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INTRODUCTION

Goodness. Some of the earliest *Lamentations of the Flame Princess* work, back in print! Those were much simpler times.

This was back in the day when I was still trying to fuse traditional heroic fantasy with my nascent understanding of the Weird. It was the sort of thing where people would still engage in deep online discussions as to whether orcs should be normal beings with families and children, or if they are actually evil by their very nature. What is a group of heroes who have vanquished their genetically evil foes supposed to do with the foes' kids? My suggestion, after they'd slaughtered a pack of humanoid enemies in some dungeon, was to have an orc child just kind of wander in, with a stuffed human baby in its arms (in place of a teddy bear), and then ask "What did you do to my daddy?" Really mess the players up.

So that was the early *raison d'être* of LotFP. Take the uncomfortable bits of traditional gaming fantasy, highlight them, and push them front and center. Not exactly a deconstruction, just a bit of *agenre* shift.

Looking back on these old adventures, it was interesting how they all had a common theme. Sure, I knew that *No Dignity in Death* was about intolerance, but really all of the adventures here are about intolerance and superiority complexes. Garvin Richrom couldn't accept his daughter's agency or his daughter's rejection of his wishes for her life, and so blames her choices and ultimate fate on the adventurers she chose to join. The arctic Elves simply don't see others as equal to themselves and thus are brutal killers of anything round-eared. (While I'm on the subject of that adventure, I don't know how "Eskuit" ran under the radar back in 2010, and it'll probably cause trouble now, but that's what it was then, and this volume is simply here to upgrade the presentation, not content, of the original adventures.) The Dwarfs thought they were the rightful masters of everyone else to ruinous effect. And, of course, the social fictions of Pembrook-

tonshire result in heartache and misery at every turn.

Another thing I like is the innocence of these things. I hadn't yet found the courage to go full Troma (or Clive Barker, if I wanted to pretend to be classy) yet, and so the gut punches of each adventure are more revelatory and less an attempt to break the spirit through explicit shock. It's good in that it's more familiar for the average player and more inviting. But even so, these adventures are constructed the way they are because I was working within the boundaries of "standard" adventures. And, in many ways, holding back. I've got this weird tic where I'd rather present things to be less popular but more personally satisfying than release something more broadly appealing but feel like I didn't get to do what I really wanted.

But this stuff is what I wanted to do way back in ancient times, and I think they're still pretty damn good. I hope you have fun with them.

James Edward Raggi IV
March 24, 2020
Helsinki

PS Oh yes, one more story. Originally *No Dignity in Death* was to be my masterpiece released by another old-school publisher in 2009, and *Death Frost Doom* (sold as a separate volume) was going to be the little weird thing I released myself. But I had all sorts of instructions for the publisher in how to present NDID, and they ended up telling me to just release it myself... and so, LotFP became its own publishing concern.

PPS All of these adventures were written before LotFP adopted the "silver standard." You might want to "downgrade" the value of the treasure. Gold becomes silver, silver becomes copper, that sort of thing.



The Grinding Gear



AUTHOR'S NOTES

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Is it OK to have a reasonable expectation for failure in a fantasy role-playing adventure?

I created this adventure in the early days of 2008, and I thought at the time it was just another week's adventure. After running *The Grinding Gear* for two different groups, I see it as something a little unusual, and that is why it is in your hands now.

Both groups failed to find the treasure that is the ultimate goal of the adventure. Yes, they escaped with their lives to adventure another day, but they didn't succeed in this quest, and there are multiple chances in this thing to really rip a party to shreds. The very first location, with the statue, has a real possibility of slaughtering a party. In the first level of the dungeon there is a Magic-User with a *Sleep* spell waiting to use it on the characters, and there is a possibility that if the party carries a light load of equipment and buys too much into the fake map that they could starve to death on dungeon level two. How harsh is that?

None of my players' characters died in any of those obvious kill-zones. Yes, we had a few character deaths up in the attic, but that set up was so obvious that I consider those to be mercy killings.

So I don't expect this to be a slaughterhouse dungeon though the possibility is very real that the players will think that the entire thing is one big cruel waste of their time with no rewards. Are you prepared for that?

This adventure rewards careful observation

and attention to detail and perhaps true resource management in addition to the usual battle savviness and puzzle-solving. "Old school" proponents often claim player agency as one of the main advantages of this style of game and perhaps this adventure was written to highlight that very thing. It somehow loses its sting if players are allowed to make die rolls to be reminded of things encountered in the game that they decided were not important enough to either remember or write down.

I strongly recommend you schedule sufficient time with your group to complete this adventure in one session. Spreading it out over multiple sessions would be almost unfair due to the nature of the final puzzles and encouraging the players to take notes would give it all away.

You probably don't create adventures and locations like this in your game. Although this adventure is now yours to do with as you please I ask that you consider not changing those elements which most clash with your gaming style. This is one of the very purposes of using published materials: to take on different perspectives and styles than you would have on your own. While this adventure may tax your players the in-game rewards are certainly there, and plentiful, for those clever enough to find them. On a meta-game level perhaps your players will start paying more attention to the background scenery in the future.

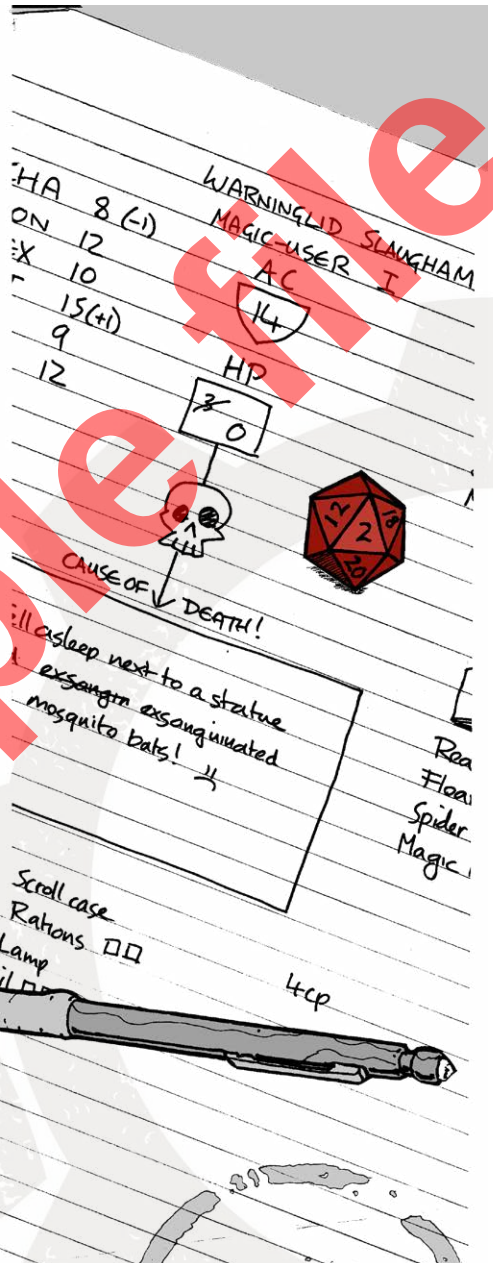
... and right about now I'm looking at the

AUTHOR'S NOTES

preceding paragraphs and I realize the adventure isn't all that cruel. Both my groups successfully conquered the entire adventure, save for one room (that happened to be the final room), so it's not like this adventure is a master class of player disempowerment or an outrageous display of more-clever-than-thou or anything of the sort. I guess I just spend too much time online reading people whine about their cruel Referees and worry it might be those people who will be next to experience *The Grinding Gear*.

The truth is I've had great fun presenting *The Grinding Gear* to my players and I do believe that they had fun playing the adventure, especially the one guy who, weeks later (in real time!), thought to go back to the dungeon and search the final sarcophagus more carefully. Ghostcutter was found! I'd like to hear about your group's experiences with *The Grinding Gear*. Send me an email at lotfp@lotfp.com, or post on the LotFP message board.

James Edward Raggi IV
October 17, 2009
Helsinki, Finland



REFEREE INTRODUCTION

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This adventure is designed for a party of three to eight characters of first to fourth level. Parties should be a good mix of classes, ready for exploration, combat, and especially problem solving.

This adventure will run a bit different than most. While there is some combat, perhaps more than the characters can handle, the primary challenge of the adventure comes from an NPC who specifically wished to challenge adventurers. Players will have to use their heads in order to find the treasure.

Referees are encouraged to strictly enforce light source durations and encumbrance from the very start of the adventure, especially where it concerns carrying great amounts of food. At one point the characters will very likely become trapped in an area from which it may take them some time to escape. If the Referee has enforced these oft-ignored guidelines it may be seen as bad form or being unfair to the players to suddenly make them important only when it is to their disadvantage. Follow the rules when they do not seem important and there will be no cause for complaint once they are.

This is not to say that the adventure should be used as a hammer to bludgeon players. Players who come up with creative solutions to problems should be rewarded with success. If players completely avoid some obstacle or situation which this adventure seems to assume will happen then more power to the players! This module is merely a static location and it

is intended that players will completely wreck it. Let them.

One last note: Obviously "St. McIver" is something of a joke name. It was originally used just to be easily memorable. If using that name would create a tone incongruous with a Referee's campaign it should be changed. If the established pantheon of an individual campaign does not use saints just change it. McIver can go by any name and can be a fully-fledged deity if the Referee so chooses without changing the substance of the adventure at all.

PLACING THIS ADVENTURE IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

The Grinding Gear takes place in and under an abandoned inn. It should be someplace close enough to civilization for an inn to be plausible yet far enough off the beaten track that no one kept the place open when the last owners left as well as far enough out that adventurers would have once frequented the place and for it to be visited at least fairly often by goblins now. One suggestion is that the inn was on the road to a frontier mining town that has since depleted its vein, making its existence no longer essential.

