

OFF-TRACK: The Uncharted Swamp

A modular adventure supplement thing for players, characters, and player characters who *will not be railroaded*.

Levels 1 - 5

Brian Cooper



Labyrinth Lord
Compatible Product

OFF-TRACK: The Uncharted Swamp

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One of the hallmarks of old-school-style role-playing games is a preference for player-driven rather than referee-dominated plots. The reasons for this opposition are that role-playing requires active player participants and an honest game cannot have a foregone conclusion. But creating a true sandbox in which the players characters are free to explore in any direction, their actions seemingly limited only by those actions' consequences, is really dang hard.

For instance, let's say there's a path that leads from a village to a dungeon. Or several paths. Each path is dark, twisty, and overgrown— and has its own set of preplanned challenges. The players have chosen to travel from the village to the dungeon. But they don't want to use any of the paths. They don't even want to creep along in the undergrowth while staying *near* the path. They want to traipse through miles of uncharted wilderness and approach the dungeon from the opposite side. Good for them—they outsmarted the enemy. But they've also outsmarted you. (If you're thinking, "my players love it when I just wing it!" stop reading now.)

The following pages aim to solve the problem of dealing with random overland movement through a swamp by offering the referee a really really good random encounter table that doesn't feel random, but instead hangs together in a meaningful way. There is no map of The Swamp. These encounters are primarily intended to assist in

just-in-time world-building through a mainly featureless environment. Some of the encounters do describe a lair or other fixed location so the referee may want to sketch a map in order to record locations as they are encountered. Otherwise, the location is less important than who the characters meet and when and how.

Each encounter has a day and night version. Both versions describe the same creature(s), but with sensitivity as to how light and darkness would affect their actions. For instance: by day, a fresh corpse without any visible wounds; but, if discovered after sunset, a newly-created wight. Also, the two descriptions account for the fact that, during the day the party will be moving, and at night they will likely be encamped.

Each encounter includes suggestions for how to vary the encounter for when its number comes up a second time. Encounters can and should be re-used—with these variation. If a party spends enough time in the swamp, they will encounter the same type of creature multiple times. This is intended to create the sense that the characters are intruding in an inhabited place. Second encounters may involve a lair, an ambush by survivors of a first encounter, or, in the case of common creatures like red frogs and centipedes, a completely different group of the same type.

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Overview

While PCs are traversing The Swamp, they'll have 0-5 (d6 -1) encounters each day and 0-3 (d4-1) encounters each night. A d10 roll determines the nature of the encounter, based on the table on page 5, with sensible adjustments to all your rolls based on the PCs' actions.

The chart shows both a day and a night version for each encounter. You may use a d12 to determine the exact hour or leave it to your own innate randomness. Some "night" encounters work best at dusk rather than at night. And don't rule out the possibility of two encounters happening simultaneously.

Again, note the "first encounter" and "second encounter" with the first encounters functioning as a warning or foreshadowing for the more dangerous or confrontational second encounters. In writing this, I imagined an area about 20 miles across, meaning that it would take a good two days to cross it. But again, there is no area map, so a smaller or larger area will also work.

The Swamp comprises varied wetland terrain, ranging from "true swamp" (wetlands with trees), to slow-moving streams lined with reeds, to pungent mud flats.

This area is dominated by two groups of human men. The first is a band of brigands who found in the swamp what seemed a perfect refuge from justice. The PCs may encounter a patrol and/or a returning raiding party, and eventually discover their camp on a muddy peninsula.

The second, more unusual group might be perceived as "barbarians" or "cultists," and are referred to in the text as "frogmen." The frogmen have discovered certain colorful frogs living in this swamp secrete a mind-altering substance ("Frogsweat," described in Appendix, pg 30.) Having made a habit of licking the colorful frogs and enjoying the effects, most of the frogmen have had their minds thoroughly altered. A rare few remain capable of moderating their indulgence and sustaining rational thought; based on these advantages, these "leaders" maintain some authority over the others. The table refers to three "bands" of frogmen. They are all loosely associated with each other, share the same leaders, and gather at the same "lair," the shell of a stone tower.

The Random Encounter Table

Roll on d10	Encounter	Page	Short description – Day	Short description - Night
1	Frogmen band 1	6	<i>First encounter:</i> Sleeping <i>Second:</i> Awake	<i>First encounter:</i> Snoring <i>Second:</i> Awake
2	Frogmen band 2	8	<i>First encounter:</i> Party guys <i>Second:</i> Lair	<i>First encounter:</i> Sounds of revelry <i>Second:</i> We bring the party to you
3	Frogmen band 3	10	<i>First encounter:</i> Fighters <i>Second:</i> Lair	<i>First encounter:</i> Fighters <i>Second:</i> Ominous chanting
4	Red frogs	12	See full description and frog sweat explanation.	
5	Giant centipedes	14	<i>First encounter:</i> Ruins <i>Second:</i> Dead deer	<i>All encounters:</i> Surprise!
6	Zombies	16	<i>First encounter:</i> From a pool <i>Second:</i> Undead caravan	<i>First encounter:</i> From a pool <i>Second:</i> Undead caravan
7	Wight(s)	18	<i>First encounter:</i> Fresh corpse <i>Second:</i> Lair, boss wight	<i>First encounter:</i> Fresh wight <i>Second:</i> Lair, boss wight
8	Swamp Mammoth	20	<i>First encounter:</i> Puddles (tracks) <i>Second:</i> Sighting	<i>First encounter:</i> Distant rumbling <i>Second:</i> Uninvited visitor
9	Brigand raiders	22	<i>First encounter:</i> Returning raiders <i>Second:</i> Lair	<i>First encounter:</i> Returning raiders. <i>Second:</i> Party!
10	Brigand patrol	24	<i>First encounter:</i> Patrol <i>Second:</i> Ambush	<i>First encounter:</i> Patrol <i>Second:</i> Proposition

1. FROGMEN BAND 1 (The Sleepers)

Number: 12; Move 120' (40'); AC: 9; HD: 1 (4 hp); Attacks: 1 (club) Damage: 1-6; Save: F1; Morale varies; XP: 15.

DAY

First encounter: *About 30 yards ahead . . . a dozen bodies lying on a sunny dirt mound . . . all of them men . . . naked or clothed in rags . . . and their skin is covered in either mud or extensive tattoos.*

If the party approaches, they will notice additional details: *The men are bald and covered with both mud and extensive tattooing . . . there are small red animals moving among them . . . the men do not show any serious wounds . . . the men are breathing . . . the men are sleeping peacefully . . . red frogs hop among them, eating the bugs that gather around the men's eyes and around the minor cuts and scrapes on the men's legs and arms.* Any frogman who is awakened (requires deliberate effort) will be groggy at first, but will become violent until he finds “his” frog. (Pg. 30, Appendix: Frogswear.)

Second encounter: Same group, but the effects of frogswear are unpredictable. Roll on The Frogswear Effects Table (page 7) to select a new “mood” for this group.

NIGHT

First encounter: Towards dawn, those on watch hear the night sounds of the swamps subsiding—and replaced by the sound of snoring. The frog men will be difficult to locate until daybreak. Two hours after daybreak, the frog men will begin to wake up and look for a frog to lick.

Second encounter: Same group, but the effects of frogswear are unpredictable. Roll on The Frogswear Effects Table (page 7) to select a new “mood” for this group.



Frogsweat Effects Table (d 4)

1. Happily Alert (+2 initiative if a fight breaks out)
2. Happy, Not Alert ("You should meet The Great Leader!")
3. Generous and oblivious (Lose initiative every round, almost no short-term memory.)
4. Paranoid and aggressive ("We know you have our frogs!")

2. FROGMEN BAND 2 (The Party Guys)

Number: 13; Move 120' (40'); AC: 9; HD: 1 (4 hp, but fight to -10 hp); Attacks: 1 (spiked club) Damage: 1-6; Save: F2 (frogsweat bonus); Morale varies; XP: 15.

DAY

First encounter: . . . *a dozen naked, mud-smearred men, strolling through the swamp in a loose, seemingly carefree band.*

If the party is few in number, quick, and quiet, they can slip away unseen. Otherwise, when the men are within 30 yards, they spot the party, point at them excitedly, and greet them. They have been licking frogsweat all day, and are in a mood to share. They will attempt to convince the party—through largely inarticulate speech, gesture and demonstration—that they too should try holding, kissing, and licking the frogs. Due to the effect of the frogsweat, the frogmen will barely notice if attacked. (See page 30, Appendix: Frogsweat.) If, on the other hand, a frogman is deprived of his frog for more than one round, he will become aggressive-- at first half-jokingly, but soon (within five rounds) violently.

Second encounter (Day version): The frogmen lair, the shell of a stone tower. (Described on page 11.)

Alternate: “Happily Alert” frogmen chasing a deer that they've already shot with two arrows.

NIGHT

First encounter: In the middle of the night, the noise of laughing and singing, stumbling and splashing, will alert any watchers and soon wake up the other party members. If the moon is bright (referee's discretion), the party can quietly observe the strange antics of the frogmen. If the party has a campfire or horses or otherwise attracts their attention, the frogmen will approach excitedly, as described for the Day encounter. Otherwise, they will revel for hours.

Second encounter (Night version): This time, the party guys do find the camp. They are not immediately hostile, just annoying. And they stay for several hours before falling asleep.



"You want a lick my frogs?!"

3. FROGMEN BAND 3 (The Fighters)

Number: 9; Move 120' (40'); AC: 9; HD: 1 (4 hp, but fight to -10 hp due to frogsweat-inspired rage); Attacks: 1 (spiked club) Damage: 1-6+2 (due to rage); Save: F2 (frogsweat bonus); Morale 12; XP: 15.

DAY

First encounter: . . . *shouting and the sounds of breaking reeds from about 50 yards away.*

If the party avoids drawing attention to itself, it may approach with surprise or evade the frogmen completely (no checks needed). These frogmen have lost their frogs and are desperately looking for new ones, slashing at reeds with sticks or tearing them up with their hands. The party can observe them without being spotted until they approach within 10 yards or after 10 rounds have passed. After spotting the party, the frogmen will accuse them of being thieves and attack them ferociously, fighting to the death with no morale check. (If any of the party members are carrying colored frogs, they can buy off the attacks of individual frog men. The other frog men will continue to attack, focusing their attacks on any "confessed" thieves).

Second encounter: The party stumbles upon the Frogmen's' lair, the shell of an ancient watchtower next to a large pond of potable water. (See page 11.)

NIGHT

First encounter: At dusk, the party will hear the wild shouts of the angry frogmen. The party's tracks have been discovered and mistaken for those of brigands (who do, in fact, often steal the frogmen's frogs). If the party has a campfire or horses, the frogmen will spot their camp immediately. Otherwise, the party will spot the frog men at 40 yards and, if quiet, will not be noticed for 1-10 rounds.

Second encounter: Occasionally, the frogmen leaders, who rarely leave the tower, lead one or more bands in ritualistic chants (derived from brief exposure to a more developed cult of serious frog-worshippers, but generally gibberish). When the wind is right, these chants can be heard over a long distance and traced to the Frogmen's lair. (See page 11.)

Frogmen's Lair (All three bands can be encountered in lair, plus leaders.)

Frogmen Leaders (4, including Great Leader—all four leaders have the same stats): Move 120' (40'); AC: 7 (studded leather dyed a mottled reddish brown); HD: 2 (11 hp, but fight to -10 hp due to frogsweat-inspired rage); Attacks: 1 (short sword or short bow) Damage: 1-6; Save: F2; Morale 9; XP: 50. The Great Leader owns a special red frog that also allows him to *levitate*, as the potion, for one turn per lick.

Overview: The frogmen make their lair in the shell of a ruined tower. The tower is 30 feet tall and 20 feet square. All interior walls and flooring are gone; the roof is accessible only by climbing up the wall or magical means. A pit inside the tower contains 2d8 red frogs. Except during rituals, only leaders are permitted inside the tower.

When the party arrives at the tower, all leaders will be present. In addition, there is a 1-in-4 chance that each of the three “bands” described in encounters 1-3 will be present, minus any casualties. For each band present, there is a 1-in-4 chance that they are in a deep sleep and will not wake up even in the event of combat. Roll for each band as a group. Do not roll for the leaders.

The Great Leader does not like strange visitors, but if outnumbered by party, he will offer “hospitality,” biding his time until reinforcements return or the party succumbs to frogsweat.

Tactics: If at least one band of frogmen present and alert, the Great Leader will command them to attack. The Great Leader will *levitate* to the top of the tower while the other leaders fire their bows from inside the tower. The Great Leader will shoot arrows as well, but if things go badly for him, he will lie prone on top of the tower

Treasure: The leaders enjoy playing their part as cultists. Each carries 1-3 pieces of amber with insect inclusions (value 20-120 gp for each piece). Also they wear gold chain belts with a frog-head buckle (value 800 gp for each of the belts except the Great Leader’s which is set with two red spinels for eyes, and is worth 1,500 gp).

There is no additional treasure inside the tower, but the Great Leader has accumulated about 1,000 g.p., mainly from selling frogs to a merchant who visits once a year. He keeps his hoard in a burlap sack under a sheet of oiled canvas, weighted down with rocks.

4. Red Frogs

Number: Varies; Move 60' (20'); AC: 7; HD: 1 hp; Attacks: N/A Damage: Special; Save: F0; Morale 5; XP:

1 See Appendix: Frogswear

DAY

First Encounter: All day the party has been startled by the splashes of small unseen animals, but these 9 brilliant red frogs stand out amid all the brown and sludgy green. *Their little heads poke out of the water, and their large black eyes seem to be watching you.*

The frogs retreat from any deliberate attack, but if approached cautiously will allow themselves to be handled. Placed against bare skin, they provide a pleasantly cooling sensation that temporarily alleviates all feelings of nausea, pain, and fatigue. There are other effects associated with continued contact. For more details about these creature see Appendix: Frogswear (page 30). Once the party has encountered red frogs, they can easily find them almost anywhere in The Swamp. (1-in-6 chance per turn of active looking.)

Second encounter suggestion: Even without actively searching, the party notices several red frogs in an otherwise ordinary pond.

NIGHT

First encounter:: A randomly selected sleeping PC is awakened from a pleasant dream by a small creature that's nestled in the hollow of his or her collarbone. If the PC responds violently, allow a to-hit roll (AC 7). If the frog escapes, it will try to hop away and, after a short wait, find another sleeping PC. If the PC responds in some other way (e.g. "grab it and look at it") the frog will read the PC's general intentions and allow itself to be seized. If seized, it will release secretions to help the PC go back to sleep. Roll a secret saving throw against poison at +2. On failure, the PC goes back to sleep. If the PC calls out to the other members of the party, they will notice that he or she sounds groggy and delirious. This is result of having already absorbed Frogswear while sleeping. See Appendix: Frogswear (page 30).

Second encounter: Repeat with a different PC.



You know you want to.

5. GIANT CENTIPEDES

Move 60' (20'); AC: 9; HD: 2 hp; Attacks: 1 (bite) Damage: Poison; Save: 0 level human; Morale 7; XP: 6.

DAY

First encounter: . . . *In the midst of a copse of trees off to the right . . . a piece of bluish-purple cloth hangs from a branch The hint of a roofline further suggests human habitation.*

Former brigand camp abandoned because of a vermin infestation and “bad luck” associated with several deaths within camp. Remains of four crude wooden huts, only one of which still retains any part of its roof. There is a fire pit in the middle of the four huts, a haphazard graveyard on one side of the camp, and a midden pit on the other. All graves have been desecrated and the remains scattered. A search through the midden pit will uncover a variety of salvageable but low-value items (belt buckles, brass rings, a necklace of polished glass pieces—5 g.p. value total) and also a leather pouch containing 5 silver arrow heads. The blue cloth was once a silk dress, but is now only a rag. Any searching will require that the party first deal with a total of 20 giant centipedes: 11 in the midden, 5 in the graveyard, and 4 in the rafters of the half-standing shack.

Second encounter (Day version): 5 giant centipedes feasting on the remains of a deer (or frogman).

NIGHT

First encounter: *Ouch!*

Unless the referee believes the party has properly protected itself against nocturnal, burrowing nastiness, a randomly selected PC will be surprised by 3 giant centipedes. (Neither sleeping PCs nor those on watch are any more likely to be targeted, but peasant's luck will protect most hirelings.) The resulting commotion will draw the attention of 6 additional giant centipedes. (There is no connection between the day encounter and the night encounter. Them suckers are everywhere!)

Second encounter (Night version): After a first encounter with these creatures, it's likely that the party will learn to look for signs of their presence and take care in choosing their campsite. If not, repeat until they do.



6. ZOMBIES

Move 60' (20'); AC: 8; HD: 2; Attacks: 1(yo mama) Damage: 1-8; Save: F2; Morale 12; XP: 30.

DAY

First encounter: . . . *an area where the ground is solid enough to support a light hardwood forest. . . a small pond, so clear and still that you can see the bottom, covered with layers of dark leaves.*

Buried underneath the leaves and several layers of mud are 17 zombies. If the water is not disturbed, the zombies will not emerge from the mud until nightfall (see "night" encounter). If a living creature enters the pool, the zombies attack immediately, rising in three waves. If objects are thrown into the pool, the zombies will not respond for 3d6 rounds (more quickly if the water is severely disturbed.)

Second encounter: 12 zombies marching in a line. Several are reanimated frogmen. (Or brigands that the party killed earlier!) They are following the instructions of an evil priest to attack a distant homestead. Individual zombies will defend themselves but otherwise the group ignores the party. Inquisitive parties may attempt to follow either: (1) the zombies, until they reach the homestead or (2) the zombies' tracks (backwards), until they reach the high priest. These adventurers are left for the referee to develop.

NIGHT

First encounter: Use the "day" encounter, but describe the pool as something the adventurers discover while setting up camp. And give them a chance to find a new campsite. If the pool goes undisturbed, the zombies will emerge and attack several hours after dark.

Second encounter: Same as the day version. The zombies march within 10 yards of the campsite.

Or, as an alternate: day or night The party is simply attacked by 12 wandering, untraceable zombies.



Did the water start to get cloudy all the sudden?

7. WIGHT(S)

Number: 3 total Move 90' (30'); AC: 5; HD: 3; HP: 24, 9, 9; Attacks: 1(touch or magic broadsword)

Damage: Energy-drain or 1-8 +1; Save: F3; Morale 12; XP: 110.

A total of 3 wights can be encountered. The strongest of the three, Angles of Flatt (h.p. 24), was an adventuring warrior who was killed by wights. His companions slew the wights, but did not give Angles a proper burial.

DAY

First encounter: . . . *a dead man lying in the reeds. He wears padded armor and in one hand still holds a short bow. His skin is very pale and his legs are twisted underneath him in an awkward, unnatural position. But you see no visible wounds.*

This is the body of a brigand, killed by Angles's energy drain, and destined to rise as a half-strength wight when night falls unless given proper burial. By stripping his body, the party can recover not only his armor and bow, but also a dagger, 13 arrows and 29 s.p.

Second encounter: . . . solid, dry ground that supports a hardwood forest . . . noises of the swamp die down . . . *little in the way of underbrush, but it's still slow going, . . . low-hanging branches of thorny trees . . . fallen trunks.* If the party continues, they will find themselves in a dark grove, dominated by a *huge hollow oak tree whose crown is filled with dead leaves.* This is the lair of Angles and his serf-wights. They attack as described on page 19.

NIGHT

First encounter:

Use the same description as the day encounter. The body is discovered at dusk, 20 yards from the campsite. If the body is given a proper burial (possibly requiring a cleric of a particular faith) or if the party selects a new campsite at least a quarter mile away, there will be no encounter. Otherwise, they will meet a half-strength wight (h.p. 9) during the night.

Second encounter:

Use the day version of the encounter, describing how the party finds a campsite on dry ground in or near a forested area. Give them a fair chance to notice the absence of animal life and green plants. If, despite this, they do decide to spend the night, the wights attack as described on page 19.

Fighting Angles

Angles has a special enmity for all those who “play it safe” in combat and will make a special effort to attack those using distance attacks. His usual tactic is to stay hidden until his two serf-wights (h.p. 9 each), unfortunate former brigands have identified any bow-shooters and spell-casters; then he moves around to attack those cowards from behind.

The wights have no treasure, but Angles’s broadsword has acquired a magic dweomer, so that it is now +1, +3 against thieves, liars, and cowards. As a gesture of respect, Angles will use his sword, rather than his energy-drain touch attack when he fights against other melee warriors—at least until the battle starts to go against him.



8. YOUNG SWAMP MAMMOTH

Move 120' (40'); AC: 5; HD: 9 (40 hp); Attacks: 2 or 1 (tusks or trample) Damage: 2d4/2d4 or 4d8; Save: F5; Morale 8; XP: 2400. Treasure: Tusks are worth 1,000 g.p. for the matched pair.

DAY

First encounter *A pair of circular puddles, each about two-feet across, surrounded by flattened reeds.* These are the tracks of a swamp mammoth, left about an hour ago. The mammoth's path was more-or-less perpendicular to that of the party. It will be easy to confirm these are tracks; to both the right and the left, there are nearly identical pairs of circular puddles. And the most reasonable conclusion is that the tracks were made by a single creature, though it's not clear which way this round-footed creature was going.

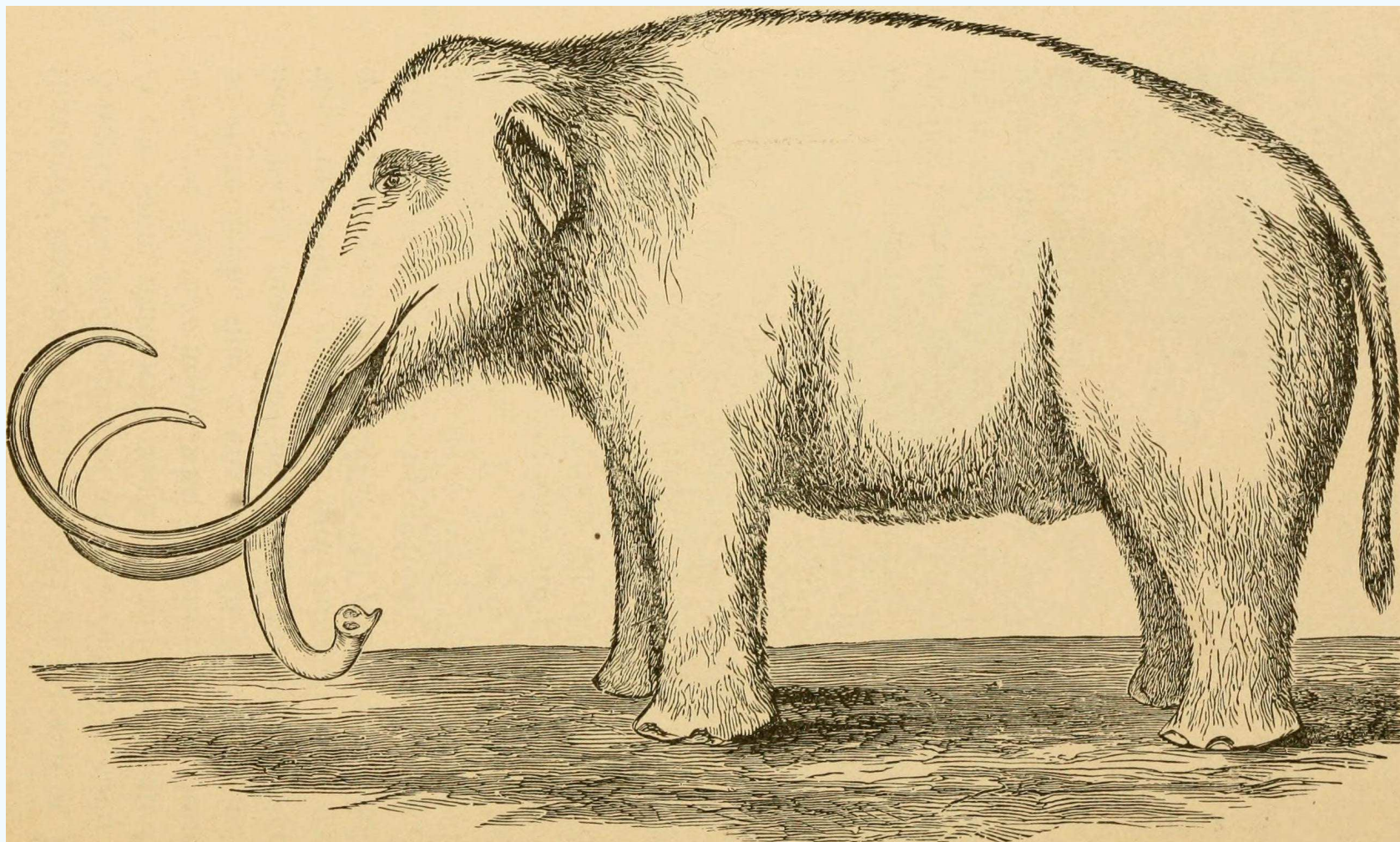
Second encounter: *A low rumbling in the ground . . . an enormous beast, at least twice as tall as a horse. Like a wild boar, it has two long tusks extending from its mouth. It's shaggy brown fur is interspersed with moss and a 10-foot long tentacle extends from the center of its face.*

The mammoth will generally ignore the party, but will pursue (barely impeded by the mud of its natural habitat) and trample anyone who attacks it or otherwise seems menacing.

NIGHT

First encounter:: A couple hours after sunset . . . *low rumbling beneath you.* About half an hour later, those who are awake who hear *the call of a hunting horn or battle trumpet, sounded with more passion than finesse.* The mammoth is in an agitated mood and, without getting any closer than 50 yards to where the characters are sleeping, it will continue to stamp and trumpet every 15 minutes or so for the next two hours. If approached during this time, it will attack. If left alone, it will eventually wander away.

Second encounter:: Repeat of first Night encounter except that this time, the Mammoth will stomp through the characters' camp. As long as characters get out of its way quickly, they will not be attacked, though some equipment will likely be ruined.



THE MAMMOTH (*Elephas primigenius*).

9. BRIGANDS (Raiders returning)

Brigand Raid Leader Anaheim, plus 10 archers, 3 scouts, 7 spearmen (See Appendix: Brigands Roster)

These brigands have just successfully raided a large caravan of merchant wagons, and are returning to their hideout with their booty, including sheep, chickens, and a 500 gp barrel of wine. Anaheim's backpack contains a merchant's cashbox, containing 600 gp and, in a secret compartment, a crystal-and-gold vial of perfume worth 700 gp. The raiders' plan is to evade pursuers, enjoy the wine in the swamp, and then return safely to their hideout.

DAY

First encounter: . . . *sloshing across a wide slough of knee-deep water, shaded by towering cypress trees. . . a voice calls out: "Hello? Are you ghosts or men?"*

The voice belongs to one of three scouts; their job is to slow down the party, determine their purpose, and dissuade them from their current path. If threatened, one of the scouts will give a signal on his hunting horn and the archers will fire a volley of arrows (no chance to hit as they are well-screened by trees and up to 100 yards away). A second signal brings a group of 7 spearmen (moving tree to tree). One of the scouts will sound a third "distress" signal, hoping to call the Anaheim and the archers into melee, but instead they will hustle away with their loot. The raiders can be tracked to their lair, but if Anaheim knows he's being followed, he will order 6 archers to stay behind as an ambush/diversion.

Second encounter: Even if the raiders evade pursuit, the party may come upon their trail later and can follow it to the well-trod path in the reeds that leads to the brigands' lair. (Page 26)

NIGHT

First encounter: *about a dozen lights, torches probably, moving through the swamp some distance away.* If the PCs have a campfire, the brigands will spot them from afar and keep moving, staying at least 100 yards away. The brigands, will not extinguish their torches, due to their fear of the wights. If the party does not have a fire, the brigands will pass through the vicinity of their campsite, not noticing the party until they are about 10 yards away. The other scouts will see the party first and greet them with good-natured mockery, mistaking them for members of the band. Within a couple rounds, the rest of the raiding party will catch up with the scouts. When the brigands learn of their mistake, roll a reaction check, modified according to the party's manners and apparent strength.

Second encounter: . . . *the sounds of a party!* Singing and laughter and then as the night wears on, angry accusations and fighting. If the party investigates, the brigands' reaction will depend on when the party arrives and if they have anything to share.



MORRIS Meredith Williams

10. BRIGANDS (Patrol/Hunting Party)

Brigand Patrol Leader Gumm, plus 2 archers, 2 scouts, 2 spearmen (See Appendix: Brigands Roster)

These brigands are combining the tasks of patrolling and hunting. The patrol will most likely not attack the party, preferring instead to pose as hunters from a village several miles away or lost travelers

First encounter (Both day and night(dusk): . . . *unkempt beards, ragged clothes, and a strong odor. Their apparent leader, who introduces himself as Gumm, wears decent boots and leather armor, but most of the others are barefoot.* The patrol will engage in friendly conversation, and offer to share one of the ducks they've killed. Gumm will pass around a red frog to share. (See Appendix: Frogswear (Make saving throws for both brigands and PCs. The brigands will try to keep each other awake.) Depending on how things go, the brigands may decide to return to their camp to make a report, to attack the party themselves either now or in the future, or even to suggest they join forces.

Second encounter (Day version): Ambush. This encounter will occur only if Gumm and his patrol survive the first encounter. Their numbers will depend on the strength of the party. If the party is weak, Gumm will attack them with his own men. If they are stronger, he will have returned to the brigand camp to recruit reinforcements (Hogwash with 8 spearmen and maybe Ish the creepy magic-user). The brigands stage their ambush at a muddy pond surrounded by trees on one side. Two or three spearmen (emboldened with frogswear) throw their spears at the party from 40 yards away, hoping to lure them into the pond. Gumm and the archers, screened by the trees, will shoot the party when they enter the pond. Reserve spearmen protect the archers. If the ambush includes the reinforcements, the brigands' tracks can easily be followed back to their lair. (Page 26)

Second encounter (Night version): Dusk. Assuming the first encounter didn't end in hostility, Gumm & co. return with a proposal: "Can you help us deal with the frogmen?" (Or the wight, or the mammoth, etc.). Both the number of brigands involved and the proposed target will depend on the apparent strength of the party. The brigands' primary goal is to eliminate the proposed target. Their secondary goal is to so weaken the party so that they too can be eliminated. The brigands are also willing to sacrifice and double-cross each other.



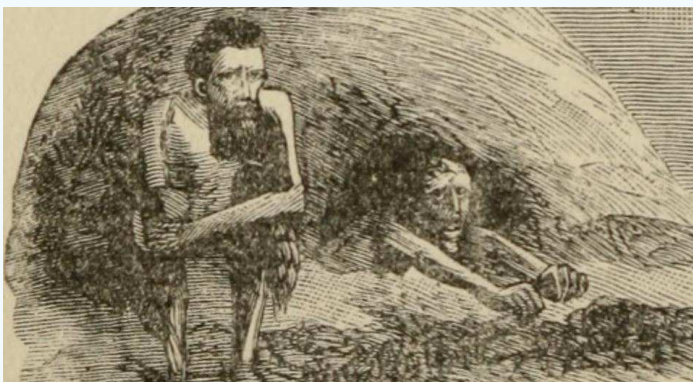
APPENDIX: THE BRIGANDS' HIDEOUT

Before running an encounter with the brigands at their lair, take a moment to consider who will be there, and whether they expect the party's arrival. If Anaheim or Gumm encountered the party in the swamp and survived the encounter, they have likely returned to alert chief, "**Sir Windsor**" (Ftr 6), who will order his men to prepare an ambush. See the ambush plan and roster on pages 27-28. The brigands are undisciplined and after two days have passed, they will no longer be on alert.

If the brigands are not on alert, they will welcome the party into their camp, playing the part of "jolly outlaws" (many to excess) while secretly alerting Windsor. Rather than meet the party, Windsor will send over a barrel of beer and expect the other leaders to gather information. Unless allowing the party to live seems useful, Windsor will give the orders for an attack on the basis that they might have treasure and are likely to attack him later; plus, his herd needs thinning anyway. At some opportune moment **Ish** the magic-user will shoot a magic missile at a party cleric; the majority of the brigands understand this is the secret signal for "Hey everyone, murder the guests!" A good third of the common brigands will be unable to fight due to drunkenness/frogsweat, but the others will attack.

Sir Windsor established his lair as both fortress and prison, where his enemies are unlikely to find him and from which his followers find it hazardous to desert. After abandoning other camps throughout the swamp, he found this rocky and tree-covered peninsula, surrounded on three sides by water and nearly impassable mud flats. Shaped roughly like a human hand, the peninsula is roughly 30 yards wide and 60 yards long. At the point where the peninsula meets the mainland, there is a crude wooden palisade, more of a strategic obstacle than a barricade. Instead of a gate, there is a two-foot gap on either side that allows entry, but not a forceful charge.

The common brigands share tents and mud hovels in the center of the peninsula, with 3 or 4 brigands to each structure. Most of the cooking is over a central fire pit. A locked shed contains foodstuffs and other provisions.



Windsor and the four other leaders has his own hut on one of the peninsula's five "fingers." These huts are basic one-room squares, but better construction and bigger, being roughly 10-feet on a side.

Windsor and his “**Lady Windsor**” (NM, non-combatant) live at the tip of the middle “finger” in a pair of extra-nice daub-and-wattle huts with a covered “porch” between them. A string of five additional huts along the sub-peninsula houses Windsor’s two young children and the children’s nurse (non-combatants), plus Windsor’s **3 bodyguards** (loyal and stupid), and Windsor’s **10 “knights”** (less loyal, less stupid).

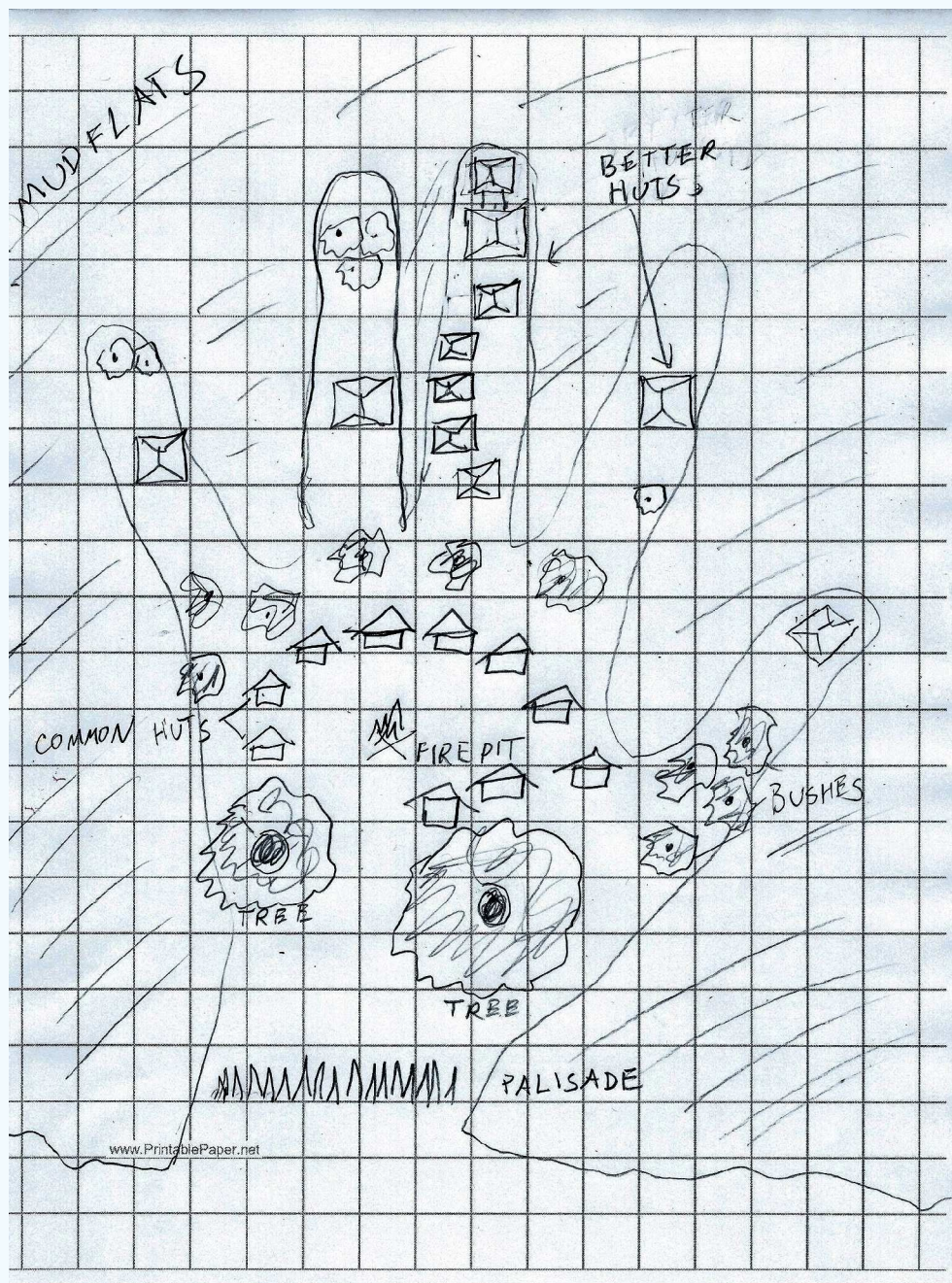
Windsor has done his best to make his two-room dwelling-place resemble the castle to which he aspires. Displayed in the “throne room” are various silver goblets and serving platters that are worth a total of 200 gp. His provisions are decent and include a barrel of beer reserved for entertaining unexpected guests (50 gp). All walls are covered with tapestries, with those in the throne room depicting battle scenes and those in the bedroom depicting a deer hunt. (8 tapestries in all, worth 50 gp each). At the bottom of a large, locked clothes chest in the bedroom are a pair of olivewood boxes, each of which holds a crown. Windsor’s crown, made of a gold alloy and once set with 5 carnelians (2 have gone missing) is worth 1,000 gp, more for its materials than its aesthetic value. The second crown, which belongs to Lady Windsor is made of silver and set with 5 pearls; it is worth 1,200 due to its superior craftsmanship and better state of repair. Two other chests, both locked, each contain about 500 g.p. Windsor carries the keys to all chests.

The other four leaders (all detailed on the roster on page 28) are **Anaheim** (Ftr 4, see Raiders Encounter on page 22), **Gumm** (Ftr 3, see Patrol Encounter on page 24), **Hogwash** (Ftr 3), and **Ish** (MU5). Each of the other four leaders lives in a hut on one of the other “fingers” (Ish lives on the thumb), sometimes sharing his space with female companions, but generally not with any retainers — as this would be perceived as disloyal to Sir Windsor. Each of the other leader huts, except for the one belonging to Ish, is relatively sparse as the leaders carry what treasure they own on their person. Ish’s hut contains various odd and malodorous items (skulls, mummified animal parts, dried plants, etc.); most of it is worthless, but a magic-user would be able to select 100 g.p. worth of material components. Besides basic furniture, the hut also contains a large wooden box, open and filled with dirt and 9 Red Frogs. Buried in the dirt is a closed iron box that contains Ish’s spellbook.

Besides Lady Windsor, her two children, and their nurse, there are 8 other non-combatant women in the camp. None of them have a permanent home or “husband,” but each usually spends the night with one of the leaders or one of Windsor’s knights. All the women except Lady Windsor secretly hate the brigands. They do not actively resist but there are three who, given the slightest opportunity (e.g. a visit by the party whether friendly or hostile), will attempt to find a way to escape.

BRIGANDS' AMBUSH "PLAN"

- Two sentries (archers) are posted in trees on the island with orders to silently alert the rest of the company when anyone is spotted.
- Most brigands will be under the influence of frogsweat and, as a result, one-third will be incapacitated. The others will be +2 initiative and fight to -10 hp.
- The general plan is to allow the party to approach, and then start killing them as soon as two or three make it through the palisade.
- Ish and the archers are stationed on Ish's peninsula with a clear line of fire at party members as they pass through the palisade. A line of spearmen, with Anaheim and Hogwash right behind them, charge out from the center of camp to hold the party in the archers' killing zone. Gumm and the scouts attack anyone who gets through the spearmen.
- Windsor's knights maintain order among the common brigands-- discouraging deserting or looting.
- Windsor, watches the battle from the roof of his house, almost undetectable. If the party reaches his peninsula, he drops inside his house to take a last stand with his family and bodyguards.
- Nothing goes exactly according to plan,.



Brigand Roster

Lists do not include various non-combatants, such as Sir Windsor's wife (Lady Windsor), and other women and children. The leaders view their job as to "encourage" the other brigands to fight and avoid combat personally. The "knights" and bodyguards only take orders from Sir Windsor. Most brigands have no armor. Some have studded leather (AC 7), brigadine (AC 6 or 5 with shield), or chainmail (AC 5 or 4 with shield).

NAMED BRIGAND LEADERS (Anaheim and Gumm can likely be encountered outside camp.)										
Name	Level	Move	AC	HP	THACO	Damage	Morale	XP	Treasure Carried	Notes
Sir Windsor	Ftr 6	60'	4	35	15	1-8 (sword)	10	600	5 red frogs, 11 pp, 18 gp, 5 sp	Paranoid, cowardly, vicious, lying bully.
Anaheim (Leading Raiders Encounter 9)	Ftr.4	60'	5	24	17	1-8 (sword) 1-6 (bow)	9	200	Red frog, 3 pp, 46 gp See also Encounter 9, describing treasure acquired in recent raid.	Brash and boisterous, occasionally murderous "tough guy".
Gumm (Leading Patrol Encounter 10)	Ftr.3	90'	5	16	18	1-8 (sword) 1-6 (bow)	9	100	Red frog, onyx worth 25 gp, 22 gp	Fatalistic, worn-out, amoral outlaw.
Hogwash	Ftr 3	90'	6	19	17	1-8+1 (sword + str)	9	50	Red frog, 25 pp, 32 gp	Hard-driving, too-loyal, half-remorseful wannabe soldier.
Ish	MU 5	120'	9	11	Unarmed Spells: Allure, Unseen servant (or Magic Missile), Auditory illusion, ESP, Suggestion.		8	600	Two red frogs, one dose frog sweat antidote (cancels negative effects), and two polished red carnelians each worth 100gp.	Lecherous, conniving, self-deluded creep.

OTHER BRIGANDS (0-level humans, excepts "knights" are Ftr. 1 and bodyguards Ftr. 2)												
Type	Numbers		On Patrol	On Raid	Move	AC	HP	Weapon Damage	THACO	Morale	XP	Treasure
	Total	In Camp										
Scout	8	3	2	3	120'	9	3	1-4 (sling or club)	20	8	5	10-40 sp
Spearman	20	11	2	7	120'	9	3	1-6 (spear)	20	8	5	10-40 sp
Archer	15	3	2	10	90'	7	3	1-6 (s. bow or hand axe)	20	8	10	1 gp + 20 sp
"Knight"	10	10	0	0	60'	5	6	1-8+1 (sword+str bonus)	18	9	15	3 gp + 20 sp
Bodyguard	3	3	0	0	60'	5	13	1-8+1 (sword+str bonus)	18	10	30	4 gp + 20 sp
TOTAL	56	30	6	20								

APPENDIX: FROGSWEAT

Many species of frogs secrete toxins as a defense against predators. In a fantasy world, these frog toxins have additional mind-altering and even quasi-magical effects. Those who are familiar with “special frogs” and the questionable practice of licking them refer to the secretions as “frogsweat.”

The only special frog that appears in this module is the Red (Love) Frog. Unlike most other varieties of frogsweat, that of the Red Frog has a very pleasant taste. Placing a Red Frog against a wound or other bare skin produces a cool, soothing sensation, plus temporary healing and ability score boosts. The user will either feel “happily alert” or fall into a deep sleep.

The many pleasant effects encourage additional contact, and thus continued absorption of the toxins that quickly lead to addiction and are often eventually fatal. Throughout this process, the frogsweat user becomes increasingly attractive to the insects and tiny parasites that the Red Frogs eat.

The mechanics are different depending on whether the user is already an addict. (For the addict's experience, turn the page.)

For the first-time user or other non-addict, a single lick, placement against a wound, or 10 rounds of other contact with bare skin will have a variety of effects that are best explained by the chart on page 31.

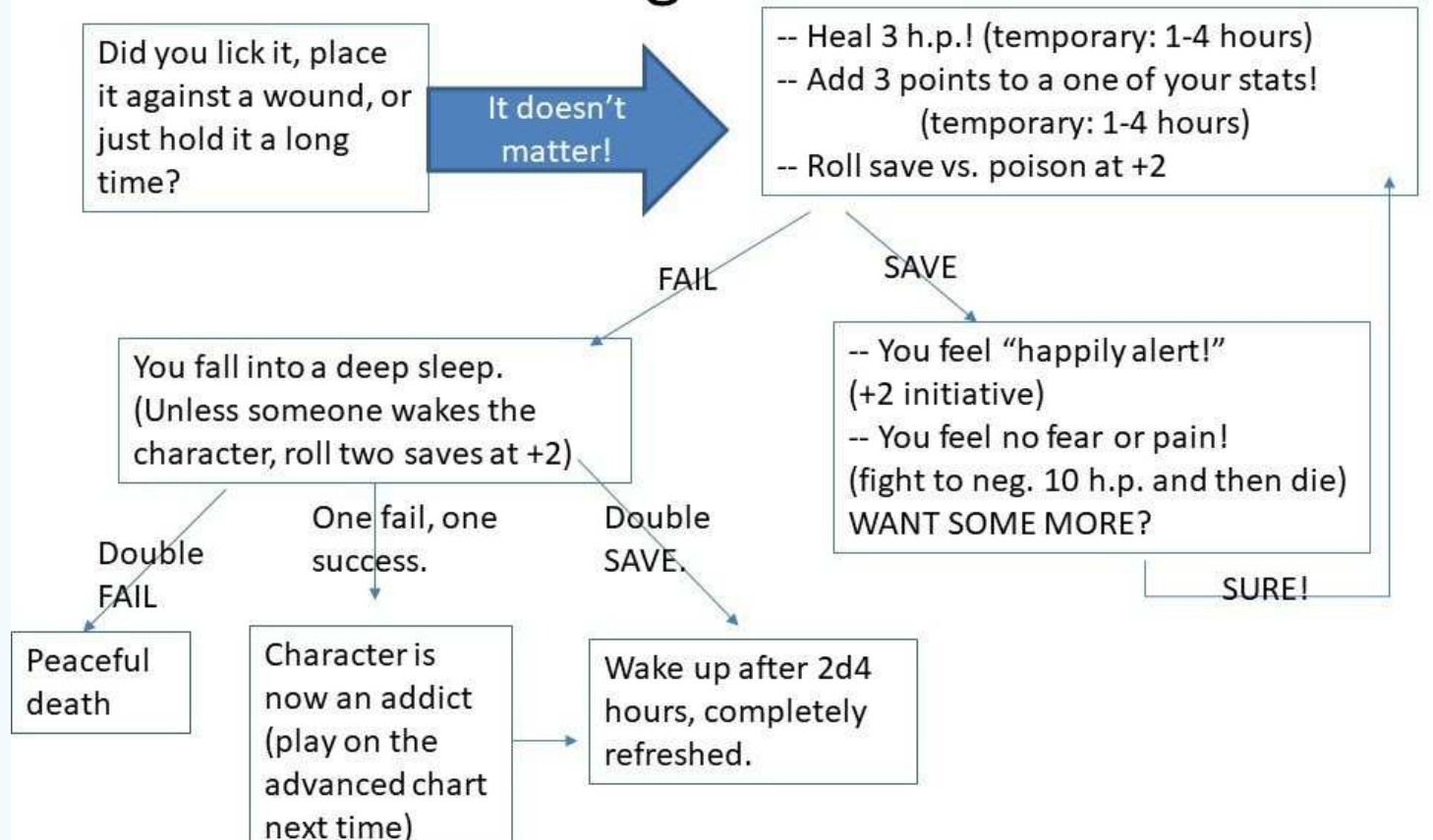
A character may continue licking a frog to gain additional benefits but each lick requires its own saving throw vs. poison to avoid falling asleep.

Those who make the save remain “happily alert” and retain a +2 bonus to initiative rolls and the ability to keep fighting to -10 h.p. for 10 rounds.

Characters who fail the “licking save” fall asleep, and if they are not awakened and either forced to stay awake until the effects wear off or treated with *neutralize poison* (which cancels all effects both positive and negative), are forced to roll a pair of saving throws against poison at +2. If the character fails to save on either of these rolls, the character is now “addicted” (see the next page). If the character fails to save on both of these rolls, the character peacefully dies.

Those characters who survive (whether addicted or not) and are allowed to sleep until they wake up naturally after 2d4 hours, lose any temporary benefits, but they still gain the benefits of a full night's rest: natural healing and, for spell-casters, the opportunity to re-memorize spells.

What happens when a non-addict uses Frogswheat?



For those who are "addicted" to Frogswheat, see the chart and explanation on page 33.

For the addict, while any contact with the frog is pleasant, only licking the frogsweat has any mechanical effect; and the effect of each lick is reduced to only one point of temporary healing and ability score boost.

Also, the addicted user does not necessarily feel "happily alert." As noted in the flow chart, they may feel simply "happy," or "oblivious," or "paranoid." Of these three, only "oblivious" has a mechanical effect (lose initiative + *forget* what happened the previous round, (like the spell.)

The roll to avoid falling asleep is at +6 (which is likely to simply mean more indulgence before finally passing out).

For those who do fall asleep, death may result., but only after two failed saving throws, both at +6. Those characters who do wake up will feel refreshed, even if they have been sleeping naked in a swamp.

There are two additional long-term consequences. First, an addict cannot sleep without frogsweat (or some other chemical or magical assistance). After each day without sleep, there is a 25% cumulative chance that the character will go into a delusional and psychotic state of being "unhappily alert" (+2 initiative, but very short-tempered) in which he or she imagines Red Frogs everywhere and imagines that everyone else is hiding Red Frogs on their person that rightfully belong to the user.

Treatment and Recovery Addicts who survive their 4 terrible days and nights of paranoia without frogsweat break free of their addiction. They may be susceptible to relapse.

Frogsweat use in The Swamp **Frogsweat's effects are unpredictable and vary from one person to another; its effects on frogmen and brigands, as described in specific encounters, need not be completely consistent with the "standard effects" described here.** All frogmen should be assumed to be "special case addicts" who have developed a strong tolerance. The brigands are also familiar with frogsweat; the leaders pass out frogs before major battles. Many of the brigands use frogsweat recreationally as well (with a "designated waker" so as to attenuate the risk of addiction or death.). Despite such precautions, many of the current frogmen are former brigands.

Frogsweat use outside The Swamp While the right buyer might pay 1,000 g.p. or more for a single frog, finding someone willing and able to pay such a price — without attracting unwanted attention— will likely be an adventure in itself. PCs looking to sell frogs quickly will not receive more than 100 g.p., and much less if selling more than one or two at a time.

What happens when an addict uses Frogsweat?

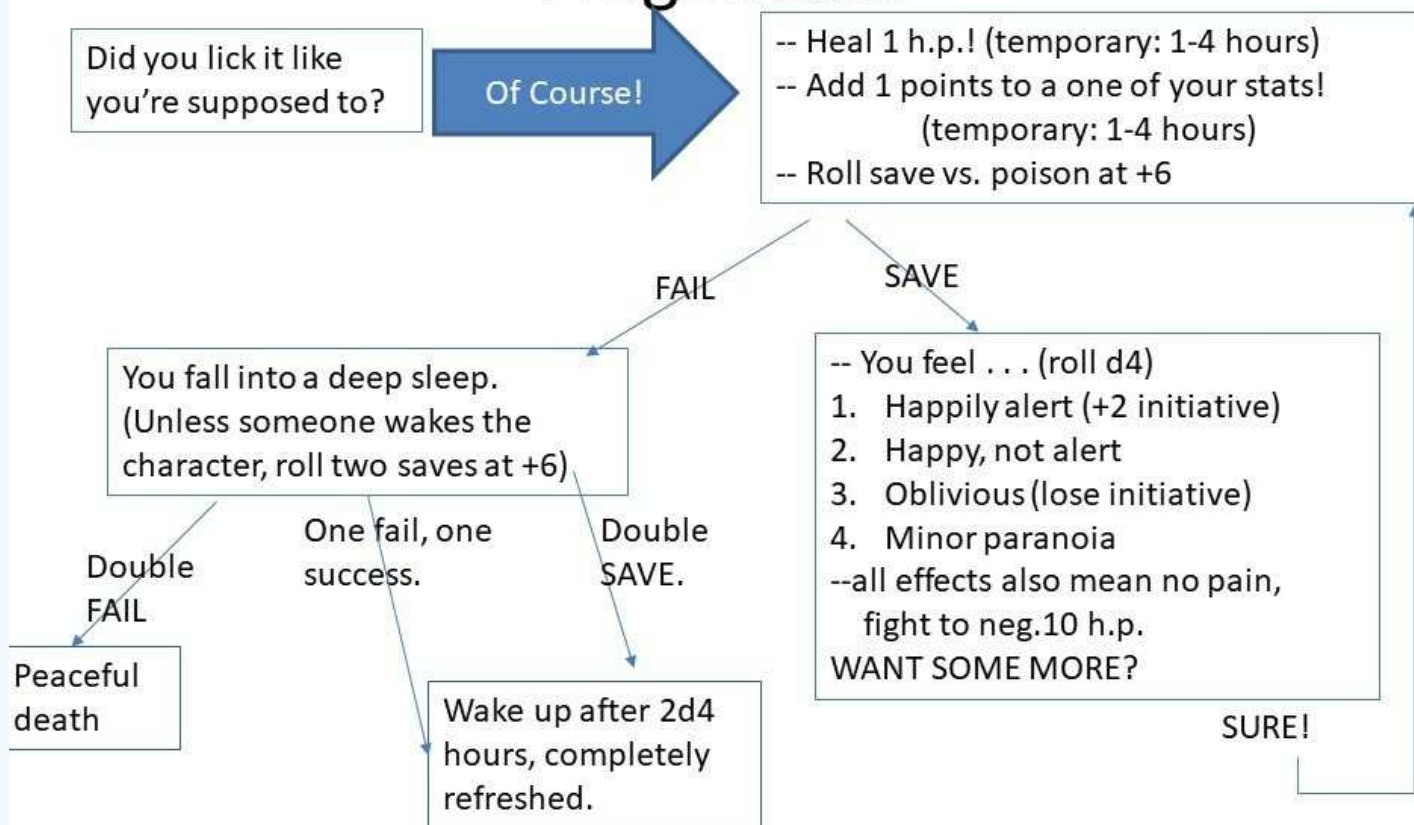


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Progress is slow and every step is a small struggle. Boots sink into the soft, sticky mud and then fill with water. The air is thick and fetid. Along with the strong smell of decay there are the sounds of much that is alive: buzzing insects, chirping frogs, sometimes the squawk of a scavenging bird. Whose idea was this?

