

Slaughter Quest

The Non-Proprietary RPG

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Door Ways

It's been roughly a year since I wrote the first (and only) entry in this Slaughter Quest series, so it's hard to believe this writing project means that much to me. On the other hand, I dreamt about playing Slaughter Quest last night, so it's obvious (to me, at least) that the game means something to me.

In the dream, I was the Referee, the Dungeon Master, the Story Teller, and/or whatever you want to call that Head Honcho Rules Lawyering Position. And there was a break in the game... for reason unknown. You know how it is in dreams. I could not begin to tell you why we were playing, in the first place; much less why we were breaking, now. Anyhow, I was playing with my friends from childhood (a totally unimportant detail). And they had just cleared out this big cavernous hall... of monsters or something. Once again, I know not what, when, where, why, or how. But the import part was having cleared the hall, we were now taking a break from the game. And during said break, I was

reading a magazine article... much like this one. Hence, why I write this particular article. Of course, I did not read the article in my dream; and so, I am unable to faithfully reproduce it here. But I do remember that the article was about doors.

And in that Great Hall (call it a Throne Room), which the characters had just cleared, there was a secret door. And without a doubt (since the rest of the adventure lay beyond said secret door), the characters were most definitely going to find that secret door. So, the only real question was how the characters were going to find it. I suppose one could roll the dice. But the best use for dice is to decide specifics and not overarching themes.

Thus, on a roll for one to three (1-3, d6), 'Your Dwarf sees some odd construction detail towards the narrow part of the chamber, a shift in construction techniques, like the change in an era or something.'

On a roll of four or five (4-5, on the same d6), 'Your Bard can't help but to notice there is an epic poem carved into the entry chamber's stone wall. It would take a person a long time to read it all the way through. Personally, I'm wondering if the Old King made every visitor listen to it from beginning to end, as the court scribe read it off, you know, as a means of making his petitioners wait. You've heard about such a tale... the arrogance of a King, who in his braggadocio, would make his supplicants listen to an hours long tale of fealty and what it means to both rule and be ruled, you know, what it means be a king, and that sort of thing. Ironically, the King was said to be imprisoned, banished to his bedchambers, or something like that, a

usurper, coming to rule in his place, sitting on his throne, probably one of those guys sick of waiting.'

And on a six (the only other possible outcome for that six sided die), 'Your Wizard doesn't quite notice magic, but the absence of magic, magic that has once been, that has worn off, faded away, and fallen to dust, back by the archway, surrounding the entry.'

All of the clues are the same. It matters not who receives them... so be generous (eventually) with one and with all. After all, that much flavor text should indicate (to any worthy adventurer and/or player) that something is up. And after a bit of searching the entry hall, another (perhaps pretend) roll of the die, and someone is sure to find a secret door that is suddenly not so secret. But even after the characters discover the door, note its outline, see the cracks in the stone, and its general method of entry, the door will be stuck, for the hinges, once oiled and smooth, are now rusted fast. Which is to say, it will (most assuredly) take a test of strength to open the doors. And this is what my dream was about.

We were all lying amongst a pile of Lego's, which were being used to define the dungeon walls and passages, you know, that Great Hall, that Throne Room. And amongst this pile of Lego's, we were taking a break; and I was reading an article (in a gaming magazine) about opening dungeon doors, in which it was suggested that players make noises (grunts and groans and so on and so forth), as their characters tried to open in-game doors, you know, just put your body into it, push against that small little Lego door, pretending to push with all your might, as

you grunted and groaned... and rolled the die to see if you succeeded.

I demonstrated what I meant. 'Argh!' I said, as I rolled the die.

Another friend, took a different tact. 'Grr!' he said, very empathetically; so much so, he did not even bother to roll the die.

But the one with the strength, the one who would actually be doing the deed, did not put much effort into his sound effects, a measly groan was all he got out, a mere 'g...', and not much more.

Well, what can I say? He rolled a 14 (on the trusty d20), which was more than enough to open the door. After all, anything over a ten would have done. And anything less would have simply indicated another tactic was in order, perhaps by giving it a go with another player, doubling up, as it were... or by enlisting the aid of an iron bar for some additional leverage. Thus, success was ultimately assured. But on account of the player's piss-poor sound effects, upon opening the door, his character fell (head over heels) down the stairway that lay just beyond, just on the other side, eventually landing at the bottom in a pile of moldy corpses... infested with rats. Oh, yes! There were rats, who soon swarmed.

Anyway, long story short, the player's character received 140 experience points for opening the door. Odd the details one remembers from a dream. And because it was mere flavor text (and a highly subjective call on the part of the Referee), the player's character received no damage from the fall... or the pipsqueak little rats, crawling over him. But the humility from running like a coward

back up the stairs from what turned out to be no more than a dozen or so, ordinary rats... well, that took a little while longer to live down.

In short, doors are made to be opened.
And adventures are made to be completed... in full.

But the story would be incomplete if we stopped there; for beyond the secret door, down the stairway, lay the Old King's Hidden Chamber, you know, that place where the King of Old would do as he would as others would do as he should, which of course, means others took care of his Kingdom, while the King, himself, passed his days in an underworld garden filled with waterfalls and brooks, pillow filled chambers, libraries, and books: the lot, having turned over the years, into a Death Trap Dungeon of sorts. But back in the day, it was a land of Earthly Delight, complete with all the trimmings... the good and the bad, the young boys and the girls, a land of wonder for grown men complete with a wide diversity of magical toys. And now, but of course, at the center of it all, resides a Dark Lich, a Skeletal Warrior, that King of Old, long preserved, who even after all this time, these many long years (millennium, even), will be interested to know if you read the whole tale, studied the story, and know that no matter what, no matter when, no matter where, why, or how one must always bow down before their King and pay homage... or suffer the wrath, thereof.

Which is to say, I don't really know how powerful that Lich is, if he is indeed a Lich; and whether said Lich, Skeletal Warrior, or Phantasm of Light is Good or Evil,

completely indifferent or off the wall bonkers insane... or even what type of Quests said ruler would send his faithful followers on after all of these years. But I do know, one thing is for sure, all Hell will follow if the characters do not bend a knee, as the King of Corpses screams 'Death to you all, traitorous fools!' But if the characters do... bend a knee, pay a token bit of homage, say by kissing a ring on the Dark Lord's partially decayed finger, well then, they've just met a friend rather than foe... and would they maybe care for a cup of spiced tea, as we discuss the present (ill conceived, madly erroneous) state of the world... and the deeds that currently need doing?

But alas, that last, is truly a story for another time.