Into the Hive

by the Goblin's Henchman

Contents

Introduction

This adventure is designed to be a one-shot dungeon. It is also a **map-less dungeon**, and relies on a 'procedural' method to navigate through the dungeon, by means of a series of 'point encounters'. Neither the DM nor the players actually know what is coming up next.

As such, aside from having the appropriate monster reference books, nothing is needed in advance except the normal assortment of polyhedral dice (i.e. D4, D6, D8, D10, D12 and D20), and an understanding of how the use the procedural method.

The key premise that underpins this idea is that the dungeon is essentially a labyrinth, and cannot be mapped in any meaningful way. Even simply trying to retrace your steps is not possible. To some extent, this concept requires some **buy-in** from the players, who might otherwise be tempted to 'break' the dungeon.

The dungeon is envisaged to be a disorientating labyrinth of tunnels and chambers having 4 distinct Zones (Zones 1 to 4). Zone 0 is outside the labyrinth and Zone 4 is at the very heart of the labyrinth, with Zones 1 to 3 lying between Zones 0 and 4.

Credit: The procedural method in this adventure takes inspiration from **Jason Cordova's** 'Labyrinth Move' devised for Dungeon World. Jason's method uses two D6s to chart progress through the 'labyrinth', whereas this method uses two D10s (but has a similar probability profile). In addition, the present procedural method uses the full accompaniment of standard polyhedral dice (i.e. D4, D6, D8, D10, D12 and D20) to generate information about the dungeon, so as to make this a standalone adventure.

Procedural method explained (Steps 1 to 5):

Before this system is explained, it should be noted, an Excel spreadsheet has been created to do the grunt work for you. I prefer to roll dice. The workbook can be found in this dropbox folder:
https://tinyurl.com/y8fys6yc

Overview
The DM (or even the players) need to roll a D4, D6, D8, 2 x D10, D12 and (1 to 4) D20s, and consult the Tables in **Appendix 1**.

Step 1 – Player declaration
The players need to state what they are attempting to achieve. With reference to this specific adventure, the PCs are probably trying to locate the Queen of the giant ant colony, or the reverse, trying to leave again. Any embellishments they might provide in this description may incline the DM to award a +bonus to the progress determination made in Step 3.

Step 2 – Location and dungeon dressing
While it is conceived that the PCs explore for about ten minutes during this check, something of note will happen within that window of time (this is a bit like a combat melee round, i.e. a minute of action with a result determined at the end of the melee round i.e. with a die roll). Step 2 gives information about where that notable event happens, or at least where the PCs are after their window of exploration.

To do this, in Step 2 a **D4**, **D6** and **D8** are rolled, and **Table 1** to **Table 3** are consulted respectively.

These rolls define the shape, size and anything notable about the PC's location.

Step 3 – Progress and encounters
Next **2 x D10** are rolled and summed together giving a (bell-shaped probability curve with values in the) range from 2 to 20.

Table 4 is consulted and this gives information about the progress the PC have made towards the objective stated in Step 1 (high values being good).

Table 4 also details if a monster is encountered (or not). If a monster is encountered go Step 4, else to Step 5.

Step 4 – Defining the monster
A D12 is rolled and **Table 5** consulted to see what the monster's reaction is and/or what it is doing.

Next the DM will roll a number of D20s equal to the Zone number the PC are in and consult **Table 6**. That is, if the PCs progress from Zone 2 to Zone 3, the DM rolls 3 x D20. Using the rules, one D20 is selected and **Table 7** is consulted to give the type of monster encountered.

Step 5 – Taking stock
Once any encounter is dealt with, the players will need to decide what to do next, which probably involves going back to Step 1 and starting over.

That's it. If you go to **Appendix 1** - Procedural Tables & Rules and work through the tables, the procedure should be reasonably straight forward. Also **Appendix 4** - Template (Roll Tracker) has a template to track the results of this procedural method.

Breaking the system
Players might try to break the system. Aside from discouraging this, there are at least some good ingame reasons why this would not work.

The giant ant's nest in this adventure is a maze of undulating tunnels, twist turns and false trails and dead ends. There are essentially no straight lines here. It was created by the formic mind for the formic mind. Therefore, trying to 'cheat' your way to the goal of finding the queen will (probably) not really help. Yes, a divination type spells may tell the PC's that the Queen is downwards and off to the left a bit. But how do you get there? There is no direct route, and to get there might involve going in what might appear to be the wrong direction for quite a long time. Zone 4 (where the queen is most likely to be found) is not necessarily only 'down', it might be in an area quite close to Zone 2, but only accessible via Zone 3. Zone 2 might even be below zone 3 and Zone 4 might be an inclined Z-shaped plane. In most cases, the tunnels in the mound are not close together, a tunnel might be encased in earth walls 100 feet thick. A portable holes and/or stone to mud spells can't help here, even if you knew which direction you wished to travel. Teleporting blindly would also be risky, you might materialise within the earth of the mound. This adventure is also aimed at low level parties which shouldn't have the high-power means to 'break' the dungeon. Finally, if there is the chance the players will not want to buy into the concept, then have the chat upfront.

Customization
It self-evident this system is customizable. The labyrinth could be a swamp, abandoned space station, archipelago of islands, and likewise the monsters could be swapped for different monsters. The only thing you may wish to bear in mind is **Table 4** - Progress and encounters (Progress and encounters) and **Table 7** - Monster Encountered **(Monsters encountered)** are weighted for probability. Therefore, if you want the 'plebe' monsters to mostly appear in Zone 1 and the tougher monsters mainly appear in Zone 4, and the 'wild-card' monsters to appear whenever, then try to mirror the order in which the types of monsters appear in **Table 7** - Monster Encountered **e.g.:**

Roll	Template Encounter	Lizardman Swamp	Ruined Temple City	Forever Forest	Chaos Archipelago
1 -6	Plebs / base troops	Bullywugs	Cultists	Goblins; kobolds	Slaver / thugs/ natives
7-11	Random monsters (flavour)	Misc. swampy critters	occults-type monsters	Misc. forest beasts	Misc. Sea beasts
12-18	Shock troops (real threat)	Lizardmen	Clerics & retinue	gnolls; hobgoblins	Pirates / Sahuagin
19	False end; decoy; trap	Medusa / King Lizard	Lesser Demon	Hill Giant; Ogre	Slave Lord
20	Boss encounter	Salamander	High Priest	Goblin Shaman	Sea Hag coven

If this adventure is too hack-and-slash for you, then replace outcome 19 with prepared puzzle/traps.

The adventure

This adventure has mainly been written for AD&D 1e, but has monster references to OSRIC (2nd printing) and to Sword and Wizard.

It is aimed for an adventuring party summing about 20 levels, with no single character being higher than 5th level.

Background

The remote town of **Tnatnaig** is located near a giant ant's nest, known locally as the 'Hive'. The Hive is a hill-sized mound of earth.

There are various interests in **Tnatnaig** that want the Hive Destroyed. A decade ago a determined attempt was made to eradicate the Hive. This raid cost the lives of many townsfolk, and was thought to have succeeded in killing the queen ant.

This raid had an unforeseen consequence. With the decline of the ants, a band of gnolls moved into the Hive's surface caves, and began raiding the surrounding country side. Whenever, threaten, the gnolls simply took shelter in the Hive and could not be found. The gnolls were later driven out, from within, when the giant ant colony reasserted itself.

The Hive has hundreds of cave like-entrances. The inside of the Hive is a veritable labyrinth of tunnels and chambers. The tunnels weave, undulate and double back on themselves in way not comprehensible to the non-formic mind. Dead ends and empty chambers are quite common, because the giant ants still have not fully recovered in numbers. Some invasive species have made their home in the Hive, but live in the spaces not yet reoccupied by the giant ants.

To navigate the Hive, use the procedural method in **Appendix 1**, rolling the dice indicated. Please note, retracing your steps is generally not possible due to the size and complexity of the Hive. Also, like a busy city, the monsters are always moving location, even entering and leaving the Hive.

NPC's and plot hooks

The following NPC live in **Tnatnaig** and have an interest in the Hive:

- **Bulla (***town smith***)** – retired town guard who took a mandible to the knee. He hates the ants, and will do **repairs for free** if he thinks it will harm the Hive

- **Clypeus** (*leader of the Formic Widows and Widowers*) – his group want to avenge the deaths of the villages lost a generation ago. They have a generous fund set aside for this purpose and will pay a good sum for the **Hive Queen's head**.

- **Elbidnam** (*Druid*) – **wants his apprentice** (Antinhim) found; he is believed to have entered the Hive, the apprentice has an unnatural interest in these giant insects.

- **Emmet** (*Mayor*) – wants to **quash the rumours** that gnolls have domesticated giant ants and are planning to attack the town. He will pay an adequate sum for each gnoll ear returned to him.

- **Eatna** (*townsperson of low status*) - wants his **daughter's body recovered** from the Hive. She was in the militia that raided the Hive and never returned. She has an amber broach in the shape of a beetle. For help, he will swear fealty to the God of any PC promising to help him.

- **Gaster** (*bored city merchant and purveyor of exotic foods*) - **giant ant larvae** are a local delicacy, and are known as 'dirt lobsters'. In the big cities giant ant larvae command eye-watering prices. Gaster will pay adequately for any giant ant larvae. The larvae do not need to be alive, but they cannot be spoilt.

- **Nemodba** (*beast-master*) – will pay handsomely for any <u>living</u> **giant ant larvae**. The giant ant larvae must be kept warm and humid if they are to survive and hatch. For a captured living **Queen** the beast-master will nearly any sum.

- **Occiput** (*healer*) – wants the **stinger glands** from Giant Warrior Ants, and will promise to heal anyone in return for these. He is really an agent working for Leah Cim (see *'& Magazine', Issue 11, pages 58-71*).

- **Petiole** (*thief*) – has an ancient map that indicates the Hive is located over an **abandoned temple complex**. She wants someone to enter the Hive and clear the path for her, so she can find the Temple's entrance (and the riches within). She is cunning and may offer to guide the party to the Hive for a little coin, but will slip way in the Hive when it suits her.

- **Tarsus** (*tavern owner*) – wants **ant trophies** (mandibles, heads, legs etc.) to embellish his inn. He will pay a little coin for these trophies, but prefers to barter lodging in exchange.

- **Tergite** (*head of the town guard*) – thinks the ants should be **left alone**. Doesn't like troublemakers. Outsiders are usually troublemakers.

- **Xaroht** (*Hill Dwarf entrepreneur*) - has bought (on the cheap) the land upon which the Hive resides (ostensibly to exploit local mineral deposits). This has made him a laughingstock in the town. His grand (and secret) plan is somehow to kill the Queen ant, and then sell the vacated living space to his Hill Dwarf kindred. If he can achieve his goal he would become very rich indeed. He figures, the disgruntled townsfolk would prefer Hill Dwarf neighbours (or even Halflings) in place of giant ants or gnolls. His funds are limited, but his promises are large.

Appendix 1 - Procedural Tables & Rules

D4 –size

1   small chamber
2   medium chamber
3   large chamber
4   corridor

Table 1 - Chamber size

D6 – shape

1   amorphous in shape (easy going)
2   amorphous in shape (some obstacles)
3   amorphous in shape (hard going)
4   amorphous in shape (partly flooded)
5   spheroidal in shape (round or oval)
6   polygonal in shape (e.g. hexagonal, octagonal etc.)

Table 2 - Chamber shape

D8 – dressing

1   notable temperature
2   notable smell
3   notable taste
4   notable noise
5   notable geo/bio-feature
6   notable air current
7   notable humidity
8   notable illumination

NB - the DM will need to adlib here. That said, in **Appendix 2 -** Detailed chamber dressing is given.

Table 3 - Chamber dressing

Summing of 2 x D10 – Progress and encounters

Roll	Monster Encountered	Progress
2	encountered	Gone the WRONG way: -1 Zones
3	not encountered	
4	encountered	
5	not encountered	
6	encountered	No progress: 0 Zones gained
7	not encountered	
8	encountered	
9	not encountered	
10-16	encountered	Good progress: +1 Zones gained
17	not encountered	
18	encountered	Great progress: +2 Zones gained
19	not encountered	
20	encountered	

Table 4 - Progress and encounters

D12 – Monster's actions

1   at a tactical disadvantage
2   resting
3   eating
4   building
5   cleaning
6   curious
7   hiding
8   responsive
9   alert
10   aggressive
11   ambush-ready
12   at a tactical advantage

Table 5 - Monster reaction

D20s – Type of monster encountered

Zone 1 - roll 1 x D20 (reroll if 19 or 20)
Zone 2 - roll 2 x D20 (select the lowest number)
Zone 3 - roll 3 x D20 (select the highest number)
Zone 4 - roll 4 x D20 (select the highest number)

Table 6 - Zone and D20's

Use the value from **Table 6** (inclusive of applying the rules) to determine the kind of monster encountered below:

Roll	No.	Monster type
1	1	Worker ant
2-4	D4+1	Worker ants
5-6	2D4+2	Worker ants; + 1 warrior ant per 5 workers
7	D4+1	Giant fire beetles
8	D3+1	Carrion crawlers
9	D6+3	Giant centipedes
10	D2	Slithering trackers
11	1	Giant assassin bug (see **Appendix 3**)
12-14	1	Warrior ant
15-17	D4+1	Warrior ants
18	2D4+2	Warrior ants
19	1	False Queen; 3D4+3 worker ants; + 1 warrior ant per 5 workers; +10 larva per worker ant
20	1	(true) Queen; 4D4+4 worker ants; + 1 warrior ant per 4 workers; +10 larva per worker ant

==#Still to include references to MM1, OSRIC and SW==

Table 7 - Monster Encountered

Appendix 2 - Detailed chamber dressing

	Temperature	Smell	Taste	Noise
1	freezing	acrid	acidic	buzzing
2	very cold	chlorine	bilious	chinking
3	very cold	cut grass	bitter	clicking
4	icy	dank, mouldy	burning/biting	cracking
5	uncomfortably cold	fetid	buttery	creaking
6	cool	fishy	fiery	crumping
7	cool	fruity	fishy	grating
8	cool	hay / straw	greasy	hissing
9	hot and cold	manure	herbal	humming
10	hot and cold	metallic	lemony	jingling
11	hot and cold	minty	meaty	rustling
12	hot and cold	ozone	metallic	scraping
13	hot	pine	oniony	scratching
14	hot	putrid	peppery	screeching
15	uncomfortably hot	rotting vegetation	perfumy	scuttling
16	blistering	salty, wet	salty	shaking
17	scorching	sawdust	sour	slithering
18	very hot	sulphurous	spicy	squeaking
19	very hot	urine	sweet	tapping
20	extremely hot	woodlands	vinegary	thumping

	geo/bio-feature	air current	humidity	illumination
1	bats	air totally still	bone dry	central localized glow
2	blind fish in pools	buffeting wind	bone dry	coloured auroral-like smoke
3	caustic pools	cold current of air	very dry	dimly lit
4	columns	cross-breeze	very dry	flame spouting tar pits
5	crystals	downdraft	very dry	fluorescent minerals
6	deflected stalactite	dry current of air	dry	glow bugs
7	lily pads/ shelfstones	gentle breeze	dry	glowing algae
8	low ceiling	headwind	dry	highly reflective pools of mercury
9	mounds	light breeze	sticky humid	iridescent surfaces
10	mushrooms	local downdraft	sticky humid	pearlescent mist
11	pits	local updraft	light mist	phosphorescence mushrooms
12	rodents	mini-cyclone	misty	prisms of light detracted from crystals
13	roots	pulsing air currents	foggy	rainbows in the mist
14	slippery surfaces	strong wind	unpleasantly humid	shafts of natural looking light
15	sloped floor	swirling breeze	unpleasantly humid	slot-like ceiling illuminations
16	splattermite	tailwind	armpit humid	strange hovering ribbons of light
17	stalactites	updraft	very humid	tapetum lucidum from watching eyes (eyes reflecting light)
18	stalagmites	very strong air current	very humid	three colours of light
19	veins of minerals	wet current of air	very humid	two colours of light
20	very muddy	windy	extremely humid	well lit

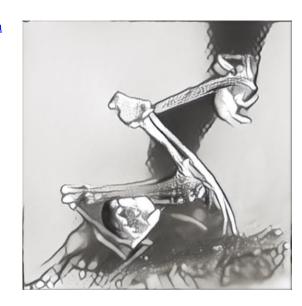## Table 8 - Detailed dungeon dressing

Appendix 3 - New Monsters

Assassin Bug, Giant

	AD&D	White Box D&D
Frequency:	Uncommon	
No. Appearing:	1-8	
Armor Class:	4	4 [15]
Move:	3"*12"	3"*12"
Hit Dice:	4 + 4	4 + 4
% in Lair:	70%	
Treasure Type:	C	
No. of Attacks:	1	1
Damage/Attack:	2-8	2-8
Special Attacks:	See below	See below
Special Defenses:	Nil	
Magic Resistance:	Standard	
Intelligence:	Low	
Alignment:	Chaotic Evil	Chaos
Size:	L	
Psionic Ability:	Nil	
Saving Throw		13
Level/XP Value:	650 +5/HP	650 +5/HP

The giant assassin bug is a giant version of the normally sized 'assassin spider' (also known as an 'assassin bug'). This is not a creature to be tackled alone, and is a prowling thief's nightmare. While the assassin spider does not make a web for itself, it can climb other spider webs, with **Giant Spiders** (MMI, page 90) being one of its favourite prey. It also devours other giant insect, often infiltrating giant ant nest. Therefore, Assassin Spiders are often found in the same environments as giant insects and other giant spiders.

The Assassin Spider has a normally proportioned spider body, which joins to an unusually long 'neck', which extends upwards about 6 feet. Its powerful head is equipped with two massive chitinous scythe-shaped mandibles which are as long as the Assassin Spider's neck. The spider's tree trunk thick neck may appear to be a tempting target, but in reality it is very heavily armored and so in effect no weaker than the rest of the spider's body.

The mandibles are armor-piercing and deliver a fearsome slicing/crushing attack. If the spider makes a successful to hit roll, it grabs its prey with its formidable mandibles and lifts them at least 6 feet into the air. Unless the victim has (and retains a grip on) a polearm, it cannot hope to hit the spider in combat (even then with at least -4 on their hit roll).

Worse still, thereafter the victim's armor class (**AC**) is worsened by 4 units due to lost manoeuvrability and as a result of the crushing/slicing action of the spider's mandibles as they relentlessly come together.

In subsequent rounds, each time a successful to hit roll is made **(i)** the amount of damage done (i.e. normally 2-8 HPs) increases in multiples of x2, and **(ii)** the victim's AC is again also diminished by 4 more units, i.e.:

First hit	2D4 HPs	AC reduced by 4
Second hit	4D4 HPs	AC reduced by 4 more
Thirds hit	6D4 HPs	AC reduced by 4 more (etc) … and so on.

If the victim is reduced to -10 HPs (which is the Assassin Spiders aim), the PC is sliced in half.

The spider is single-minded and will focus on one victim at a time unless severely provoked.

Size [ ] `D4`

| 1 - small | 2 - medium | 3 - large | 4- corridor |

Shape [ ] `D6`

| 1-4 - amorphous | 5 - spheroidal | 6 - polygonal |

Feature [ ] `D8`

| 1 - temperature | 2 - smell | 3 - taste | 4 - noise |
| 5 - geo/bio formations | 6 - wind | 7 - humidity | 8 - light |

Start Zone | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | `Sum 2D10`

2	3	4	5	-->	-1 Zone lost	(backwards)
6	7	8	9	-->	0 Zones gained	(same level)
10 -16	17	18		-->	+1 Zones gained	(good progress)
19	20			-->	+2 Zones gained	(great progress)

Finish Zone | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Encounter | Y | N | --> shaded = encounter

Monster's Mood [ ] `D12`

1 - sleeping	2 - resting	3 - eating	4 - digging
5 - cleaning	6 - curious	7 - hiding	8 - cautious
9 - responsive	10 - alert	11 - aggressive	12 - ambush-ready

`D20s`

Zone 1 (i.e. 1 xD20)	[ ]	-->	Re-roll if 19 or 20
Zone 2 (i.e. 2 xD20)	[ ][ ]	-->	Select Lowest
Zone 3 (i.e. 3 xD20)	[ ][ ][ ]	-->	Select Highest
Zone 4 (i.e. 4 xD20)	[ ][ ][ ][ ]	-->	Select Highest

Monster [ ]   D20 result [ ] --> i.e. cross-reference with encounter table

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