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Temple of the Golden Ape

By

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This material first appeared in *Dragon Roots Magazine*, issue #1. At that time, the material was written for 3rd Edition *Dungeons & Dragons*. All material has been reworked for *Dungeon Crawl Classics*.

I have hopes of expanding upon this material for a longer adventure (and adventure setting). If you use it, please email me at ravencrowking@hotmail.com. Let me know what you thought, and who was in your group. With any luck, I can include you in the playtester credits!

Introduction

The *Temple of the Golden Ape* was designed for use in the author's home campaign. It is designed to take place in a tropical setting, although the judge can easily modify the temple proper to use it in another environment. The adventure is suitable for 1st or 2nd level PCs. If you and your players enjoy this adventure, it should be easy to create additional levels where they can discover more treasures, more adventure...and, perhaps, more clockwork guardians!

All new magic items, new monsters, and creature stat blocks in this adventure are designated Open Game Content.

Some Wilderness Encounters

Although a wilderness map is not provided for this adventure – the idea being that you can place it in any unfinished area of your own campaign map – some smaller encounters are provided. Place them where you will, or use them as desired. You know best what types of encounters will best challenge, tease, and delight your players.

1. Serpent Oracle: A tangled thicket has grown in the area of a small statue of a loosely coiled serpent. The thicket, which has grown through the loose coils, has inch-long thorns that seep a mild toxin. Anyone who wishes to cut the statue free must brave the thorns (Reflex DC 10 frees the statue while avoiding the thorns; any who fail must succeed in a DC 12 Fort save or suffer 1d3 points of temporary Stamina damage).

The statue itself is magical, and if touched addresses the person who touched it thusly: "Thrice yea or nay I shall answer thee, then till moon is consumed shall I silent be." The statue can answer three "yes or no" questions (this ability is reset with every new moon) with near-omniscience. It will not repeat the phrase it first said when touched, nor will it respond to any other than the character that first touched it. It ignores any question that cannot be answered with Yea or Nay, but answers any question by the keyed individual (the one who first touched it) that it can, if that question is asked within 60 feet of the statue. The serpent oracle does not need to be addressed specifically for this to occur.

The serpent oracle weighs some 500 pounds. If enterprising PCs find a way to remove the statue and cart it back to their home base (or with them!) the judge should allow them to ask it three questions monthly. However, any PC involved in such a scheme permanently loses 1 point of Luck.

2. I Wonder If It'll Be Friends With Me?:

The skeleton of a colossal whale lies within a crater some 150 feet in diameter and 40 feet deep. The bones and crater are several years old, and the bones have been scattered and gnawed. The crater is thick with vibrant green ferns, and there are orange moldy patches in the undergrowth where globs of whale flesh and blubber had once been scattered.

3. Rockfall and Axe: Beneath a small rockfall is a tiny cavern. Anyone who goes through the effort of excavating this area will locate the cavern. Excavation takes 120 minutes for a single person, with up to 5 additional people helping reducing the time by 10 minutes each to a minimum excavation time of 70 minutes. Within is a fully functional copper woodsman's axe adorned with images of interlaced vipers (7 gp value; non-magical but does 1d12 damage against plant monsters). Because it made of copper, it dulls (doing -1d damage) each time a natural "1" or "20" is rolled.

4. Ancient Sewers: A narrow sinkhole, some three feet in diameter, gives way to an ancient sewer system with one-foot square passages. Water from the sinkhole fills the tunnels, and the walls of the sinkhole are infested with a golden fungus that bursts if disturbed. Any within 10 feet take 1d3 temporary Stamina damage and must succeed in a DC 10 Fort save or 1 point is permanent.

These sewers could provide another entrance into the adventure area, where the fungal infection quickly gives way to a passage leading to the adventure location. In this case, you should consider giving the PCs some reward for having cleverly found a forgotten way in – possibly allowing them to come up through a grate in a treasure chamber, giving them a chance to either steal the treasure and retreat back through the sewers, or to use the treasure on the encounters beyond the treasure room (a reversal of the normal situation in most role-playing games).

5. Earth Bridge and Hippo: An ancient earth bridge crosses the river here. The earth is hard-packed, almost to the hardness of stone. Great hollow logs up to 20 feet in diameter were built into the structure, allowing the river to flow beneath, and granting access to smaller watercraft (5 foot clearance). A **hippopotamus** frequents this area, usually staying submerged during the day. It is 50% likely to take exception to swimmers or watercraft, but will not attack anything that flees onto the land.

Hippopotamus: Init +2; Atk bite +4 melee (1d6+4); AC 16; HD 4d8+12; hp 40; MV 20' or swim 50'; Act 1d20; SP charge (+3 to hit, +4 damage, -4 to AC until next round), capsize watercraft (Agility-based skill check vs +5 bonus); SV Fort +8, Ref +0, Will +2; AL N.

6. Stone Table: An old, scarred and disfigured stone table lies broken beneath an overhang. From its size, it was once used by huge creatures. The hill giant, **Bragamos**, frequents this area. There is a 25% chance that the Bragamos is in the area at any given time. Bragamos should not be a combat encounter for the PCs. Indeed, he hasn't the heart to fight unless attacked, as he is lamenting the recent theft of some treasure he loved. This treasure may be anything that the judge desires, and may tie into any adventure the judge wishes to run. In any event, returning the item (which may even be mundane) to Bragamos earns the PCs an ally for life.

Bragamos (12' tall, 1,200 lbs.): Init -2; Atk club +15 melee (2d8+8) or hurled stone +6 missile fire (1d8+6, range 100'); AC 16; HD 8d10; hp 50; MV 30'; Act 1d24; SP infravision, crit on 20-24; SV Fort +10, Ref +5, Will +6; AL C.

7. Barricade of Beetles: An ancient, worm-eaten wooden barricade is fully covered with rock, small stones, and intertwined vines. The barricade (some 160 feet long, 40 feet wide, and 40 feet tall) was originally made by giants, who piled logs into a trough braced by other logs, then covered the whole thing with loose stone. The wall is now thoroughly rotted, and is tunneled through with the 5-foot diameter tunnels of **giant beetles**. These beetles aggressively protect their tunnels, but do not otherwise emerge. They have no treasure.

Giant Beetles (20): Init +0; Atk bite +3 melee (2d5); AC 14; HD 2d8; hp 9 each; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP hive mind (all are aware of attacks against other beetles, and act accordingly); SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +1; AL N.

The Temple of the Golden Ape

General Conditions:

The Temple of the Golden Ape was once a maze of passages and courtyards, of which little now survives. Unless otherwise noted, the walls and ceilings were made of masonry covered with green and blue mosaic tiles, but the tiles have largely fallen away to lie scattered on the floor. Great roots have pushed down into many of the passages and rooms, collapsing parts of the temple and buttressing others.

Unless otherwise noted, all walls in the Temple are DC 5 to climb due to the presence of roots and handholds created by broken masonry. Characters can move along the walls horizontally with a DC 10 Climb check. The masonry is 1 ft. thick, and can be broken through to reveal thickly packed earth, tangled roots, and a shower of mundane worms and burrowing insects, with a DC 20 Strength check.

The floors are made of bluish gray flagstones, which are cracked and somewhat uneven where they are visible – although in many places they are covered by shards of broken tile from walls and ceiling, and in a few places soil and detritus has drifted into the ruin, forming a thick coating over the floor. In several places, the floor is broken and uneven due to the earthquakes that exposed the entranceway.

In these areas, a DC 10 Reflex save is required to run or charge. Failure means the character can still act, but can't move in this round; a natural "1" means the character falls prone and must succeed in a Luck check or drop any held item.

Unless otherwise noted, all ceilings are 8 feet high.

Anyone walking in the temple feels somewhat uneasy, as though they were being watched.

The Clockwork Ape

The Temple is guarded by a large ape made of clockworks. This ape moves about the complex, knowing its layout perfectly. It is not automatically aware of intruders.

Characters might hear it moving in the complex, or might see signs of its passage. The clockwork ape is not listed on the wandering encounters table, as its actions should be controlled by the judge. Once it is aware of intruders, it will attempt to use its knowledge of the Temple to get behind intruders and attack the trailing characters (by surprise if possible). It will usually attack only for 1d6 rounds, and then break off to attack again later from another passage. If pursued, however, it will turn to fight.

Any time both claws hit a single opponent, the ape can rend for 2d7+3 automatic damage. The judge should remember that the ape's second Action Die can instead be used for another move action, allowing it to move, attack from surprise, and then move again.

The clockwork ape is covered with small golden plates. If it is defeated, these plates can be removed and sold for up to 500 gp.

Clockwork Ape: Init +1; Atk claw +5 melee (1d7+3); AC 15; HD 6d10+18; hp 55; MV 30' or climb 30'; Act 2d20; SP construct (immune to mind-affecting, poisons, and effects that target biology), electrical attacks heal rather than cause damage, takes half damage from spells, infravision 120', keen senses, rend (2d7+3); SV Fort +12, Ref +6, Will +12; AL N.

Wandering Encounters

Check for wandering encounters once every hour (see table next page).

Die Roll (1d20)	Encounter
1-3	Shrew-like Rats (2d6): Init +3; Atk bite +0 melee (1 plus attach); AC 9; HD 1 hp; MV 20'; Act 1d16; SP attach (automatic damage each round unless removed by an action or Mighty deed); SV Fort -4, Ref +6, Will +0; AL N.
4-5	3-Foot Lizards (1d3): Init +1; Atk bite +1 melee (1d3); AC 12; HD 1d3; hp 2 each; MV 20' or climb 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will -2; AL N.
6-7	Foot-Long Red Centipede (1): Init +4; Atk bite +0 melee (1 plus poison); AC 10; HD 1 hp; MV 20' or climb 20'; Act 1d20; SP poison (1d3 temporary Strength damage; Fort DC 15 or 1d5 additional temporary Strength damage) SV Fort +0, Ref +5, Will +0; AL N.
8	Plate-Sized Hunting Spiders (1d2): Init +1; Atk bite +3 melee (1d2 plus poison); AC 12; HD 1d4; hp 2 each; MV 30' or climb 30'; Act 1d20; SP sense vibrations 120', poison (1d3 temporary Agility damage; Fort DC 7 or -10' move and -4 to Initiative for 1d5 hours); SV Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +0; AL N.
9	Hand-Sized Pale Yellow Scorpion (1): Init +3; Atk sting +3 melee (poison); AC 13; HD 1d3; hp 2 each; MV 20' or climb 10'; Act 1d16; SP poison (1d5 temporary Stamina; Fort DC 13 or collapse immediately, dying in 1d7 rounds if a second DC 13 Fort save fails); SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +3; AL N.
10-13	Thorny Devil Workers (1d6+1): Init +2; Atk bite +0 melee (1d3 plus hold); AC 14; HD 1d8+1; hp 5 each; MV 30' or climb 30'; Act 1d20; SP hold, sting (+1 to hit, 1 damage plus poison), poison (Fort DC 14 or take 1d5 damage), thorny; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +0; AL N. A thorny devil is a 2-foot-long ant-like creature covered with thorny chitinous growths. It can sting any creature it bites as a free attack. It holds on a successful bite, dealing 1 point of automatic damage each round. In successive rounds, it gains a free sting and can use its Action Die to attempt to sting. Anyone grabbing a thorny devil (including to remove it) must make a DC 12 Fort save or either suffer 1d3 damage or lose that action (player's choice).
14	A small shower of tiles and dirt falls from the ceiling (no in-game effect).
15-16	Something is heard to clatter in the fallen tiles on the floor, somewhere that the party cannot see (no in-game effect, or roll for another encounter to determine what is making the noise).
17-20	No Encounter

Numbered Encounter Areas

1. Entranceway: As the characters approach the ruined temple, read or paraphrase the following:

As you make your way toward the gilded dome, you come across a place where the jungle has broken into the complex – vines and tree roots grow around a pile of rubble and broken tile. You can see a 10-foot wide, 8-foot high passageway going into the mounded earth, southward in the rough direction of the dome. Vines overhang the broken masonry walls; soil has drifted into the

Droppings and tracks make it fairly easy to determine that rat-sized rodents have passed both into and out of the entranceway (these are the shrew-like rats described in the Wandering Encounters section). A DC 10 Intelligence check with an appropriate occupation can also determine that some form of giant insect has also made use of this entrance (these are the thorny devils described in the Wandering Encounters section). If the Intelligence check result is 20 or more, the tracker finds a solitary print from what appears to be an abnormally heavy ape (this is from a clockwork ape).

When the characters further examine the entrance, or prepare to move down it, read or paraphrase the following:

Ragged blue and green tiles cling to the walls and ceiling in what were once abstract geometrical patterns, but walls and ceiling buckled long ago. They are rent in places, allowing thick roots to trail down the walls, their tendrils crossing the floor.

2. The Gilded Dome: As the characters approach this room, they gain may hear the twittering and squeaking of nesting bats. There is a strong, choking odor of guano. Any character that approaches within 15 feet of this room is subject to the guano odor hazard, described below.

The passage enters into a huge room, some 50 feet across. The walls remain vertical for some 8 feet, and then curve for another 50 feet into a huge dome whose surface is covered with what was once a bright mosaic in yellow, blue, and green tiles. It is hard to see the pattern because of damage to the structure ... and because of the thousands of bats that are roosting here.

You can see a gash in the dome, over 20 feet long and half again as wide, allowing the bats easy access to the night air. The floor here is slick with piles and mounds of bat droppings. This rich fertilizer has allowed plants to begin growing inside the dome – vines twist upward along the ribs of the dome and out into jungle sky.

The passage opens into a 30-foot square room, with a hallway in the center of the north, south, and east walls. A portion of the ceiling collapsed to the north, bringing part of the jungle into this area. Vines and creepers cover the walls and what ceiling remains. The tremor that caused the ceiling to collapse also caused the floor to subside, so that this entire area is wet, and most of it is covered in greenish water. More water trickles in through the ceiling to the northwest, and the water seems to be draining slowly to the north.

Disturbing these bats is a very bad idea, as there are enough to make up 2 bat swarms (about 3,000 bats). Usually, a disturbance will only initiate one swarm, and the swarm will only surround the characters responsible for 1d6+1 rounds before settling.

Bat swarms, mundane (2): Init +4; Atk swarming bite +1 melee (1d3 plus disease); AC 10; HD 2d8; hp 12 each; MV fly 40'; Act special; SP bite all targets within 20' x 20' space, half damage from non-area attacks, disease (Fort DC 14 or terrible stomach pain and unable to heal damage normally for 1 week); SV Fort +0, Ref +10, Will -2; AL L.

The floor is slippery, forcing incautious characters to make Luck checks to avoid falling. Moreover, the fumes from the bat guano are hazardous in their own right (Fort save DC 12 each minute or nauseated 1d6 rounds; -1d shift for each save beyond the first; three failed saves in a row results in unconsciousness; 7 failed saves in a row results in death; nauseated creatures cannot use their Action Dice, but can make a single move action per round). The creatures in this scenario are immune to this hazard.

A multitude of small insects and spiders subsist off the nutrients the bat guano. These in turn supply a portion of food for the small shrew-like rats and lizards that are found on the Wandering Encounters table.

3. The Serpent and the Pool: Characters who approach this place may hear the sound of trickling water.

At its maximum depth, this water is only about 8 inches deep, although algae growths make it difficult to determine this without testing. Despite the algae and a malodorous flavor, this water is safe to drink.

The slippery and uneven flooring here makes fast movement difficult (Luck check to avoid falling, in addition to the saves described in the General Conditions).

There is a 12-long constrictor snake hiding in the vines.

Constrictor Snake: Init +3; Atk bite +5 melee (1d3) or grab +3 melee (1d5 plus constriction); AC 12; HD 3d6; hp 10; MV 30' or climb 20' or swim 30'; Act 1d20; SP constrict (1d3 automatic damage each round; opposed Strength vs. +4 to escape); SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +0; AL N.

The passage to the north is uneven, and slightly inclined (which allows the water to flow). Although that passage leads to a collapsed section, the water does not pool here – instead, it seeps between the ruined masonry, and into the soil.

4. Collapsed Hallway: At each of these locations, the hallway has collapsed into a pile of dirt, old masonry, and thick jungle roots. For the purpose of this adventure, continued exploration in these directions is impossible. If the judge wishes to expand the temple complex, however, any one of these areas could be only thinly blocked, and a few hours of labor might allow characters to explore an even larger section of the temple – perhaps uncovering lost levels below this one.

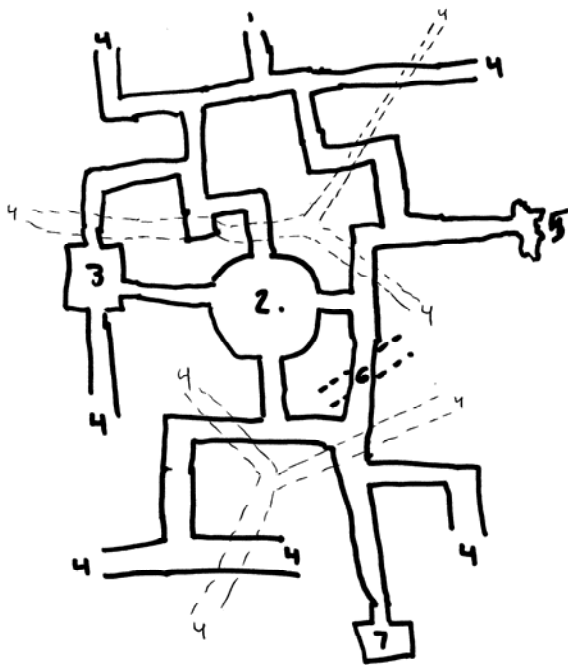
5. Collapsed Room:

The corridor comes to an end in a pile of rubble and old tiles. To the right, you can see a small opening that you could perhaps squeeze into – an open, but rubble-strewn space perhaps 5 feet wide and 10 feet deep. The ceiling is 10 feet high in this section, making it likely that it was once part of a room.

There is nothing of interest here.

6. Collapsing Hallway: The floor of the hallway at this point is weakened, and is prone to collapse when over 200 lbs crosses the marked area. This effectively acts as a camouflaged pit trap (10' fall for 1d6 damage)

If one or more characters explore the area beneath (either intentionally, or due to falling), read or paraphrase the following:



TEMPLE OF
THE APE

----- upper tunnels (5' wide)

The floor collapses into another tunnel running beneath the first. This one goes northeast to southwest. Although it is tiled in a manner similar to the tunnels above, the tiles are in better repair, showing images of a golden gorilla-like ape being worshipped by what may be men or snake-men. This tunnel is colder than the tunnel above, and darker.

The tunnel itself is only 100 feet long, running roughly equal distances from the entry point before ending in collapsed areas like those described in Area 4 (although with far fewer roots). This area is not altogether abandoned, though, for it is the prison of 6 partially corporeal un-dead rats. These rats hunger for the living, but even so they chitter in the darkness for a full 6 rounds before attacking. Anyone in the lower tunnel may hear them faintly at the southwest end of the tunnel, if they pause to listen.

Un-dead Rats (6): Init +2; Atk bite +4 melee (1d3 plus 1d2 temporary Strength damage); AC 12; HD 1d6; hp 4 each; MV 15' or climb 15'; Act 1d20; SP Detect living 120', 50% chance that non-magical or non-silver weapons pass through creature without harming it, un-dead traits; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +5; AL C.

7. Vault of the Dragon: Corroded copper hinges built into the wall show that doors once protected this room, but no other sign of them remain.

After 15 feet, the corridor opens into a room some 30 feet square and 12 feet high, with no other visible exits. The room is supported by buttresses of stone, spaced every 10 feet, and carved to look like crude apes uplifting 2 1/2-foot square pillars. The apes are all about six feet tall, hunched with arms over their heads, and the pillars are also about six feet tall. The pillars interlock with sagging beams crisscrossing the ceiling. Pillars and apes both are covered in thick roots and moss, almost hiding what they are. The floor is covered with broken tiles and debris.

Hidden within this room is the lair of a pseudodragon, **Ondavina**. Her lair is in a space where the wall has crumbled behind one of the ape-buttresses' carved heads. A two-foot wide crack gives way to a space nearly five feet in diameter, which is perfect for Ondavina.

Ondavina keeps her own treasure within her lair. Ondavina's treasure consists of 124 gp, 765 sp, seven gems (three citrine gems worth 15 gp each, two tiger's eye gems worth 25 gp each, and a ruby worth 150 gp), three potions (two *curatives* that heal 2d6 damage and one which makes the imbiber *invisible to animals* for 1d5 Turns [animals have a -4 penalty to attacks]), a *corroded copper ring* with images of mermaids that grants the wearer a +1d shift for swim checks, and a Lawful +1 *dagger* (5 Int; no communication) whose name has been lost to time.

Judges are encouraged to use Ondavina to draw players' interest to future adventures. Ondavina, for example, might know something about the villains of an adventure, or something about the treasures that can be found there, that will pique the players' interests. The Judge is encouraged to use this opportunity to add to what the players know, rather than simply repeating hooks they have already received. If you are planning on using a module with a table to generate rumors, now is a good time to give the players additional information from that table.

Set into the center of the floor, hidden beneath broken tiles and other debris is a flat circular stone 5 feet in diameter, carved with images of a dozen apes and monkeys chasing each other around the stone in a clockwise direction. There are handholds along the rim of the stone that allow it to be rotated either clockwise or counterclockwise. Turning it in either direction requires a Strength check (DC 17). Because of the handholds, up to four characters can attempt this check together (each adds their Strength bonus, or a minimum of +1, unless a character has a penalty).

If rotated clockwise, the stone turns a quarter turn and then sinks 6 inches into the floor. When this happens, the sound of glass breaking can be heard, releasing a 15-foot diameter cloud of gas centered on the stone (**Death Orchid Fumes**: Fort DC 12; 1 point of temporary Strength damage on a success; if failed, 1d6 points of temporary Strength damage and a DC 15 Fort save to avoid death). Turning the stone back counterclockwise a quarter turn raises the stone to the level of the floor. This resets the trap as long as any poison remains (see below).

This trap is DC 20 to discover, and DC 10 to disable (by determining that the stone should be turned counterclockwise only; actually disabling the trap can only be done from within the hidden vault below).

Ondavina the pseudodragon can also tell the PCs about the vault, and the trap, but if she does so she demands first pick of the treasure as compensation.

Rotating the stone counterclockwise causes it to move one-quarter turn and then begin to slowly rise until it is five feet higher than its starting position. As it rises, it reveals a hidden treasure vault five feet in diameter and five feet high, of which the ape-carved stone is the ceiling.

The trap can only be disabled while the vault is open, by removing the three remaining vials of death orchid poison (DC 15; failure by 5 or more breaks a vial, creating a 15-foot cloud of poison gas). These vials can be sold for 75 gp each or be used as missile weapons.

Within the vault are an earring that magically translates the language of any intelligent ape, gloves that grant a 20' climb speed (decorated to look like gorilla paws; not automatically effective on sheer surfaces, granting a +1d bonus instead), three small elephant tusks weighing 50 lbs and worth 75 gp each, 4 silver holy symbols (a disc with a stylized primate; the clockwork ape will not attack anyone prominently displaying one of these discs), the *rod of the ape*, and six leather bags containing 50 sp each. These are ancient coins, each weighing three times what a modern coin does. Each coin can be sold for 2 sp based on metal weight, or up to 1 gp to a collector of antiquities. Of course, merchants will be happy to accept them on a 1 coin = 1 sp basis, either because they are crooked or because they do not know the coins' true value.

If the PCs made a deal with Ondavina, she desires the Rod as her payment. Combat may ensue.

If the PCs are in need of something specific to complete a quest, the Judge can include it in Ondavina's hoard or within the hidden treasure vault, making travel to the Temple of the Golden Ape into a crucial part of an ongoing campaign.

Ondavina (Cat-sized crystal dragon): Init +3; Atk claw +4 melee (1d8) or bite +4 melee (1d12); AC 13; HD 3d12; hp 22; MV 30 or fly 60'; Act 2d20 + 1d20; SP see below; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +3; AI N.

Breath Weapon: Type (Electricity); Save (Ref 12); Damage (As dragon's hit points or half with save); Shape (1-4 line forks, width 5', total length 3d6 x 10')

Level 1 Spells: *Read Magic*.

Unique Power 1: Control fire (3/hour). The dragon can take control of mundane flames, such as torches and lanterns, and cause them to dance, extinguish, or expand; can create line of flame up to 40' long per round. A character touched by line of flame (including one holding a torch or lantern) is engulfed in flames for 1d6 damage plus an additional 1d6 per round. Reflex save each round to extinguish.

Rod of the Ape: This three-foot long rod is made of ebony wood, with an iron tip formed into the shape of a grinning ape's head. It can be used as a weapon, as a +1 *mace*. In addition, the following spell-like functions of the rod can each be used once per day:

- *Paralyze* upon touch, if the wielder so commands (Will DC 14 negates). The wielder must choose to use this power and then succeed on a melee touch attack to activate the power. If the attack fails, the effect is lost. This power is effective only against apes, monkeys, and similar creatures.
- *Aura of Fear*. Enemies viewing the Rod within 30' must make a DC 16 Will save or flee from the wielder for 1d6 rounds. Those who save are at -2 to attack rolls and spell checks due to fear for the next 1d5 rounds. Invoking this power uses an Action Die and costs 1 point of Spellburn.

Strength cast with a +5 bonus on 1d20 (rather than the wielder's spell check bonus). This power affects only the being holding the rod.

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