

D&D

Scenarios

Ideas for Adventures by Lewis Pulsipher

The standard *Dungeons & Dragons* scenario is an adventure in a tunnel/cave complex, hunting for gold to steal and monsters to kill. The more sophisticated campaigns offer an entire world — wilderness, cities and countries, seas, etc — with the ultimate object virtually unchanged. But there are many interesting one-session scenarios and unusual ways of playing a campaign some suggestions for which are outlined below.

Moria. An excellent scenario to introduce novices to *D&D* is the journey of Tolkien's *Fellowship of the Ring* through Moria. Virtually every *D&D* player or potential player has read *Lord of the Rings*, so they'll have some conception of the capabilities of the individual characters even though they don't know any rules: Aragorn is a tough fighter who can heal, etc (seventh level ranger-paladin); Gandalf has spells (modified eighth level cleric), a magic ring (minor fire spells) and staff (light); Legolas is an archer (fourth level fighter with above customary archery ability), etc. The fellowship entered Moria with virtually no equipment, not even rope, which makes the game much simpler. New players find it easier to grasp the scenario objective — go in one side of Moria and come out the other — than to understand the usual gold-and-blood-lust of *D&D*. Since the players aren't coming out the way they went in, a detailed map isn't needed. The referee can draw a simple connectivity diagram on a blank sheet as the adventure progresses. Next issue's scenario will be my adaption of Moria as an adventure for beginning *D&D*ers.

Continuous Adventure. A referee once planned a six level dungeon with only one way out — in the sixth level. His idea was that the same party would pick up the adventure wherever they left off last session, rising in levels as experience was gained, until they got out or died. This doesn't seem practicable, but a more limited version may attract some refs.

Tests and Programmed Adventures. Another form of continuous adventure is a one-man test. A novice character of specified class enters the 'halls' on his own and, he hopes, comes out some hours later and several levels higher. Such things tend, inevitably, to be lotteries at best (when the referee is sympathetic or gives things away), death traps at worst.

A programmed adventure is a solo method first devised for *7&7*. The single character is given a limited number of choices and turns to the specified page and paragraph of the printed booklet to find out what happens. Such things also tend to be lotteries, however, by nature of the limitations on choices.

Another permutation is a dungeon designed for an adventure by just one or two mid-level characters (4th-6th), but other-



wise normal. The monsters can't be very tough or numerous, but the adventurer(s) should get full experience because of the risk involved. Magic-using monsters do not belong in such places.

Battle. Traditional wargamers may like this idea. Two players choose forces using some point system and enter a dungeon from different places. While searching for some treasure or treasures, they fight it out with each other and, possibly, with referee-controlled monsters. It's not an easy job for the ref, who must keep the players in separate rooms and go back and forth between them. But the game can be finished in one session, and there is a clear winner and loser, for those who prefer such things.

Monster Chaos. Each player chooses an evil or neutral monster and the group then goes on a real-time adventure. (By 'real-time' I mean players are forced to make decisions rapidly in emergencies rather than have time to think.)

Lack of Worldly Knowledge. Some referee's run campaigns that require that players may not read the *D&D* rules. Anyone who does can participate only as a referee. Naturally this makes life difficult, and is hardly realistic — after all, if you live in a world, and can talk to other adventurers (there must be some around) you'll know a lot about how it works. On the other hand, no one could know as much as a player knows after he reads the rules. A good compromise is to forbid consultation of the rules while play progresses, but this merely gives an advantage to those who can memorize large sections of the rulebooks. At any rate, in Virginia the players invented a game called 'Sorcerers and Spoons', based on what they had deduced about the workings of *D&D*, to pass the time when an official referee wasn't available.

Characters. The referee can supply a ready-made character to each player. Each character includes a detailed background, and some begin higher than first level depending on the background and on the experience and style of the player. If a character dies the player is guaranteed to get a worse replacement — this is to prevent suicides, but deaths are rare.

A more common character modification is the one-class campaign. There are no character classes as such. Each character is able to learn abilities that suit the player's preferences, within limits. Hiding in shadows as a *D&D* first level thief, hand-fighting as a first level monk, casting a *sleep* spell, fighting skill (as represented by extra hits) would all be abilities one could choose. Some abilities exclude the use of others: eg anyone selecting clerical spells would have to vow not to use sharp weapons. Some also require minimum ability scores — a minimum intelligence to cast a spell or minimum dexterity to hand fight, for example. There is much to recommend in this approach but it calls for extensive work and playtesting in order to devise the abilities schedules.

Postal. Finally there is postal *D&D*. Each player selects a party of adventurers using a point schedule devised by the referee. The player and ref engage in lengthy correspondence to carry on the adventure, but even so the player must write many conditional orders and the referee must employ discretion and initiative. Inevitably, the player has less control of events than in a face-to-face game. Things become even more complicated when one player's party encounters another's. ■