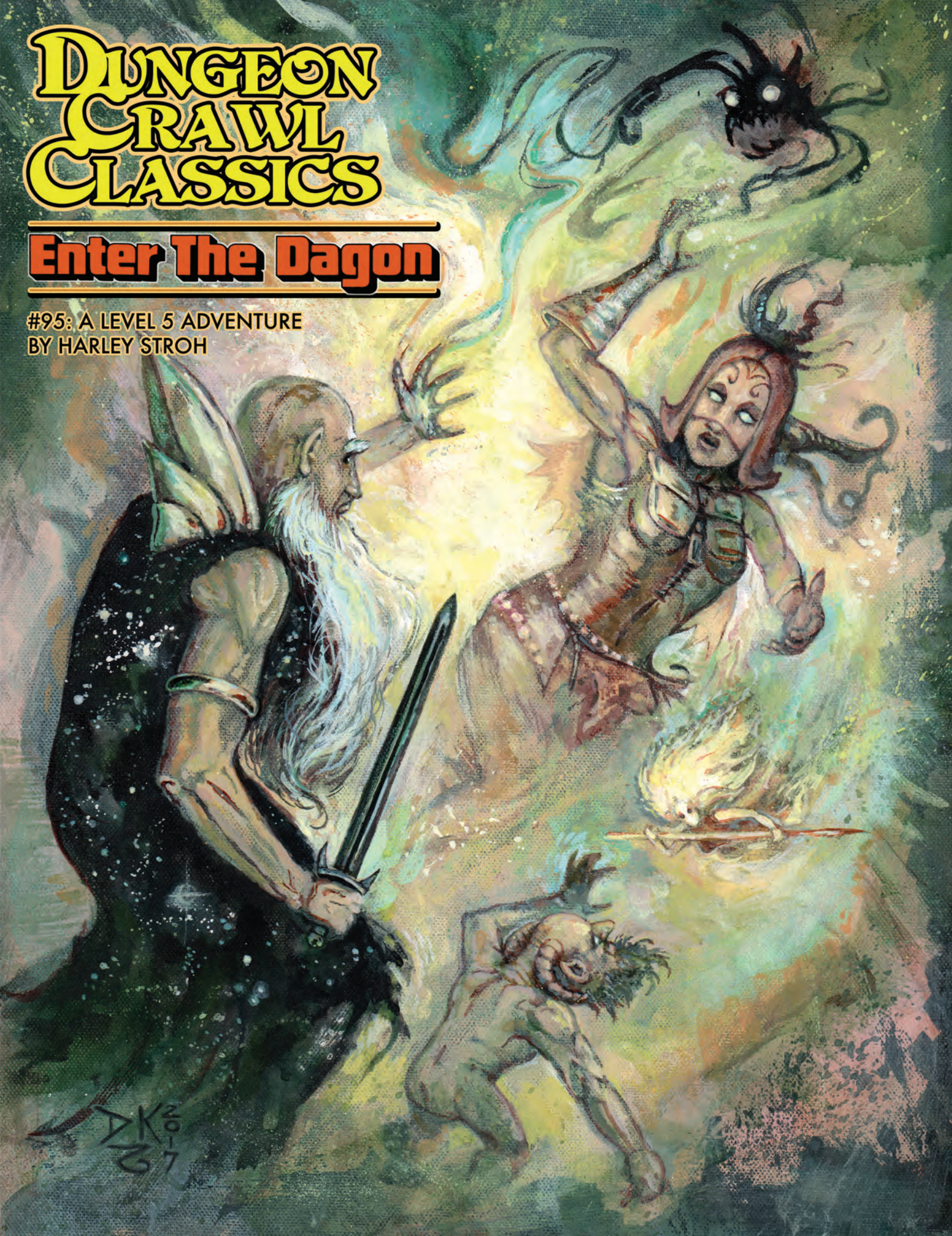


DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS

Enter The Dagon

#95: A LEVEL 5 ADVENTURE
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ART OVER



Enter The Dragon



ENTER THE DAGON

A LEVEL 5 ADVENTURE

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Playtested at Gen Con 2015 and Gen Con 2016. Thanks to the hundreds of characters who died to
bring this module into your hands!

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INTRODUCTION



Remember the good old days, when adventures were underground, NPCs were there to be killed, and the finale of every dungeon was the dragon on the 20th level? Those days are back. Dungeon Crawl Classics adventures don't waste your time with long-winded speeches, weird campaign settings, or NPCs who aren't meant to be killed. Each adventure is 100% good, solid dungeon crawl, with the monsters you know, the traps you remember, and the secret doors you know are there somewhere.

Welcome to *Enter the Dagon*, a level 5 adventure modeled after the spell duel tournaments run at Gen Con 2015 and 2016. As in the *Enter the Dagon* tournaments, PCs will be expected to spell duel a host of challengers. Judges prepping for the adventures could do little better than to watch the classic films *Enter the Dragon* and *Game of Death* before running their games.

While the heart of the adventure lies in the arcane death matches, the party's survival secretly rests on the shoulders of the other classes. The PC spell duelist (whether wizard, elf, cleric, or thief) is dangerously outclassed by the other contestants; obedient wizards expecting a fair challenge will be sorely disappointed.

Seasoned reavers will know better: in order to survive Dagon's machinations, they will have to fight.

Before the adventure is over, all the classes will be held to account. Stealth, trickery, and bloody violence can all be employed to help balance the scales. Warriors, halflings, and thieves, especially, will be called upon to be both cunning and courageous in the face of certain death on the Isle of Dagon.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Sorcerers and warlocks traffic in souls, the names of demons, and forbidden knowledge. As such, there are few places in the Known Realms that strike fear into the hearts of wizards or elves – but the Isle of Dagon is such a place.

The isle itself is a mystery. It appears and vanishes at will, emerging from a drifting fog bank one day only to disappear scant weeks later behind (beneath?) the waves of a crashing storm. The isle is never discovered by accident. Instead, it appears only when it wants to be found, and only by those whom the isle deems worthy.

To common folk, the island is a place of menace and foreboding; the merest sight of the island is an omen presaging bad fortune and tragedy. But to wizards, the island is principally known as the near-mythic location of an arcane death match – a series of spell duels to the death. The timing of these duels is always irregular: the contest might be held once a month, once a decade, or not for entire centuries. However, the memory of wizards is long, and the deadly occult affair holds a special allure to sorcerers hoping to prove their mettle.

An untold number of wizards have traveled to the island

to take part in these death matches, never to return. However, legends persist that the wizards that do survive go on to become the mightiest warlocks and sorcerers of their age, armed with fell knowledge and arcane secrets beyond peer.

What is certainly true is this: Many enter the contests, but only the most cunning and powerful can hope to survive.

THE SECRET MASTERS

While by some accounts the isle itself lays claim to a certain sentience, its first and final masters are the occult practitioners collectively known as the Order of Dagon. Ageless sorcerers, the order seems to exist beyond the reach of time or the turmoil of the world. (Or, as some sages aver, the secret masters *orchestrate* the turmoil of the world.)

For all its legendary might, the Order cannot survive without the regular replenishment of key magical components – components which can only be harvested from living spellcasters. The Order hosts death matches to secure those most precious of arcane resources: the organs of wizards and elves.

Contrary to the fabulous tales of arcane might, no champion has ever emerged triumphant from the bloody death matches, nor are there any sorcerers (living or dead) who can honestly lay claim to the title of Master of Dagon. (Foolhardy is the charlatan that dares to do so.)

THE DEATH MATCH

Only the most powerful spellcasters are invited to the Isle of Dagon.

While the death matches appear to occur at random, sages and other students of the heavens can confirm that they are always aligned to key celestial events. Powerful wizards are seldom surprised when Dagon's masked heralds deliver their invitations on starry, moonless nights, when the air is ripe with the stink of rotting seaweed.

Wizards and their retainers begin arriving several days before the duels, partaking of the hospitality of the Black Order and its insect servitors. Duelists are feted as regents; every request and desire (no matter how slight or decadent) is immediately met. Wizards are fed the finest meals, offered strange spirits and wines, and treated to whatever entertainments they desire (as best the insects can perform). In the days and hours before the death matches, any one of the duelists could be mistaken for an overlord or empress.

A wizard's retinue is far less fortunate. They are regarded as filthy animals, tolerated at best and violently punished at worst. Competing wizards have the unquestionable right to demand the punishment or death of any non-duelist for the slightest infraction (whether real or imagined), and only the word of another wizard can stay this punishment.

The death matches take place over a series of nights, high atop a pair of rocky outcroppings connected by a narrow stone bridge. At the appointed hour, the wizards are anointed with sacred oils, arrayed in rich, white robes, and proceed with their retinue along the streets of the isle to the high prominence.



Once the duelists ascend the worn steps, neither is permitted to leave until one is dead. The duels are attended by everyone on the island, and are typically solemn affairs, with each duelist's retinue donning black. Any interference by outsiders is swiftly punished by death, and all attendees are expected to aid in the capture and slaughter of offenders.

The death matches use a simplified form a spell dueling, as outlined in Appendix A (and identical to the rules used for the Gen Con tournament and published in the *Goodman Games Gen Con 2016 Program Guide*). Spells are favored, but wizards can also cross the bridge to engage in melee combat. Magic items, ranged weapons, and the use of poison are expressly prohibited and result in the immediate execution of the cheat – but only if the PCs are caught.

(Clever judges will note that these constraints can be exploited by the PCs. If they can somehow make it appear that an opposing duelist is cheating, the crowd will do the PCs' work for them.)

Following the match, the body of the loser is borne away by Dagon's masked servitors (ostensibly to be mourned and cremated, but see below). The loser's retinue is condemned to a violent end: a mob of the insect servitors cast aside their masks and hurl themselves upon the unfortunate souls, tearing them limb from limb before ravenously devouring the corpses.

The winner of the death match is borne away atop a grand palanquin at the head of a triumphal march. While the wiz-

ard's retinue is treated to overflowing horns of ale and spits of roasted meats, the triumphant wizard retires with the Black Order to a more dignified celebration as they survey fine wines and contemplate mastery of the universe.

DAGON'S SECRET

Powerful spellcasting warps both the universe *and* the caster. The organs of powerful wizards – imbued with latent arcane power – have always been sought and coveted by wicked sages and purveyors of woe.

The Black Order hosts its spell duels in order to harvest organs from powerful spellcasters. The defeated casters are borne in secret to the abattoir (area 1-3) and processed by the insect servitors. The flesh, heart's blood, and cranial fluid are rendered into the sweetmeats, pâtés, and fatty wines served to the duelists, while the more potent organs are used to sustain the Black Order's eternal youth, fuel their dread spells, and maintain their mastery over the island.

The most coveted of the organs are those of the tournament's winner: the Master of Dagon, who, following the tournament, veritably crackles with arcane energies. Led to a feast hall high atop the island, the newly crowned Master of Dagon is plied with drugged wine, placed atop the table, and slowly eaten alive. Paralyzed, yet fully awake, sorcerers live for hours as their organs are carefully removed – some to be eaten by the Order and others to be fed to the gaping black stone maw at the heart of the isle.

GEN CON 2015

This adventure was originally run as a tournament at Gen Con 2015, and updated and evolved for Gen Con 2016. Here are some photos of the tournaments and winners!



Above: Harley running tournament sessions. Someday you have to game with him.

Below: The tournament championship belts in repose.



Below left: *Enter the Dragon* spell duel finalists, led by winner Mike Markey showing off his championship belt! From left to right: Nita Bittman, Connor Skach, Aaron Koelman, Mike Markey, Harley Stroh.

Below right: Harley wandering around the hotel carrying the tournament belt.



GEN CON 2016



Above right: A large crowd gathered to hear the tournament results announced.

Left: Joseph Goodman shows off the tournament belt to the crowd.



Left: Harley Stroh presents the belt to the winner.

Below: Tournament winner Silas Moore.

