

DEAD MAN'S HAND

Davey Jones locker. The edge of the map. And, of course, Hell. All very nasty places. But are any of them real, or are tales just born of earthly places? Well, some pirates may learn about Hell...

PREPARING TO PLAY: When all are gathered to play, and the Players are prepared, begin the adventure by following the steps given below.

Background: The Adventure will begin with your reading the following narrative, thus setting the stage for the adventure that is to follow.

The tale haunts you, even hours later. What you remember is watching other pirates wile away an evening like any other in a tavern just like any other. Some were playing poker, but, when one of them slapped his cards down, a hush fell. "A dead man's hand..." was what they whispered. You saw that he had only aces and eights. Then, that pirate drew his pistol and shot... himself. In the stillness which followed, time seemed to stop and wait. Candles flickered and died. Nobody, it seemed, was even able to speak. Then a hideous laughter blew through the place, and you saw an aged pirate in the fireplace, a ghost, curling its bony finger, as if inviting you into the bowels of Hell. Even now, as dawn approaches, the crews of several pirate ships twist and knot the stories into a tangled rigging which can only make wind for legend, that the tavern is build atop an old torture chamber and dungeons which the locals call the 'Well of Blood', or 'Neredo Well'. They speak of spirits and treasure alike in the caverns below, whose gate is the inne's old fireplace...

Legends: There are many tales of the Neredo Well, but given recent events, all are too afraid to even speak of them, forcing the party to sift through old accounts, availing but 1 roll on the chart below.

Legends

Roll	Legend of the Neredo Well
9-12	The true devils of the dungeons are those who never breathe, in life or in death
4-8	The treasure of prisoners lies beyond the ground where only ghosts can walk
1-3	The key to immortality is in the machines

EXPLORING THE WELL: Once the party sets their mind to enter and explore the lost dungeons beneath the tavern, tell the tale of their journey by the following Encounters, to be played one and all and in the order that they are presented.

Light & vision: In these dungeons, the party must have a light source (lantern, torch, etc.) or they are not going to be able to see anything.

Fearful NPCs: Given the terrifying stories of these dungeons, plus the recent events that prompted the search here, no NPCs will ever go down there.

1) The fireplace

Clearing out the fireplace, you find an obvious trapdoor in the floor. Lifting the heavy slab, you notice for the first time devilish marks burned in the back of the chimney, like the ghosts of those poor souls swallowed by the stone throat of the Devil. In the darkness below, there is nothing to see or hear.

Beneath the fireplace, there is a 30' drop down to the cavern floor of Encounter 2.

2) Ghostly grotto

You drop down through the darkness, landing on a sandy cavern floor, surrounded by skeletons, all of them broken and contorted from their own fall long ago. The edges of this dark cavern are lost to sight, and strange echoes stir in the blackness. Voices, not human, seem to react to your every movement.

If one stops to listen, an Intuition Check can then discern that the echoes, while strange, are but of one's own movements. However, the floor itself is perilous, with sinkholes hidden beneath only a thin layer of dust. Each Turn one moves about the cavern there is a 5 in 12 chance he steps in one, increased by a factor of 1 for every 30 Burden he carries (as it throws off his balance). Once in any sinkhole, a Character has 1 Round before he falls through to his doom. Escaping can be done with a Brawn Check at -3 or a Saving Throw at 8.

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3) Rope bridge

The tunnel opens into a large cavern, where the floor vanishes into a dark abyss. No bottom can be seen or heard. Not even an echo is allowed to escape the infernal darkness below. Spanning this chasm are three ropes—two high and a third down low—forming a crude bridge.

The ropes are old and may break. For every 30 total Burden between bodily and carried weight that is on them at any time there is a 1 in 12 chance they will snap. There is no way around the abyss. Those who fall in are lost.

4) Underground river

A winding honeycomb of tunnels leads steadily downward, ending at last on the sandy shores of an underground river. Though many tunnels open here, there is only one on the other side of the river, doubtless a safeguard against any escaping prisoners, who would surely become lost in the maze behind you.

The river is only about 5' deep. However, it is filled with man-eating devil-fish. Each Round one is in the water he will be attacked by these fish, which number in the hundreds and thus cannot be killed, but attack at +6 for Base Damage 6. The river is 30' wide at the narrowest point if someone tries to jump it. Once someone has either been in or over the water he may make an Intuition Check to notice something glittering on the bottom. It is in reality a gilded treasure-box, locked but holding 100 doubloons and an dull silver key. If the devil-fish are attempted to be destroyed en mass with an explosive, it will also destroy the treasure-box and its contents.

5) Vault door

The tunnel passes through a few chambers with rough-hewn walls, each filled with the wreckage of medieval torture devices. At the other end of this twisted jungle of rotting wood and rusting metal, you come a massive door, like that of a vault. It has three keyholes.

The door is too strong to be opened by force, and its locks cannot be picked. However, all three locks must be defeated before it will open. If the silver key was found in Encounter 4, it can open one of them, but once used, it will remain fixed in that keyhole, leaving two others to be solved. For each keyhole is locked with a puzzle—writing in whatever language the party speaks will be etched into the door around each keyhole.

The first lock bears the words 'Knock in the name of the beast'. One must steadily knock either 13 or 18 times next to this keyhole. Solving this particular puzzle is worth 10 Experience Points.

The second lock bears the words 'Give to the gargoyle the proper final tribute; OTTFSS'. One must slide 8 coins into this keyhole. Solving this particular puzzle is worth 20 Experience Points.

The third lock bears the words 'Feed me with the golden plenty to equal the weight of my heart and I shall give it up to you'. One must pour into the keyhole enough sand (which is readily available throughout these tunnels) to equal the approximate weight of one's hand. Solving this particular puzzle is worth 30 Experience Points.

6) The Devil's Hand

The vault door opens to reveal a chamber of the finest masonry, and filled with the finest treasure of Europe! Skeletons swim in piles of gold coins and choke on jewels of every color. It is a true trial for a man to take it all in before scooping up the nearest of the hoard in his arms.

The entire treasure, totaling roughly 92000 in coin and 54000 in jewels, is cursed. Anyone who takes any of it will lose life—every 1000 gold he takes is a randomly lost Ability Point (roll D12, a '1' is Luck, '8' Brawn, etc. but '9-12' is no loss). This loss remains even if the treasure is returned. A Search can find a golden hand—not cursed.

FINISHING THE ADVENTURE: The treasure of 'The Devil's Hand' is actually worth a great deal to many royal families. If pawned merely to pirate captains or merchants, it will be worth about 5000. However, if taken to Europe and presented to any governor there, it will be worth 15000.