested with the usual range of dangerous creatures typically found in fantasy swamps. A couple of encounters appropriate to the party's level on their way to the ruin would not

be amiss. One of these encounters should be with an Orc patrol equipped with a 2d4 doses of the Bog-Mother's gift!

THE BOG-MOTHER'S GIFT

Mazagga's healing herb is a small, wrinkled pod from an uncommon swamp plant called Muckwort. After being treated by her secret process, it gains the ability to immediately restore up to 2d6 hit points to an evil demi-human who consumes it. It deals 2d6 hit points of damage to any human or friendly demi-human who eats it, at a rate of 1 hit point per round. A character may not fight, cast spells, or perform any other complex action on a round when they eat the herb.

THE CASTLE GROUNDS

The site consists of three obvious areas of interest that the PCs may wish to examine. These consist of the tumble-down castle ruin itself, an adjacent graveyard around a central crypt, and an old well surrounded by knee-deep stagnant water.

The Ruin:

Searching the ruin takes about 30 minutes, and reveals a stairwell in a small back room. The room apparently used to be a storeroom. The stairwell leads down into darkness to area 1 on the dungeon map.

The Graveyard:

This area is small – about 30' wide by 40' long. Rough-hewn gravestones dot the area, many of them toppled over. A 10' x 10' marble crypt stands directly in the middle of the graveyard, its wrought-iron gate hanging ajar. Within the crypt a stone stairway leads down to area 2 on the dungeon map.

The Old Well:

The well stands in front of the ruin in what was once a paved plaza. The plaza has subsided over the centuries, and is now filled with water that is knee-deep in the center. Ironically the well itself holds only a little mud at the very bottom of its shaft, which is 15' deep. The brick lining of the shaft opens sideways into an equally muddy tunnel at the bottom, into area 3 on the dungeon map.

KEY TO THE CESS-PIT

1. The stairway up to the old storeroom in the castle ruins. The stone wall on the east side of the stairwell is collapsed, revealing a muddy dirt tunnel leading east. The corridor at the foot of the stairs is littered with pieces of old broken crates; a search reveals nothing of value.
2. This crumbling stairway leads up to the marble crypt in the middle of the graveyard. A corpse – long-dead and desiccated – lies sprawled across the floor at the base of the stairway. The stone wall west of the stairway has collapsed, revealing a muddy dirt tunnel leading west.
3. This is the bottom of the Ruin's old brick-lined well. It holds only five or six inches of slimy mud and water. The bricks have fallen down on one side, revealing a very muddy dirt tunnel to the north. A thin, sluggish stream carries a trickle of water from this tunnel into the bottom of the well.
There is a square at the end of the tunnel, by the entrance to Room 11, which has a patch of Green Slime (9 hp) in it.
4. This is an empty, muddy earthen cave. There are several pools of muddy water on the floor. Roots dangle down from the ceiling.
5. This was obviously the entrance chamber to the crypt of a nobleman. The stone walls, though ancient and crumbling, still contain elaborate decorative carvings. Two ancient corpses lie on the floor where indicated. Two Small Hatchling Nodes poke out of the stone walls: a Small Tentacle Node (C, 7 hp), and a Small Dart Node (D, 7 hp). These nodes belong to the Small Hatchling (H) which occupies the archway leading south out of the room. One Bog Blight (16 hp) stands ready in front of the Hatchling. They all immediately attack any intruders who enter the room. The Bog Blight will move to a corpse behind the party if that move will put it behind their lines.
6. The Cess-Pit. This is the lair of Mazagga the Sea Hag (hp 14) – where she performs her experiments and creates her healing pods. Orcs in the region

bring her bribes of coins, gems, and even minor magical items in exchange for her 'Gift'.

The chamber is arranged like an extremely crude alchemical laboratory, equipped with a rough wooden worktable, a few ceramic bowls and glass jars that are cracked and stained, and heaps of strange, unidentifiable ingredients (including many sprigs of Muckwort). A grating in the center of the ceiling used to open into the privy room of the castle above, but it's now thoroughly closed off with dirt and rubble. The floor is ankle-deep with ancient stinking muck. There is also a depression at the back filled with slightly deeper brackish water, where Mazagga sleeps.

The chamber is also filled with asphyxiating noxious gasses. Each of the PCs must make a saving roll every turn, or take 1 damage.

In addition to Mazagga herself, six Orcs (6, 8, 5, 5, 5, 4 hp) are present – watching in awe as Mazagga performs her work. It is very unlikely that the PCs will be able to surprise them. Each Orc carries one of the Bog Mother's Gifts, which they consume at their first opportunity if they become injured. Mazagga carries six of her own healing pod Gifts.

First, the players will have to contend with the effects of Mazagga's Hideous Visage. Then, at Mazagga's command, the Orcs will form a defensive wall between herself and the players, and from there she will attempt to slay them using her Deadly Glance until she runs out of charges and is forced to engage in melee.

Once Mazagga is defeated, the players can search the room and gather up the treasures she has accumulated from her adoring Orcs:

5000 ep
3500 gp
1 Azurite worth 10 gp
3 Blue Quartz worth 10 gp each
1 Emerald worth 1000 gp
1 Fire Opal worth 1000 gp
1 Moss Agate worth 10 gp
1 Sardonyx worth 50 gp
1 Gold bracelet set with gems worth 5000 gp

1 Gold crown set with gems worth 3000 gp
 1 Gold tiara set with gems worth 6000 gp
 1 pair Platinum earrings with gems worth 5000 gp
 1 Silver pendant set with gems worth 5000 gp
 1 Silver tiara set with gems worth 3000 gp
 1 Silver tiara set with gems worth 6000 gp
 1 set of Wrought gold earrings worth 1100 gp
 1 Wrought silver pendant worth 900 gp
 a Phylactery of Faithfulness
 a Potion of Clairvoyance
 and a Shield +1

7. There are two Small Hatchling Nodes in the walls of this old cellar storeroom: a Small Dart Node (A, 5 hp), and a Small Gas Node (B, 6 hp). These nodes belong to the Small Hatchling (H) which occupies the archway in the room's southeast corner. They immediately attack any intruders who enter the room. The floor is littered with wooden slats from old broken-down crates. 12000 sp can be found in an intact crate beneath Node (B).

8. This stone-walled basement storeroom is 'home' to three Bog Dwellers - unless they left the room earlier (see area 17). Rotting, collapsing piles of old crates line the western wall. They contain nothing but moldy, moth-eaten old papers and rolls of fabric.

9. A group of 8 Orcs (4, 6, 8, 1, 3, 6, 7, 4 hp) occupy this large earthen chamber, standing before a Large Hatchling (H). They appear to be conducting some sort of religious ritual that the PCs do not recognize, and which in fact they have made up because they believe it will gain them audience to see the Big Mother. This is, indeed, the waiting room outside the Bog Mother's lair. PCs who speak Orc will hear the Orcs call out her name and ask to be allowed into her presence. In fact the Bog Mother is busy at the moment, and will only let them in when she is good and ready. The Orcs attack the PCs on sight. They have no treasure, but their leader (8 hp) carries three of the Bog Mother's Gifts. He consumes one of these at his first opportunity whenever he is injured.

10. This cellar storeroom contains five Bog Dwellers (2, 3, 3, 4, 3 hp) unless they left the room earlier (see area 17), and a Large Dart Node (X, 16 hp).

This node is one of three which belong to the Large Hatchling which occupies the large archway in the Entrance Chamber (room 9). They all attack any intruders who enter the room; the Large Dart Node will prefer targets who are not in melee with any of the Bog Dwellers.

A locked chest in the southwest corner of the room contains the following treasure: a gold bracelet set with gems (5000 gp), a gold brooch set with gems (3000 gp), a gold brooch set with gems (8000 gp), a wrought platinum necklace (1700 gp), a wrought platinum pendant (1100 gp), and a wrought silver and gold crown (550 gp).

11. Roots dangle down from the ceiling of this muddy earthen cave. A stream of muddy water trickles in from the east (beneath the Hatchling which blocks that doorway), departing out the passage to the northwest. The square just inside the northwest tunnel has a patch of Green Slime (9 hp) in it.

The Hatchling in the eastern passage (H) has two Small Hatchling Nodes in this room: a Small Tentacle Node (E, 9 hp), and a Small Gas Node (F, 9 hp). These Nodes immediately attack the PCs when they enter the room.

The Bog Shambler here (9 hp) retreats to room 15 if the PCs approach from area 3, leaving a trail of Green Slime as it goes. Once it reaches room 15, or if the PCs approach from any other direction, it stands and fights.

12. A single Large Gas Node (B, 11 hp) occupies this large, earthen chamber. Water trickles down the muddy walls, forming rivulets which merge into a single thin stream that flows out the passage to the south. The Large Gas Node detects the PCs as soon as they enter the passage, or as soon as they enter the chamber itself if they're sneaking, and attacks immediately.

The stream contains 8500 gp, which have been washed there by the rivulets and almost entirely hidden under a layer of mud.

13. This is another mud-walled natural chamber which once fed water to the well in area 3. The Bog Shambler here (7 hp) retreats to room 15 if the PCs

approach from the southwest. It leaves a trail of Green Slime as it goes. Once it arrives in room 15, or if the PCs approach from any other direction, it stands and fights.

14. This was the burial crypt of a nobleman and his wife. Two dried-up old corpses (no relation to the nobles) lie on the dusty stone floor where indicated. The room also contains a Bog Blight (22 hp) and a Large Tentacle Node (Z, 15 hp). This node is one of three which belong to the Large Hatchling which occupies the large archway in the Entrance Chamber (room 9). These creatures attack any intruders who enter the room. The Bog Blight 'flees' into the nobleman's corpse inside sarcophagus B after 2 rounds of combat, emerging for a final surprise attack upon the PCs when they open the lid.

Sarcophagus A contains the corpse of a noblewoman and 2500 ep in treasure.

Sarcophagus B contains the corpse of the nobleman and the following treasure: a banded agate (10 gp), a black pearl (500 gp), a blue star sapphire (1000 gp), a chrysoprase (50 gp), a golden pearl (100 gp), a piece of malachite (cp 10 gp), and a wrought silver crown (900 gp).

15. This mud-walled natural cavern is part of a complex of tunnels and chambers which once fed water to the well in area 3. Roots and tendrils dangle down from the ceiling to the floor, slowing the travel rate of PCs (but not bog monsters) through this chamber to 1" per round. The players can hack a clear path through this obstruction with edged weapons in 10 rounds.

16. A stream of muddy water trickles in from the north, departing out the west passage. There are two Bog Shamblers (7, 5 hp) in this dank, muddy natural chamber. They immediately attack any PCs who enter the room, attempting to flank them and block their exit back into room 11.

If the PCs successfully search the room they'll spot one bottom corner of an old chest poking down through the ceiling. Apparently someone buried it between the old well and the graveyard long ago,

and the erosion caused by water flowing through this room carved out enough dirt so that it can be seen from below. A little careful poking, say with a 10' pole, is enough to dislodge it and send it splashing onto the muddy floor, where it bursts – revealing a piece of Alexandrite (500 gp), and a Sardonyx (50 gp).

17. The first time the PCs pass through this stone-walled cellar corridor, the Dwellers from room 8 ooze into the corridor behind them if they go into room 10, or else the Dwellers from room 10 ooze into the corridor behind them if they go into room 8. There is an empty torch sconce on the eastern wall, directly opposite the corridor branching toward room 8.

Stat Blocks

Bog Blight (AC 7, MV 12", HD 3+3, Claw 2d3, IN Semi, SZ M)



Bog Blights are communal beings comprised of spores which thrive upon decomposing flesh. They are able to enter and re-animate corpses. If there is a corpse within 250 feet, the Bog Blight may dissolve into a swarm of spores which fly to the corpse - infesting and re-animating it. This tactic is often employed to surprise a party or attack vulnerable party members in the back ranks by taking over a corpse which is behind their front lines. A Bog Blight leaves no physical remains when it dissolves, and any equipment on it falls to the ground. The re-animated corpse takes on all of the characteristics (appearance, current hit points, etc.) of the Bog Blight which infested it. It retains

any equipment it had, though it has very little idea how to use it. The re-animated corpse may begin to act on the following round. Note that these re-animated corpses are powered biologically, rather than by evil magic, and so a Cleric's ability to Turn Undead has no effect on them.

Bog Dweller (AC 5, MV 10", HD 2, Bite 1d3+1, IN Low, SZ M)



Bog Dwellers are a gelatinous slime which clings to the decomposed remains of humans and demi-humans for structural support. They are able to flow through thin cracks (beneath doors and around Hatchlings, for example), though their movement for the round ends immediately afterward. Anyone who touches or is touched by a Bog Dweller immediately becomes encased in a constricting layer of slime, which prevents them from moving or performing any other physical action until they escape it. Escape requires a damage roll of 4 or higher by a weapon, a spell, or even bare-handed. The trapped character may attempt this on their own (taking an entire round per attempt), or a companion may try it, using up their attack for that round (and any damage dealt in excess of 6 is inflicted on the trapped victim, though also freeing them). Note that these creatures are powered biologically, rather than by evil magic, and so a Cleric's ability to Turn Undead has no effect on them.

Bog Shambler (AC5, MV 4", HD 1+2, Claw 1d3+1, IN Semi, SZ M)



Bog Shambler are a vaguely humanoid mass of animated vegetation, growing around a central core of Green Slime. Their sensory stalks perceive movement in all directions, and so they cannot be surprised by simply sneaking up upon them in the normal manner. Moreover, they leave a trail of Green Slime wherever they go - filling the surface of each movement square as they vacate it. The Bog Shambler are themselves immune to the effects of Green Slime. They attempt to encircle melee opponents with slime, living off the biological process whereby victims are dissolved and absorbed by the slime.

Green Slime (AC 9, MV 0", HD 2, No Attacks, IN Non, SZ S)

If touched by living flesh, Green Slime attaches itself and turns the creature into more Green Slime in 1d4 rounds (no resurrection possible). It eats away wood at a rate of one inch per hour, and eats away metal quickly – penetrating plate mail in 3 rounds.

Green Slime can be removed by scraping it off (infecting the scraper), surgically removed (dealing 1d6 damage to the victim), or killed with fire, cold, or a Cure Disease spell. It cannot be harmed in any other way.

Hatchling (non-combative, indestructible)

Hatchlings are strange, insectile creatures of the swamps which live by taking up residence in the entrances to subterranean passages (where one would normally expect to find a door), blocking creatures therein from moving freely and then feeding off their remains. Small Hatchlings occupy a single doorway, while Large Hatchlings fill a double door. Hatchlings grow tendrils through the walls around their doorway (two tendrils for a Small Hatchling, three for a Large Hatchling), terminating in natural weapon 'Nodes'. A Hatchling can only be killed by destroying all of its Nodes, breaking its grip on the doorframe so that passage through the door is restored.

Hatchling Node, Large (AC2, MV 0", HD 2+3, see attacks below, IN Animal, SZ M)

These are the defensive appendages of a Large Hatchling. A Hatchling Node is a spherical insectile pod on the end of a long, burrowing feeler. The feeler is embedded in the dungeon walls, leading all the way back to its Hatchling – deep through the dungeon wall, where the PCs can't see it. The Large Hatchling itself is a beetle-like crustacean with an astonishingly thick, armored carapace. It occupies an open, double-wide doorway, completely filling it and preventing characters from passing through. Its carapace is completely immune to any amount of force that a party of level 1-3 characters can bring to bear. The only way to kill a Large Hatchling (and cause it to open) is to kill all three of its Nodes. Large Hatchling Nodes come in three varieties:

- **Large Tentacle Nodes** have three long tentacles, each of which can make a melee attack every round (inflicting 1d3+2 points of damage if it hits) at a range of up to 6".
- **Large Dart Nodes** fire a spray of sharp spines, attacking up to 5 separate targets each round at a range of up to 16" and dealing 1d2 damage if they hit. Each Node may only fire 24 darts per day.
- **Large Gas Nodes** spray a noxious gas, filling an area 9" in diameter centered on a point up to

13" away from the Node. Each target in the affected area take 1d2+1 damage immediately and again on the following round if they fail their save. Each Node may only emit gas 6 times per day.

Hatchling Node, Small (AC2, MV 0", HD 1+3, see attacks below, IN Animal, SZ M)

These are the defensive appendages of a Small Hatchling. A Hatchling Node is a spherical insectile pod on the end of a long, burrowing feeler. The feeler is embedded in the dungeon wall, leading all the way back to its Hatchling – occasionally emerging from the wall here and there so that the PCs can easily see the connection. The Small Hatchling itself is a beetle-like crustacean with an astonishingly thick, armored carapace. It occupies an open doorway, completely filling it and preventing characters from passing through. Its carapace is completely immune to any amount of force that a party of level 1-3 characters can bring to bear. The only way to kill a Hatchling (and cause it to open) is to kill both of its Nodes. Small Hatchling Nodes come in three varieties:

- **Small Tentacle Nodes** have three long tentacles, each of which can make a melee attack every round (inflicting 1 point of damage if it hits) at a range of up to 3".
- **Small Dart Nodes** fire a spray of sharp spines, attacking up to 3 separate targets each round at a range of up to 14" and dealing 1d2 damage if they hit. Each Node may only fire 24 darts per day.
- **Small Gas Nodes** spray a noxious gas, filling an area 3" in diameter centered on a point up to 3" away from the Node. Each target in the affected area takes 1d2+1 damage immediately and again on the following round if they fail their save. Each Node may only emit gas 6 times per day.

Orc (AC 6, MV 9"/N", HD 1, Sword d8/Claw d4/Claw d4, IN Avg, SZ M)

Sea Hag (AC7, MV 15", HD 3, Dagger 1d4, special attacks see below, IN Avg, SZ M)

- **Hideous Visage:** All creatures must make a magic save when they first come within LOS of the Sea Hag, or lose $\frac{1}{2}$ of their Strength for 1d6 rounds. They do not have to save again for 24 hours.
- **Deadly Glance:** The Sea Hag's gaze can force a creature within 3" to save vs. poison, or lose consciousness and die unless a Cure Disease spell is applied within 24 hours. A roll to hit is required to strike the target with her gaze. She can attempt this up to three times per day.

CREDITS

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