

The Treacherous Shaft (EL 8)

An encounter for the Iron Heroes game system

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A Mad Irishman Production

Introduction

The adventure's end draws nigh! After braving many perils of the jungle, the heroes stand poised to reclaim the precious stone for which they seek: the Heart of Glory. Knowing it to be held by the witch doctor Kalonji, they need now only reclaim it from his dark lair. This might prove more difficult than the characters had first imagined; they will have to force their way into his lair over dangerous terrain.

A Dangerous Climb

Entry into Kalonji's lair is not easily gained, for it is guarded, and natural obstacles give its defenders a sizable advantage over intruders.

Kalonji lairs in a cave perched some 70 feet above the jungle floor. A winding path leads up the side of a cliff face for most of this distance, then a vine ladder (at position A) must be ascended for the last 15 feet. The ladder brings characters to a ledge, at the end of which a dark cave mouth can be seen, beside a roaring waterfall. Water spouts from the cave and falls through the tree canopy below.

The cave floor ascends sharply. Water some 2-3 inches deep runs down and out the cave mouth; the stone floor is also slick with patches of a thin layer of mud. A jumble of small stones affords some handholds or footholds in the otherwise treacherous incline. Climbers must be extremely careful: a slip here could mean an uncontrolled slide back towards the cave mouth, only to be ejected 70 feet in the air!

Cave Mouth (Triggered Event Zone): Triggered when a character falls prone, slides into, or otherwise enters the designated area while moving more than 5 feet in a round; Reflex save DC 16; on a failed save, the character plummets 70 feet to the jungle floor (6d6 + 1d6 nonlethal damage), otherwise character catches himself on a stone, vine, or similar projection. Note that the cave mouth is itself within the Water-Slicked Incline Condition Zone (below), so characters attempting to regain their footing must still undergo a Balance check or again trigger this event zone. Marked as **B** on the map.

Water-Slicked Incline (Condition Zone): Balance or Climb DC 18; fall prone and begin sliding 15 feet per round towards entrance/no effect. This is Difficult terrain, and since the characters are effectively Climbing, their overall movement within this zone is reduced to one-eighth their normal movement rate. Marked as **C** on the map.

Characters must essentially decide whether to use Balance or Climb each round within the condition zone; they may choose whichever affords them the best chance of success. Remember that in either case, characters are flat footed for defense purposes, and must make additional Balance or Climb checks if damaged!

Characters may also attempt to catch any comrades who have lost their footing and are sliding towards the precipice by making a successful touch attack (with the sliding character giving up his active defense) and another Balance or Climb check against a DC of 21. Failure means the character keeps sliding, while failure by more than 5 points indicates the erstwhile rescuer has also fallen and begins sliding. An attempted rescue is a standard action, and any number of characters may attempt to catch characters that slide past them.

Falling characters may also try to stop themselves as a full-round action. If a sliding character makes a successful Climb check against a DC of 20, she has stopped (prone) at the end of her sliding move for the round.

A Warm Welcome

In the darkness, crouched near the culvert from which water showers down the passage, two of Kalonji's warriors lie in wait at position **D**. Characters may see them on a Spot roll against a DC of 18, with an additional –1 penalty for every 10 feet of distance between the character and the warriors. These warriors will attack if fired upon, or once characters approach within 60 feet of their position, simultaneously sounding an alarm by yelling.

Guards

Warrior 4

+4 Initiative, CR 3

Attack/Full Attack: +6 shortspear (1d6+2), +6 short sword (1d6+2) or +4 javelin (1d6+2)

Defense: 15 (+3 active, +2 passive)

Hit Points: 36

DR: none

Equipment: Shortspear, short sword, light wooden shield, 10 javelins

Skills: Balance –1, Climb +8, Jump +8

Feats: Endurance, Great Fortitude, Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative

Fort: +6 **Ref:** +1 **Will:** +1

Str 14, Dex 11, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10

The guard closest to the wall of the cavern is likely to have cover against characters' missile attacks.

If characters have tried to throw a grappling hook or similar implement up into the passage in an attempt to make climbing easier, the guards will, of course, be alerted. In such an event they will not immediately raise a hue and cry, instead opting to remain hidden and allow characters to advance up the passage before severing their rope and beginning their assault.

Further Developments

Once the alarm has been raised, reinforcements will arrive from the cave exits (marked **E** on the map) in 1d4 rounds. This will be in the form of 2 more warriors with identical statistics to those listed above, although DMs may increase or decrease the

number of reinforcements depending on the relative difficulty the players have had achieving the top of the slope.

Keep in mind that guards engaged in melee at the top of the shaft will fall prey to the same conditions that have plagued the characters during their ascent. Be sure to allow for plenty of stunts which could result in a hapless foe careening down the shaft — the characters are sure to enjoy the turning tables.

