

Cliffhangers Adventures

Bridge Work

Episode One: In Media Rex

by Jeff Quick



Bridge Work is a short adventure for four 7th-level characters. The adventure takes place mainly on an enormous stone bridge built across an archipelago. Dungeon Masters can modify the adventure to accommodate higher-level characters by giving humanoid foes more class levels and increasing the HD and/or age category of other opponents.

Adventure Background

Hundreds of years ago, a dwarf king wanted to ensure the safety of his treasure vaults. Though he knew the safety of stone, he also knew the volatility of the Underdark. So he built his treasure vault within a rocky island at the end of a short jut of rocky islands, just off the mainland.

Then he had an enormous stone bridge constructed across the islands so he could transport his riches there and guard access to the vault. The bridge arcs high and dips down to meet its support struts on three islands before it reaches the final vault isle.

Finally, the canny king bargained with elemental outsiders to protect his treasures. The descendents of the original elementals protect the island to this day. Tojanidas in the water prevent anyone from boating or swimming within several miles of the island. Arrowhawks continually circle the island, viciously attacking any who approach by air. The king designed it so that the only way to his vaults was by the bridge itself.

Less than a decade later, an earthquake crushed the king and his kingdom. The bridge was partially destroyed, and the treasure vaults were nearly forgotten.

Adventure Synopsis

The PCs can travel along a bridge and encounter some archaeologists who seek the treasure of the old king and some oath dwarves who seek to stop them. If the PCs survive that encounter, they can come across some kobolds, bees, an elemental, and even MORE oath dwarves in their quest to enter the king's treasure vaults.

Character Hooks

Cliffhanger Features

The Dungeon Master should keep the following points in mind as the players decide what their PCs should do throughout the "Bridge Work" Cliffhanger series.

Traveling by Foot (EL varies)

Two 50-foot-high dwarf statues and a few *glyph of warding* spells flank the entrance to the bridge. Safely dismissing the *glyphs* requires a password AND a golden sigil. Both the archaeologist dwarves and the oath dwarves have the golden sigil necessary to disarm the *glyph* protecting the bridge. However, only the archaeologist dwarves have the password written down on papers among their personal effects. Learning the password from the oath dwarves can be done only from speaking with their corpses.

Anyone who tries to step onto the bridge without the proper password and sigil triggers the *glyph*. Several applications of the *glyph of warding* spell delineate five 50-square-foot areas starting at the head of the bridge. The *glyph* does 5d8 points of fire damage to anyone who breaks it and

- Player characters might hear tales of a dwarven recovery team venturing to reclaim the lost dwarven king's treasure vaults.
- One of the dwarves in the party might be a descendant of some dwarf who escaped the quake. The party's dwarf might very well have it impressed upon him or her by family that the treasure is practically a birthright for surviving descendants.
- A historian or architect might want to hire armed guards, a religious practitioner, and perhaps a diviner to escort him or her to explore this mysterious edifice.
- Anybody ever notice all those bird things that fly around that island all the time out there a few miles offshore? Hasn't anybody ever been curious about that?

In Media Rex (EL varies)

The adventure begins as the PCs come close enough to the head of the bridge to see a skirmish happening before them. Read the following to the players:

As you come close enough to make out what's going on, you see two groups of dwarves fighting near the entrance to the bridge. One group is dressed uniformly in brown with black chainmail. These dwarves look thin, but well-muscled and alert. The other group wears lighter, varied colors and fights valiantly, but it is not nearly as well armed or combat-ready.

The dwarves wearing light-colored clothes are archaeologists who discovered the crushed dwarven kingdom. They learned of the vault island at the end of the bridge by studying the ruins. When they arrived to begin studying the bridge, these thin, hard dwarves dressed in dark chain attacked them.

The thin, hard dwarves are the current generation of a dwarven clan who took an oath to protect the king's treasure with their lives. They have dwelt in secret near the head of the bridge for centuries protecting it from any who would plunder the king's treasure . . . or anyone who just gets too close.

Archaeologist Male and female Dwarves Exp2 (5); CR 1; Medium-size humanoid; HD 2d6+2; hp 9; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 14 (touch 10, flat-footed 14); Atk +2 melee (1d6+1, club); SQ Dwarf traits; AL LN; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +3; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Craft (metalworking) +3, Craft (stoneworking) +3, Decipher Script +5, Disable Device +5, Gather Information +5, Knowledge (history) +5, Profession (archaeologist) +7, Search +4, Sense Motive +4, Spot +4, Use Magic Device +1, Use Rope +1; Skill Focus (Profession [archaeologist]).

all within 5 feet of the *glyph* breaker.

Glyph of Warding: CR 4; 5-ft. fire blast (5d8); Reflex save halves damage (DC 14); Search (DC 28); Disable Device (DC 28).

To cross any one section of the area requires one disarming action. This means that after someone passes the first *glyph*, he or she must pass a second *glyph* 50 feet later. Of course, anyone may fly past the area of the *glyph* and walk harmlessly on the bridge.

Traveling by Air (EL 7)

If a flier attempts to fly more than 200 feet onto the length of bridge at a height of more than 20 feet, that person attracts the attention of the adult arrowhawks circling the vault island, three miles away. (The arrowhawks do not care who walks on the bridge. They care only about those who attempt to fly above the bridge.)

Juvenile Arrowhawks (4): 16 hp each; see *Monster Manual* page 19.

Traveling by Water (EL 7)

Should the PCs attempt to swim to the island, they encounter tojanidas quite quickly.

Juvenile Tojanidas (4): 19 hp each; see *Monster Manual* page 177.

Loot and Other Important Matters

While adventuring along this bridge, the PCs find little in the way of extraneous loot around. In fact, they find only what is listed in the possessions of each creature they vanquish. However, the final encounter and the treasure hoard at the end should more than make up for the expedition. As always, Dungeon Masters should feel free to adjust the treasure to their campaign levels.

Dwarf Traits: +1 racial bonus on attack rolls against orcs and goblinoids; +2 racial bonus on Will saves against spells and spell-like abilities; +2 racial bonus on Fortitude saves against all poisons; +4 dodge bonus against giants; darkvision 60 ft.; stonecunning (+2 racial bonus on checks to notice unusual stonework; can make a check for unusual stonework as though actively searching when within 10 ft. and can use the Search skill to find stonework traps as a rogue can; intuit depth); +2 racial bonus on Appraise checks and Craft or Profession checks related to stone or metal (these bonuses are already figured into the statistics above).

Possessions: Chain shirt, club, backpack, history books, magnifying glass, 1 week's rations.

Male Oath Dwarves Ftr2/Rog1 (4): CR 3; Medium-size humanoid; HD 2d10+4, 1d6+2; hp 20; Init +1; Spd 15 ft.; AC 17 (touch 11, flat-footed 16); Atk +6 melee (1d10+2/x3, masterwork dwarven waraxe) or +3 ranged (1d8/19–20, light crossbow); SA Sneak attack (+1d6); SQ Dwarf traits, traps; AL LN; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Climb +2, Craft (metalworking) +2, Craft (stoneworking) +2, Hide +2, Jump +2, Listen +3, Spot +3; Blind-Fight, Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (dwarven waraxe), Weapon Focus (dwarven waraxe)

Sneak Attack: If an oath dwarf's target would be denied a Dexterity bonus to AC (whether that target actually has a bonus or not), or when the oath dwarf flanks his target, the the oath dwarf's attack deals +1d6 points of extra damage.

Dwarf Traits: +1 racial bonus on attack rolls against orcs and goblinoids; +2 racial bonus on Will saves against spells and spell-like abilities; +2 racial bonus on Fortitude saves against all poisons; +4 dodge bonus against giants; darkvision 60 ft.; stonecunning (+2 racial bonus on checks to notice unusual stonework; can make a check for unusual stonework as though actively searching when within 10 ft. and can use the Search skill to find stonework traps as a rogue can; intuit depth); +2 racial bonus on Appraise checks and Craft or Profession checks related to stone or metal (these bonuses are already figured into the statistics above).

Traps: Oath dwarves can use the Search skill to locate traps when the task has a DC higher than 20 and can use the Disable Device skill to disarm magic traps.

Possessions: Masterwork chain mail, masterwork buckler, masterwork dwarven waraxe, light crossbow, 20 bolts.

If the party waits to see what happens, the archaeologist group sees them and begins to fall back toward them, pleading for their help against "bandits and ruffians." If the party does not help, the archaeologist dwarves are cut down eventually.

If the party assists the archaeologists and helps them win, the dwarves thank them profusely and invite the party to join their expedition. (See Development for more information on this.)

If the party helps the oath dwarves, the dwarves thank them for their help against the thieves. Then they talk to the group to discover their intentions. If the party admits to wanting to journey on the bridge or get the treasure in the vaults, the oath dwarves shout their eternal oath of vigilance and protection, and launch into new battle against the PCs.

Development: If the PCs accept the help of the archaeologists, these worthy dwarves tell them that they will assist as they may when it comes to traps and information, but that they don't hold much with combat and will defend themselves only. They prefer to talk their way through encounters with intelligent creatures. That's what they tried to do with the oath dwarves, but they failed miserably. Effectively, the dwarves will not be participating in any combat, but they will aid in other situations.

In return for any combat aid that the PCs grant the dwarves, the dwarves will give them first dibs on one item

within the treasure vault. After that, the dwarves will choose anything that is of historical value (including one of any coins of old mint) and leave the rest for the PCs.

Cliffhanger

The bridge, open and ready for adventurers and their ilk, arcs up and away for a half mile, beckoning any who dare to cross.

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Cliffhangers Adventures

Bridge Work

Episode Two: Tollbooth

by Jeff Quick



Bridge Work is a short adventure for four 7th-level characters. The adventure takes place mainly on an enormous stone bridge built across an archipelago. Dungeon Masters can modify the adventure to accommodate higher-level characters by giving humanoid foes more class levels and increasing the HD and/or age category of other opponents.

The party begins traveling on the bridge, and they must walk up and over the first span. When built, the bridge was 50 feet wide with 5-foot-high stone edges on each side. Now, the bridge has crumbled and collapsed in several places, although no place on this portion of the bridge has less than a 10-foot-wide pathway.

A successful Spot check (DC 22) reveals very faint scorch marks and blood spatters on the bridge stone where the *glyph* zone ends. Anyone with the Track feat can follow faint blood smears (again with a Search check DC 22) to the edge of one of the many holes in the bridge, indicating that bodies were dragged to holes and tossed through. Someone has been here relatively recently.

Looking through the holes reveals only crashing waves on the shore anywhere from 200 feet to 2,500 feet below, depending on what part of the slope the PCs are on.

As the party tops the rise of the arc and begins to walk down the slope, they approach where the first island sends up a support column to meet the bridge. There, they see an unlikely sight.

Welcome to Martark (EL varies)

What the PCs encounter at this point depends on the time of day. If they reach this part of the bridge in early morning, they see a couple of kobolds standing in a line, which stops at a makeshift hut. The kobolds are facing them and notice them as soon as the PCs top the rise. The kobolds seem to have creels or game slung over their shoulders, but they drop them and brandish spears when the PCs arrive.

If the PCs come during the night or mid-day, they see a lone hut on the bridge. During the night the hut contains a single kobold. During the day, the hut is empty.

If the PCs come in early evening, they see a couple of kobolds standing in a line facing away from them. After some sort of transaction, each kobold walks up the next arc of the bridge away from them, and another one wanders in from the staircase nearby (see below) and gets into line. The kobolds have variously long fishing poles, nets, lobster cages, and primitive

Cliffhanger Features

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hunting gear. The line leads from the hut down a wooden staircase that abuts the stone bridge support.

Garklma: Male kobold Ari5; CR 4; Small humanoid (reptilian); HD 5d8+8; hp 30; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (touch 12, flat-footed 14); Atk +2 melee (1d6-2/x3, halfspear); SQ Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity -1; AL LE; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +4; Str 7, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +8, Bluff +7, Craft (trapmaking) +2, Diplomacy +9, Hide +5, Intimidate +9, Search +2; Improved Initiative, Toughness.

Darkvision: Garklma can see in the dark as though in normal daylight.

Light Sensitivity (Ex): Garklma is sensitive to light and gets a -1 circumstance penalty to attack rolls in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *daylight* spell.

Possessions: Leather armor, halfspear.

Male and Female Kobold War1 (10): CR 1/2; Small humanoid (reptilian); HD 1d8; hp 4; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (touch 12, flat-footed 14); Atk +0 melee (1d6-2/x3, halfspear); SQ Darkvision 60, light sensitivity -1; AL LE; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 6, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Climb +0, Craft (trapmaking) +2, Hide +5, Intimidate +2, Jump +0, Listen +2, Search +2, Spot +2, Swim +0; Alertness.

Darkvision: A warrior can see in the dark as though in normal daylight.

Light Sensitivity (Ex): A warrior is sensitive to light and gets a -1 circumstance penalty to attack rolls in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *daylight* spell.

Possessions: Leather armor, halfspear.

Male and Female Kobolds Exp1 (7): CR 1/2; Small humanoid; HD 1d6; hp 3; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (touch 12, flat-footed 14); Atk -1 melee (1d6-2/x3, halfspear); SQ Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity -1; AL LE; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +2; Str 6, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +1, Climb +0, Craft (trapmaking) +6, Craft (weaving) +4, Hide +6, Jump +1, Listen +3, Profession (beekeeper or fisher) +4, Search +4, Spot +4; Alertness.

Darkvision: A kobold expert can see in the dark as though in normal daylight.

Light Sensitivity (Ex): A kobold expert is sensitive to light and gets a -1 circumstance penalty to attack rolls in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *daylight* spell.

Possessions: Gear (which incorporates leather armor), halfspear.

protecting the bridge. However, only the archaeologist dwarves have the password written down on papers among their personal effects. Learning the password from the oath dwarves can be done only from speaking with their corpses.

Anyone who tries to step onto the bridge without the proper password and sigil triggers the *glyph*. Several applications of the *glyph of warding* spell delineate five 50-square-foot areas starting at the head of the bridge. The *glyph* does 5d8 points of fire damage to anyone who breaks it and all within 5 feet of the *glyph* breaker.

Glyph of Warding: CR 4; 5-ft. fire blast (5d8); Reflex save halves damage (DC 14); Search (DC 28); Disable Device (DC 28).

To cross any one section of the area requires one disarming action. This means that after someone passes the first *glyph*, he or she must pass a second *glyph* 50 feet later. Of course, anyone may fly past the area of the *glyph* and walk harmlessly on the bridge.

Traveling by Air (EL 7)

If a flier attempts to fly more than 200 feet onto the length of bridge at a height of more than 20 feet, that person attracts the attention of the adult arrowhawks circling the vault island, three miles away. (The arrowhawks do not care who walks on the bridge. They care only about those who attempt to fly above the bridge.)

Juvenile Arrowhawks (4): 16 hp each; see *Monster Manual* page 19.

Traveling by Water (EL 7)

Should the PCs attempt to swim to the island, they encounter tojanidas quite quickly.

Juvenile Tojanidas (4): 19 hp each;

see *Monster Manual* page 177.

Loot and Other Important Matters

While adventuring along this bridge, the PCs find little in the way of extraneous loot around. In fact, they find only what is listed in the possessions of each creature they vanquish. However, the final encounter and the treasure hoard at the end should more than make up for the expedition. As always, *Dungeon Masters* should feel free to adjust the treasure to their campaign levels.

Kobolds (23): hp 2; see the *Monster Manual* page 123.

Player characters must make a Search check (DC 15) to see what's going on at the hut. Those who succeed can tell that the hut is apparently a sort of tollbooth.

Some time ago, a tribe of kobolds shipwrecked onto this island. They have been eking out a living here fishing, hunting, and trapping ever since. The pickings are better in the deeper waters and lush foliage of the second island, so the kobolds built a rickety staircase up the side of the support column to walk across the bridge to it (thus avoiding the tojanidas). At the support column on the second island, they built another staircase down.

Garklma, the chief of the shipwrecked community (which is called Martark by the kobolds), had a hut built on the bridge, and he requires that hunters and fishers register before going to the second island. Garklma then levies the day's catch from returning kobolds to feed himself and his family. The warriors back him up whenever the other kobolds start questioning his leadership. Though it is rare for such a small community of kobolds to have such relatively high-classed characters, the tojanidas are a constant threat to the fishers of the community, and the combative life has brought out the "best" in several of the shipwrecked community members.

No one has ever come from that side of the bridge where the PCs emerge, and the few kobolds who have ever returned from there speak of flames jumping out of the air to kill them. So the kobolds learned to leave the "killing end" alone and are understandably jumpy about anyone who appears from that direction.

Trap: To make sure no one ever does appear unnoticed, the kobolds have trapped the bridge 25 feet from the hut toward the "killing end." The trap is a simple trapdoor in the bridge itself, which drops PCs into a heavy seaweed net 10 feet below. The net entangles the trapped PCs and (theoretically) holds them captive until the kobolds decide what to do with them. Beneath the net is a 250-foot fall onto the rocky island below.

Trapdoor Pit: CR 1/2; 10 ft. deep (no damage, entangled by net); Reflex save avoids (DC 20); Search (DC 21); Disable Device (DC 20).

Net: 1 in. thick; hardness 1;hp 5; Break DC 25; Escape Artist check frees (DC 20).

This hut is not a necessary stopover for the PCs. The kobolds here have an unfriendly attitude, but not a hostile one -- they're not spoiling for a fight, but they're prepared for it (See Table 5-3 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). In addition to the kobolds the PCs might see at dusk or dawn, more kobolds are within a few rounds of joining any fray. Though the PCs are likely to win a fight, they'll take a beating in sheer numbers.

However, if the PCs calmly register passage and claim their intent at the hut (whether truthfully or not), they can pass with no more than startled, distrustful stares from the adult population of Martark. If they try to come back through this way without paying the toll, then there will be trouble. (The dwarves will always prefer to talk to the kobolds over killing them. In fact, they'll be ready to question the leader and his fellow kobolds about anything on the islands. They'll be quite gruff to the PCs should the PCs immediately think to attack.)

The kobolds know nothing about treasure. The bridge beyond the second island has a huge gap, and no kobold has ever ventured past it. They won't say why they've never ventured past it, but they all know the giant bees live under the bridge there, and they don't want the PCs to go and steal their source of honey. They've also interacted with the oath dwarves enough to know that going into that area is not something they even talk about among themselves. Why the oath dwarves haven't yet killed the kobolds is another mystery. If asked, the kobolds respond that their leader is strong, so the dwarves fear to kill him or anger him. This bit of

self-delusion on their part is completely at odds with any questions about why the kobolds haven't tried to take over the dwarves' territory. The leader AND the kobolds simply say that they have no interest in the dwarves and their area. They wish only to survive in this newfound home of theirs right now, and when the dwarves come by their area, they let them through peacefully.

Development: DMs can have some fun with this encounter and eventually allow the truth to come out: The kobolds give the dwarves food and leave the "dwarf area" alone in return for being allowed to stay where they are and live peaceful lives. The dwarves themselves aren't as great in number as they used to be, so getting food and ignoring the kobolds is a decent enough deal for them to live with.

Cliffhanger

At the peak past the second island, the bridge has clearly fallen out, and a huge gap in the bridge is visible. Did the PCs ask enough questions to learn about the giant bees there? Did the PCs remember to bring rope? Or do they have at least enough *fly* spells for everybody?

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Cliffhangers Adventures

Bridge Work

Episode Three: The Sting

by Jeff Quick



Bridge Work is a short adventure for four 7th-level characters. The adventure takes place mainly on an enormous stone bridge built across an archipelago. Dungeon Masters can modify the adventure to accommodate higher-level characters by giving humanoid foes more class levels and increasing the HD and/or age category of other opponents.

The PCs travel the mile over the next arc, down to where the kobolds have built their staircase to the second island. They continue to receive distrustful stares from a thin stream of kobolds along the way, but they won't get attacked unless the PCs do something provocative.

About halfway up the third arc of the bridge, a successful Spot check (DC 10) allows the PCs to see that a large portion of the bridge has fallen out. From this angle it is difficult to tell how large the gap is. The party is less than a mile from the vault island now, and flying at a distance of greater than 10 feet from the bridge in any direction is enough to bring 1d4 arrowhawks around for a closer inspection.

Once they are within range to estimate, the PCs can see that the entire gap is 40 feet wide. Any character who steps on the edge and whose total weight is heavier than 200 pounds will crumble the stones of the square the character is in and the two squares on either side.

The Sting (EL 8)

When they come within 60 feet of the gap, PCs hear a loud buzzing. A successful Listen check (DC 15) allows them to pinpoint the source of the buzzing: it emanates from beneath the bridge, just under the lip of the gap ahead.

If the PCs talked with the kobolds, they might have learned of the bee hive underneath the bridge ahead (though the kobolds would have given that information reluctantly). The bees collect pollen from plants on the various nearby islands and turn it into honey, which kobolds harvest under the direction of their beekeeper, Tirestra.

Giant Bees (12): 13 hp; see the *Monster Manual* page 206.

The bees do not notice or attack the PCs until they come to the edge of the gap. But once they do, the bees become enraged. The bees come over the

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Anyone who tries to step onto the bridge without the proper password and sigil triggers the *glyph*. Several applications of the *glyph of warding* spell delineate five 50-square-foot areas starting at the head of the bridge. The *glyph* does 5d8 points of fire damage to anyone who breaks it and

front and sides of the bridge and attack anyone nearby.

Tirestra watches the PCs anxiously from behind throughout their battle with the bees, creeping closer to the fight every round. If things seem to go badly for the bees, he rushes toward the PCs in his beekeeper gear and begins stabbing the most hurt one with his half-spear. Note that this might put him within range to be attacked by a bee.

Tirestra: Male kobold Exp5; CR 4; Small humanoid (reptilian); HD 5d6; hp 17; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (touch 13, flat-footed 14); Atk +3 melee (1d6-1/x3, halfspear); SQ Darkvision 60, light sensitivity -1; AL LE; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +5; Str 8, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Animal Empathy +8, Craft (trapmaking) +2, Handle Animal +8, Hide +5, Listen +9, Move Silently +4, Profession (beekeeper) +11, Ride (pony) +3, Search +10, Spot +9, Swim +0; Alertness, Skill Focus (Profession [beekeeper]).

Darkvision: Tirestra can see in the dark as though in normal daylight.

Light Sensitivity (Ex): Tirestra is sensitive to light and gets a -1 circumstance penalty on attack rolls in bright sunlight or within the radius of a daylight spell.

Possessions: Beekeeper's gear (which incorporates leather armor), halfspear.

Once the bees and Tirestra are defeated, crossing the gap in the bridge is mostly a matter of ingenuity and organization. Crossing might require appropriate Strength checks, Use Rope checks, and spells. If the PCs talked their way through the encounter somehow, Tirestra doesn't provide anything more useful in the way of information. However, as with the other kobolds, he knows that there are dwarves guarding the treasure trove.

Cliffhanger

Past the gap, the end is in sight. The PCs can see the final island below them, and the entrance to the treasure vaults. The end of the bridge is only about half a mile away, with no obstacles in sight. Nothing could go wrong now!

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all within 5 feet of the *glyph* breaker.

Glyph of Warding: CR 4; 5-ft. fire blast (5d8); Reflex save halves damage (DC 14); Search (DC 28); Disable Device (DC 28).

To cross any one section of the area requires one disarming action. This means that after someone passes the first *glyph*, he or she must pass a second *glyph* 50 feet later. Of course, anyone may fly past the area of the *glyph* and walk harmlessly on the bridge.

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Cliffhangers Adventures

Bridge Work

Episode Four: Against the Elements

by Jeff Quick



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Once past the gap, the PCs can see the end of the bridge below them. Toward the end, the curvature of the bridge flattens out, and for the last 200 feet the construction looks much more solid, with minimal damage. Every 50 feet along the edge of the bridge, a 20-foot-tall statue of a dwarven warrior flanks the bridge, looking down on the PCs. The arrowhawks who circle overhead attack anyone flying at all now.

Against the Elements (EL 9)

When the PCs are about 110 feet away from the end, a loud voice calls out something in Dwarven. The dialect is old, but anyone who speaks Dwarven can understand it. Those who understand Dwarven hear the following:

"Halt and present the king's sigil."

Accompanying the voice, a Huge humanoid creature made of stone rises from the middle of the bridge. The railing of the bridge and 15 feet of the bridge's surface on either side of the elemental shrink away, as if the elemental were drawing from the bridge to provide its body mass. The creature holds out its right hand, as if waiting for something.

The PCs might very well pull out the golden sigil they used to bypass the *glyphs*. If they do, read the following:

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Anyone who tries to step onto the bridge without the proper password and sigil triggers the *glyph*. Several applications of the *glyph of warding* spell delineate five 50-square-foot areas starting at the head of the bridge. The *glyph* does 5d8 points of fire damage to anyone who breaks it and

The elemental reaches down, takes it in one hand, and pulls it back up to its face. It studies the sigil for a few seconds.

"This is the vizier's sigil. Show the king's sigil or be destroyed!"

If any archaeologist dwarves are with the party, they are excited and frightened to witness an elemental that has probably been guarding the bridge for centuries. They had no idea this would be here. They also have no clue what the king's sigil looks like, though they consult their notes furiously, discussing theories of the vizier's relationship to the king.

The creature is an elemental, and it is quite bored with its guard job. It doesn't care about treasure; it cares about fulfilling its centuries-old promise to let only those pass who show it the king's sigil. It speaks only Dwarven and Terran.

The elemental is implacable in its duty. It cannot be tricked easily into doing something foolish, such as revealing the shape of the sigil, or letting the PCs by so they can go get it. However, if the characters seem friendly, the elemental gives clues to where PCs can find the king's sigil in the nearby architecture. The elemental might drop broad hints such as, "I will not reveal the doorway by which you may enter."

In fact, the king's sigil is etched onto the front door of the treasure vault, 200 feet from the foot of the bridge. Though the elemental cannot allow any creature to pass, it does not stop anyone from casting spells or walking by ethereally to get a closer look.

Greater Earth Elemental: 199 hp; see the *Monster Manual* page 82.

Though its attitude is indifferent and might even become friendly through conversation, it tries to kill any creature who passes without showing the sigil. If a quick character jukes past the elemental, it chases the PCs onto the island.

If no one spots the sigil or thinks to look around for it, the PCs must fight the elemental to enter the vault.

If the PCs talk their way past the elemental, it sinks back into the bridge, awaiting the next challenger to appear.

Cliffhanger

The PCs have reached the island, and the treasure vault stands before them. What will they face inside?

all within 5 feet of the *glyph* breaker.

Glyph of Warding: CR 4; 5-ft. fire blast (5d8); Reflex save halves damage (DC 14); Search (DC 28); Disable Device (DC 28).

To cross any one section of the area requires one disarming action. This means that after someone passes the first *glyph*, he or she must pass a second *glyph* 50 feet later. Of course, anyone may fly past the area of the *glyph* and walk harmlessly on the bridge.

Traveling by Air (EL 7)

If a flier attempts to fly more than 200 feet onto the length of bridge at a height of more than 20 feet, that person attracts the attention of the adult arrowhawks circling the vault island, three miles away. (The arrowhawks do not care who walks on the bridge. They care only about those who attempt to fly above the bridge.)

Juvenile Arrowhawks (4): 16 hp each; see *Monster Manual* page 19.

Traveling by Water (EL 7)

Should the PCs attempt to swim to the island, they encounter tojanidas quite quickly.

Juvenile Tojanidas (4): 19 hp each; see *Monster Manual* page 177.

Loot and Other Important Matters

While adventuring along this bridge, the PCs find little in the way of extraneous loot around. In fact, they find only what is listed in the possessions of each creature they vanquish. However, the final encounter and the treasure hoard at the end should more than make up for the expedition. As always, Dungeon Masters should feel free to adjust the treasure to their campaign levels.

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Cliffhangers Adventures

Bridge Work

Episode Five: The Guardians

by Jeff Quick



Bridge Work is a short adventure for four 7th-level characters. The adventure takes place mainly on an enormous stone bridge built across an archipelago. Dungeon Masters can modify the adventure to accommodate higher-level characters by giving humanoid foes more class levels and increasing the HD and/or age category of other opponents.

The oath dwarves watched the PCs deal with the earth elemental on the last portion of the bridge, and they have prepared their final offense accordingly. Since they saw them fight or negotiate near the foot of the bridge, they have a general idea of who is wounded, what spells have been used, and any special abilities that party members have. They use this knowledge to their advantage.

The dwarves stand within the guard antechamber to the treasure vaults, behind the front door. The door is not trapped, but the arrow slits facing the bridge allow the dwarves inside to watch and plan unseen.

When the PCs open the front door to the vault, they see the following, standing just inside the doorway.

A single dwarf stands before you dressed in ancient, elaborate dwarven plate. A polished, sharpened dwarven waraxe hangs lightly in a hasp at her side. Her grim face holds no quarter for any of you.

In her hands, she holds a rod. Though the plate mail appears ornamental, it is sturdy and well made. The dwarf speaks in Common with a gravelly voice, "I Vixtra, last of the Treasurereeves, will allow no further encroachment. You have reached the door of the king's vaults, plunderers, but you will not return with his treasures!"

If no one moves to stop her, she snaps the rod in half. If combat begins, her first action is to break the rod. When she does, read the following:

The ground beneath you begins to shake violently. The great stone bridge shudders and collapses. Enormous blocks of stone fall into the foamy water below, and all the islands are drenched with spray as tons of rock churns the waters.

The dwarf draws her waraxe and says, "You may not enter the king's vault while I live."

The Guardians (EL 8)

There is no more room for discussion in any of these dwarves' minds. They see the PCs solely as robbers and intend to kill them.

Vixtra Treasureeve: Female dwarf Ftr7/Def1; CR 8; Medium-size humanoid; 7d10+31 plus 1d12+4; hp 80; Init +1; Spd 15 ft.; AC 26 (touch 12, flat-footed 25); Atk +13/+8 melee (1d10+6, +1 *dwarven waraxe*); SQ Defensive stance 1/day; AL LN; SV Fort +11, Ref +3, Will +5; Str 17, Dex 13, Con 18, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Climb +5, Craft (metalworking) +2, Craft (stoneworking) +2, Jump +5, Listen +3, Spot +3; Dodge, Endurance, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (*dwarven waraxe*), Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (*dwarven waraxe*), Weapon Specialization (*dwarven waraxe*).

Dwarf Traits: +1 racial bonus on attack rolls against orcs and goblinoids; +2 racial bonus on Will saves against spells and spell-like abilities; +2 racial bonus on Fortitude saves against all poisons; +4 dodge bonus against giants; darkvision 60 ft.; stonecunning (+2 racial bonus on checks to notice unusual stonework; can make a check for unusual stonework as though actively searching when within 10 ft. and can use the Search skill to find stonework traps as a rogue can; intuit depth); +2 racial bonus on Appraise checks and Craft or Profession checks related to stone or metal (these bonuses are already figured into the statistics above).

Defensive Stance: The *dwarven defender* gains a +2 bonus to Strength, a +4 bonus to Constitution, a +2 resistance bonus on all saves, and a +4 Dodge bonus to AC, but cannot move from his spot or use skills or abilities that would require movement. After (see left) rounds, he is winded and suffers a –2 penalty on Strength for the duration of the encounter. These changes produce the following alterations in the above statistics: hp 96; AC 30 (touch 16, flat-footed 29); Atk +14/+9 melee (1d10+7, +1 *dwarven waraxe*); SV Fort +15, Ref +5, Will +7; Str 19, Dex 13, Con 22, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8. *Skills and Feats:* Climb +6, Jump +6. The defensive stance lasts 9 rounds.

Possessions: +2 *plate mail*, +2 *large steel shield*, +1 *dwarven waraxe*.

Male Oath Dwarves Ftr2/Rog1 (2): CR 3; Medium-size humanoid; HD 2d10+4, 1d6+2; hp 20; Init +1; Spd 15 ft.; AC 17 (touch 11, flat-footed 16); Atk +6 melee (1d10+2/x3, masterwork *dwarven waraxe*) or +3 ranged (1d8/19–20, light crossbow); SA Sneak attack (+1d6); SQ Dwarf traits, traps; AL LN; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Climb +2, Craft (metalworking) +2, Craft (stoneworking) +2, Hide +2, Jump +2, Listen +3, Spot +3; Blind-Fight, Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (*dwarven waraxe*), Weapon Focus (*dwarven waraxe*)

Sneak Attack: If an oath dwarf's target would be denied a Dexterity bonus to AC (whether that target actually has a bonus or not), or when the oath dwarf flanks his target, the oath dwarf's attack deals +1d6 points of extra damage.

Dwarf Traits: +1 racial bonus on attack rolls against orcs and goblinoids; +2 racial bonus on Will saves against spells and spell-like abilities; +2 racial bonus on Fortitude saves against all poisons; +4 dodge bonus against giants; darkvision 60 ft.; stonecunning (+2 racial bonus on checks to notice unusual stonework; can make a check for unusual stonework as though actively searching when within 10 ft. and can use the Search skill to find stonework traps as a rogue can; intuit depth); +2 racial bonus on Appraise checks and Craft or Profession checks related to stone or metal (these bonuses are already figured into the statistics above).

Traps: Oath dwarves can use the Search skill to locate traps when the task has a DC higher than 20 and can use the Disable Device skill to disarm magic traps.

Possessions: Masterwork chain mail, masterwork buckler, masterwork dwarven waraxe, light crossbow, 20 bolts.

Tactics: Oath dwarves hide just inside the room and attempt to flank and sneak attack anyone who steps inside the vault to fight Vixtra. They do not advance outside of the antechamber, but fight to kill any who step inside.

Continuing the Adventure

After the defeat of the vault's protectors, the dwarf king's treasure vaults await intrepid seekers. The vaults could be a dungeon unto themselves, with traps and guardian monsters waiting for foolish treasure hunters. The vaults could also be empty; an Underdark denizen could have tunneled up from beneath the ocean floor as a last laugh against the king who thought his treasure safe from diggers on an island in the water. Getting back to the mainland afterward could also be its own adventure.

For those Dungeon Masters who wish to have something predetermined to give to the PCs, here is a list of suggested items from which you may choose only one set: *Greataxe of Ancestors* (a +1 greataxe with the special quality of ghost touch; engraved in Dwarven with the greataxe's name), *Staunch Defender* (a +1 tower shield with the special quality of animated; it features its name in Dwarven, too) and three potions of *cure moderate wounds*, or a *horn of goodness/evil* and a scroll of *heal*. The bulk of the treasure is in gold and silver in these amounts (to match up with items above): 4,900 gp and 1,000 sp; 2,900 gp and 4,000 sp; or 1,700 gp and 500 sp. Also in the treasure hoard, such as it is, is an old diary of a noble. The archaeologists eagerly snatch this if it isn't the first item chosen by the PCs. It's up to the Dungeon Master to determine how this diary fits into the campaign.

Once the PCs (and friends) figure out the treasure split, they will need to figure out how to get away from where they are now. The bridge is out, but any hazards that the PCs didn't destroy (such as the tojanida) remain to plague the PCs as they leave.

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