

Here are the ideas — just add imagination for

INSTANT ADVENTURES

by Michael Kelly

The players have just finished once again retrieving a small fortune from the depths of yet another dungeon. They're sitting back basking in their latest slice of limelight, while the referee is methodically populating (or repopulating) a new dungeon level.

Then one of the players idly says, "Let's do something different, not go back to that same old place." Instantly, the idea catches on with everyone in the playing group — especially with the referee, who feels a growing sense of panic. Something different? How often does a referee have "something different" that can be all set up and ready to play on a few moments' notice?

This article is designed to alleviate that problem, and stimulate variety in a campaign, by providing guidelines for the creation of several dozen simple, but perhaps untried, types of adventures. Many of these ideas, along with a big dose of imagination and some quick work with pencil and paper, can be turned into ready-to-run adventures in considerably less than an hour.

The chart of "instant adventures" can be used for more than one purpose. If the referee is pressed for time, he or she can scan the "Time" column first. "A" type adventures will generally take up to two hours to prepare, sometimes more. "B" adventures can be set up and ready

to play in somewhat less than two hours. "C" scenarios are quickly assembled, usually needing only 20 minutes or so of preparatory work.

If time is not that great a consideration, the referee can look over the list for a type of adventure that sounds intriguing. Of course, the adventure ideas, requirements and notes which describe the goings-on can be used "as is", or they can be modified to suit the circumstances of a certain campaign or a particular group of characters.

None of the suggested adventures are spelled out in great detail, and they're not supposed to be. These topics are frameworks upon which the referee must build a lot of accessories — non-player characters, maps and floor plans, treasure — topping off the creation with a plausible method for conveying to the players the information they need to know in order to begin.

For example: A referee in a hurry browses up and down the "Time" column until he sees a "C" adventure that strikes his fancy — in this case, "Salvage." The essential requirements are listed as "An item, vessel or vehicle lost in the wilderness and a rumor or map referring to same." The referee finds a place on his world to locate the wreckage of a seafaring ship (perhaps underwater, perhaps on a beach or reef) and marks that spot. Then he draws a rough map, showing only as much as necessary of the area

and its surroundings to give the players (through their characters) a good chance of locating the site.

Next, the referee makes some arrangements for the map to fall into the hands of the characters. Perhaps a local thief will accost them and offer to sell a cloak at a cheap price. Upon obtaining and examining the cloak, the players discover an old parchment sewn into the lining. It is identified as showing the whereabouts of the wreck of the *Nep-tune's Spray*, which disappeared on a voyage while carrying a fortune in silks and spices.

And so, the characters are off. Under "Notes," the referee reads that "Salvage is a high-risk adventure; there may be a fortune or it may be all gone." There is plenty of time during the actual play of the adventure for the referee to decide whether the loot can be recovered, or whether it has been ruined by exposure to water or the elements. And, it is a relatively simple matter to come up with various minor (and perhaps major) obstacles to confront the party with during and after their journey to the salvage site. But don't make the obstacles too major; the idea is to get them to play through a salvage adventure — not to kill them off, scare them away, or discourage them before they've actually taken on the mission which was designed for them to perform.

Type of Adventure	Requirements	Time	Notes
Assault/Raid (Fortress)	Maps and possibly floor plans; offensive and defensive weapons; location of critical stores; number and types of defenders.	A	
Assault/Raid (Town)	See above.	A	
Assault/Raid (Ship)	See above.	B	
Assault/Raid (Am bush)	Victims, with a list of weapons and loot.	C	
Assault/Raid (Skirmish)	Small military group (e.g. border patrol); arms, armor, and treasure.	B	
Assault/Raid ("Body-snatch")	A small military encampment.	C	This is a military operation in which an attempt is made to capture an enemy alive for interrogation purposes.
Banditry (Caravan/convoy)	Composition of forces; cargo list, and distribution of same.	B	See AD&D Monster Manual under Men (Merchant).
Banditry (Mugging)	A victim; his weapons and loot.	C	
Banditry (Building)	A building layout (e.g. bank or store); defenses and location of safe.	B	

Type of Adventure	Requirements	Time	Notes
Bounty Hunt/Posse	A wanted person or persons, preferably armed, dangerous, and with a price on their heads.	C	Characters may voluntarily go bounty hunting or may be drafted into a posse.
Brawl	Classically, a barroom scene; tables, chairs, patrons, and bar must be located and described.	C	A cliché, true, but always fun.
Breakout, jail	Prison map; defense scheme; location of all prisoners, cells, and guards; a person to rescue!	B	
Breakout, prison camp	A map of an enclosed, outdoor prison camp; location of guards and defenses.	B	Instead of breaking someone else out, perhaps the characters may have to break themselves out!
Breakout, private prison	A dungeon or tower. Otherwise as "Breakout, jail" above.	B	Rescuing a fair maiden is the classic example.
Caravan Escort	Composition of caravan (i.e. number of mules, wagons, etc.); defenses.	C	See AD&D Monster Manual, Men (Merchant); also, type of caravan should be specified (e.g. food, spices, silks, etc.).
Cattle Drive	Cattle; sellers and buyers; departure and destination points; routes to and from.	C	Not only cattle, but any type of livestock may be used; also, a trail may not yet be in existence. (See Trailblazing.)
Coup d'etat	A region with a ruler to be overthrown or discredited.	B	This region may be as small as a village or as large as an empire.
Duel, one-on-one	A real or imagined insult; a challenge; seconds and a judge; statistics and weapons of challenger.	C	One to keep in mind when a character starts to fool around with a lord's lady!
Duel, team vs. team	A "home team"; its weapons and special abilities; rules for engagement; a suitable locale.	B	Combat may be lethal or non-lethal.
Execution/Assassination	A victim; a sentence to be carried out, or an employer.	C	This should not be just a simple "hit." Rather the target should be far away, powerful, and protected.
Exploration	An unknown region; a commission to explore and report.	C	The area may simply be a possible construction site, or it may be an entire continent.
Feud, inter-family	Brief history of feud and feuding families; reason for involvement of characters.	B	
Feud, inter-business	History of feud; nature of feuding parties; fees to be paid to "hired guns."	B	
Hijack	A vehicle or vehicles to be hijacked; a reason for hijacking same.	C	
Hunt, big-game	A nasty beast; some obstacles for the player characters, and a prize for the capture of the thing.	B	The prize may be greater if the prey is brought back alive. (This is intended for sport.)
Hunt, commercial	The location of an animal lair; the treasure within; above all, the associated infants and eggs.	B	There is good money to be had selling animals, mounts in particular, on the open market. However, this can be a very high-risk venture; also, a professional hunter must be hired.)
Intrigue	A plot (to be accidentally uncovered by the players); Statistics and abilities of conspirators.	A	This usually involves a wicked relative of a ruling family attempting to usurp power by discrediting or eliminating someone near the throne. Characters may either thwart the plot or join it!
Kidnap	One victim; location of same; social status of victim; possible ransom makers.	B	Number and type of bodyguards at referee's discretion.
Madman	One berserk individual to terrorize a district, town, or quarter, by any means..	C	He may be rabid, thus contagious!

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Obstacle Course	A defined territory with several lethal and/or non-lethal obstacles.	B	Typically, a powerful individual will offer future employment; However, they must first pass one little test. Survivors get the job!
Parcel/Message Delivery	An item and nature of same; name of individual to receive item and under what conditions. Employer and terms of employment.	C	The item or message need not be necessarily known to the characters. If the item or message is of considerable power or importance, someone will surely try to rob the adventurers.
Personnel Escort	A person or persons to escort; a purpose to the voyage; employer and terms of employment.	C	
Pilgrimage Escort/Crusade	A holy shrine to visit, worship, or rid of infidels; a typical caravan with supplies.	B	See AD&D Monster Manual, Men.
Piracy	The layout of a vessel; its location (deployed or in port); crew, defenses and cargo.	B	Risky; profitable, but those caught must pay terrible dues.
Rescue, from men	Perhaps a town surrounded by hostile forces that needs reinforcements or someone about to die at the hands of unfriendly natives.	B	
Rescue, from natural forces	A good-sized earthquake, flood, fire, or blizzard should do the job; someone or something to rescue; its location and any intervening obstacles.	B	This is mostly for characters with morals, but there is an occasional reward.
Riot	An angry mob with a grudge.	C	Characters may join the mob, or be drafted to quell the riot and control looters.
Sabotage/Arson, building	Factory, shop, or other building plans; defenses; type of building and construction; location of machines and equipment inside.	B	Characters run two risks: 1) becoming wanted by the law; 2) getting caught in their own blast!
Sabotage/Arson, ship	Plans for vessel and immediate vicinity of waterfront/spaceport; nature of onboard security; nature and location of cargo.	B	See above.
Salvage	An item, vessel, or vehicle lost in the wilderness and a rumor or map referring to same.	C	Salvage is a high-risk venture; there may be a fortune or it may all be gone.
Smuggling, general	An illegal object or substance to smuggle; a source for such items.	C	The longer the smuggling goes on, the more likely the smugglers are to be caught or betrayed. Also, other underworld figures may resent the competition.
Smuggling, weapons	A war; usually revolutionaries in need of weapons and supplies. A source is needed here, too.	C	See above.
Spy/Undercover, military	A mission; methods of infiltration and exfiltration.	B	
Spy/Undercover, civil	As above, but applied in connection with police or as private investigators.	B	For example, to catch smugglers.
Sting/Switch/Swindle/Scam	Suckers, and a plan	B	Characters may perform this; better yet, it may be performed on them!
Tournament	A choice of events to enter (e.g. jousts, light-saber duels, wrestling, etc.); opponents.	B	Be sure to give the non-player characters appropriate bonuses in the statistics of their class (i.e. wrestlers should have high strength, etc.).
Trail blazing	A hitherto impenetrable swamp, sea, or mountain range; an economic need for a road through; and some businessmen to stake a venture.	C	Initially, a route must be found, in itself a dangerous undertaking; secondly, a road may need to be built.