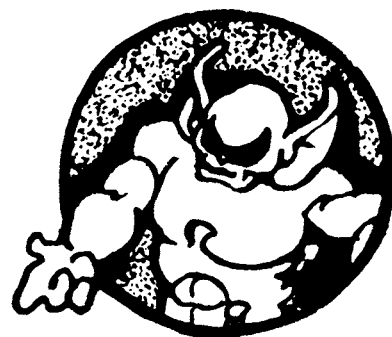


# 1



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## *Room Traps*

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The room trap is probably the most feared type of dungeon doom device. It is the main event, the central attraction, the carefully-planned and patterned engine of destruction geared solely towards the destruction of those who venture within. No mere hallway nuisance or dangerous treasure are these – room traps are thoroughbred delivery systems of dismay, designed only to kill.

By their nature, room traps are often the most contrived and detailed of traps. They are also often the most fun to employ. Delves, too, seem to enjoy room traps far more than any other variety – such traps often present “puzzle boxes” for the characters to strain their infinitesimal brains over, while you move in to smash them with a club. A good time is thus guaranteed for all.

Use these traps carefully. An overabundance of room traps can slow your pacing to a crawl, and will disrupt the characters’ interest in continuing the adventure. When used correctly, however, room traps can provide the finest of challenges.

## Room Traps

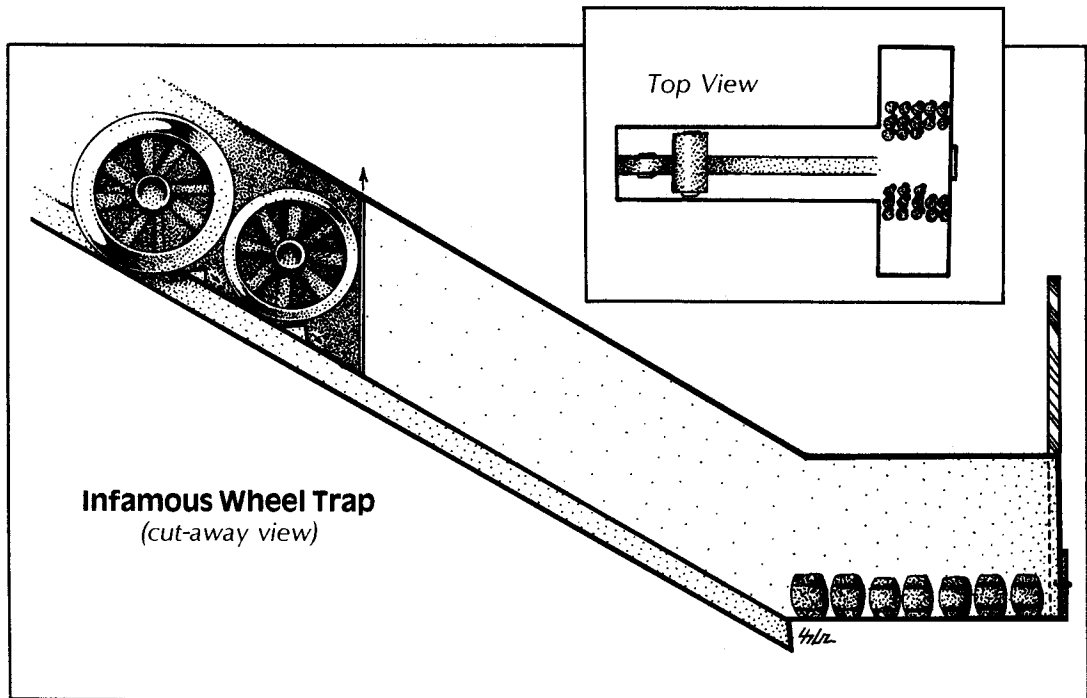
– NOTES –



To begin this chapter, I present the **Infamous Wheel Trap**, designed by Paul O'Connor. You can put this trap just about anywhere you have a lot of room, although it works best when it is sprung upon a large number of delvers all at once – such as at a dungeon entrance.

The trap design is rather complex. The delvers walk through a door to find that they are standing at the base of a long ramp. The incline slopes up away from them and ends in a wall with a door in it. A 5' trench is dug down the direct center of the incline, and runs from the base of the slope to disappear beneath the door. The ceiling over the main-corridor part of this trap is quite high.

To the right and left of the delvers, as they stand at the base of the incline, are two small, featureless rooms. Entrance to these rooms is blocked by several rows of sealed barrels, arranged so as to stand partially into the main corridor. Upon inspection, these barrels will prove to be filled with a liquid of some sort (determined by the sloshing sound when they are nudged) – but the containers will also prove to be both unopenable and completely immobile. Delvers will find that with a bit of effort they can scurry over the tops of these barrels and into the rooms beyond.



The trap is activated when a member of the party actively starts up the slope. At this time, a steel curtain will slide down from the ceiling to block the doorway through which the delvers entered. At the same moment, the large wall up the corridor will drop into the floor, revealing a large, black, corridor-sized wheel. No longer restrained, the wheel begins to roll down the slope, towards the party, at an amazing speed!

The wheel reeks of strong anti-magic, and is indestructible. Thus, the party's options for evasion are limited to the less destructive methods. They can scramble over the barrels into the small rooms before the wheel reaches them; or they may attempt to leap into the trench running up the corridor, hunker down, and allow the wheel to pass by them overhead.

The methods you employ to determine whether or not a character escapes

the wheel will vary, of course, but I suggest you make the required rolls tougher and tougher as each character completes his or her evasive maneuvers. This will ensure that those who think and act fastest will have the greatest chance of survival. If you choose to be especially fiendish, you might rule that if a character fails to clear the barrels or make the trench, he or she blocks off the characters behind from attempting that path . . .

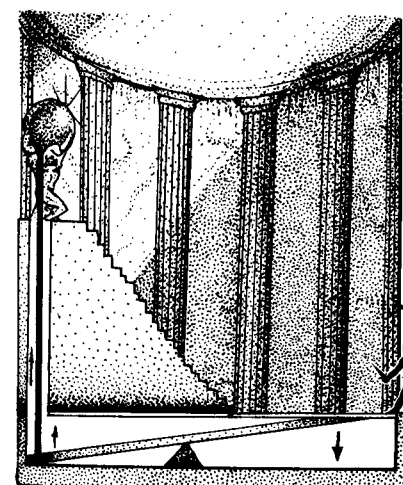
The fun is just beginning. The large wheel will pass over the characters in the trench (unless they're giants, or something equally absurd) – but those characters will be horrified to see that there's a *second* wheel, every bit as deadly as the first, rolling down the *trench* just a few feet behind the first wheel. The only way to escape the wheel is to leap back out of the trench – something that should prove considerably tougher than simply jumping in.

The characters that escaped the wheel(s) by rushing into the side rooms aren't out of the woods yet, either. The barrels of liquid mentioned before are intended as crash-cushions to prevent the wheel from doing horrible, tell-tale damage to the back wall of the room. These barrels will collapse scientifically, slowing the wheel just enough so it will still crush any character caught behind it, but won't do any major structural damage. The barrels, however, aren't filled with water or foam – they've been filled with a burning, corrosive acid!

The acid will spray into the side rooms, almost certainly covering the characters standing within. Armor will provide a certain amount of protection, but only at the expense of its future effectiveness – this acid is *corrosive*!

Getting the characters back into the flow of the dungeon after the destruction has ceased might prove a bit of a problem. You could design the room so that the splashing acid burned away the top layer of plaster within the small rooms, revealing a number of secret doors. Or, you might place a door at the top of the incline, beyond where the wheels were originally located. Suit yourself.

Another trap that hurls lethal objects at the unsuspecting party is the **Roman Amphitheatre Trap**, designed by Betty Kopf. This trap is a rather obvious one, but it's great for visual effects, and it will almost certainly be triggered due to the treasure it offers.



**Roman Amphitheatre Trap**  
(cut-away view)

The amphitheatre itself is dominated by a crouching statue that bears a huge

## Room Traps

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golden globe upon its shoulders. The globe is roughly 5' in diameter, weighs in the neighborhood of 5 tons, and is worth approximately 50,000 g.p.

The amphitheatre's floor is actually an enormous, finely-balanced lever. Whenever a weight is set upon the floor (such as a dungeon party), the lever will shift, causing the pole within the main amphitheatre structure to rise and dislodge the golden sphere. The ball will bounce down the steps and into the midst of the party.

The globe itself makes quite a prize, but getting it out of the dungeon will prove a problem. Reducing the globe to a more manageable size would ruin the quality of the sphere, and would drastically reduce its value.

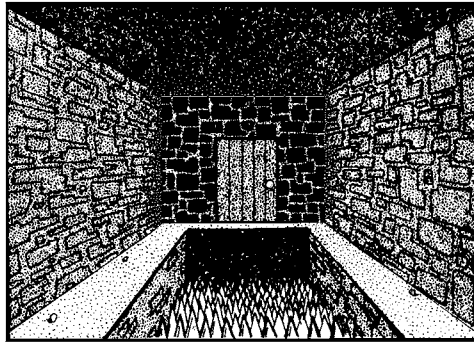


Fig. A (trap as it appears)

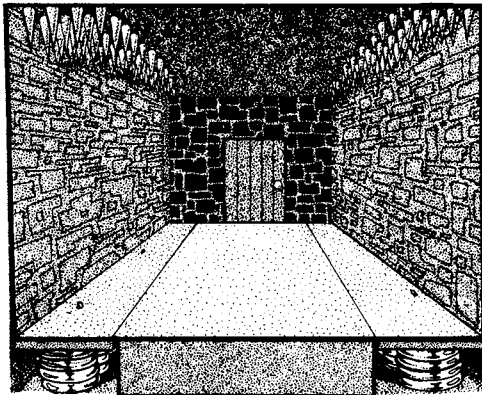


Fig. B (trap as it truly is)

**Illusions**, a fatally subtle room trap, was designed by Pat Mueller. The trap presents the delvers with a room, the center of which is occupied by a spike-filled pit. The only way around the pit appears to be walkways to either side of the spikes. (See Figure A.)

The visible pit is an illusion. Also an illusion is the section of roof above the walkways, which in reality is covered with rows of spikes not unlike those in the pit. (See Figure B.)

The safe way through this room is to walk across the "pit". Using the walkways will cause the springs beneath the floor to slam those sections against the ceiling. Ouch.

Not content with his "Infamous Wheel Trap" design, Paul O'Connor has developed two more room traps. Both are absurdly complex, and go to great lengths to dispose of characters in incredibly bizarre ways. Every now and then, when confronted with the fiendish workings of his mind, I begin to suspect that Mr. O'Connor is a distant relative of mine . . .

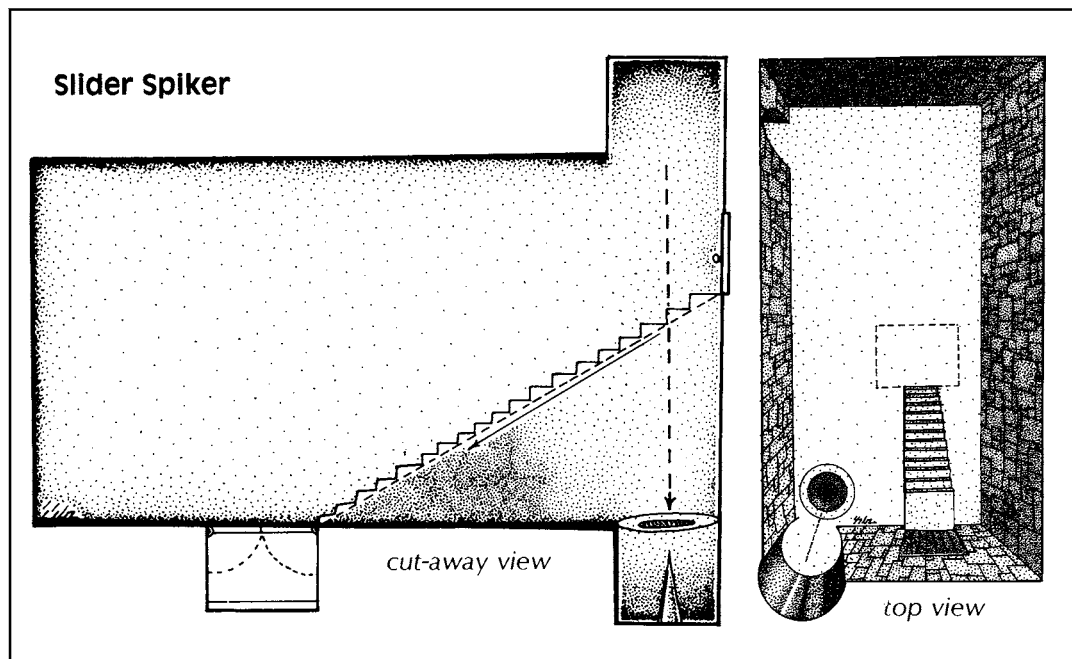


For example, consider the **Slider Spiker** trap, which I might have designed myself! The trap takes the form of a room with a staircase in it. This staircase runs up about thirty feet and ends in a door. The only other features noticeable in the room are a hole in the ceiling and, directly beneath it, a thin parchment target which conceals a long, sinister steel spike.

When a person climbs the stairs and touches the door, the steps of the stairs fold down, and the stairway converts into a slide. Unless the delver can somehow stop himself, he'll slide down the length of the stair to vanish into a hidden trap door at its base. The trap door will snap shut, and the character's screams will be heard receding into the depths . . .

... until they're heard again from the ceiling. At the bottom of the trap door pit is a teleporter pad, which transports anything that hits it to the hole in the ceiling above the target. The character in question thus falls through the floor, then completes his journey by falling out of the ceiling, through the target, and onto the spike.

A usually fatal trap. Also, an incredibly confusing one.



An even stranger room trap from Paul is the **Lobster Trap**, designed for characters who have been captured and rendered unconscious elsewhere in the dungeon. When those characters come to, they find themselves in a rather precarious position.



The delvers are being held captive in a cage suspended fifty feet above the sandy floor of a large, circular room. Hungry rock lobsters prowl the room, menacingly clacking their claws in anticipation of the feast to come. The cage itself hangs by a chain from a winch. The winch is fixed into a track that runs across the room's ceiling to terminate in a blank wall some distance away.

The cage itself has two trap doors, both easily visible and unlocked. The trap door above opens onto the roof of the cage. Characters may move freely about on the cage roof, where they'll note that the winch device is equipped with two ring-like handholds.

There is more to this situation than meets the eye. First, the cage projects an undetectable invisible-wall spell from the cage's bottom all the way to the floor. This will allow the characters to climb down the rope ladder safely, as the lobsters cannot breach the wall – but don't tell the delvers that! Second, the wall section in which the ceiling track terminates is, in reality, a thin section of painted parchment – the track continues straight on through. Finally, a hidden hollow in the floor below the cage's original position contains a treasure chest and an unmarked lever set into the ground.

## Room Traps

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The lobsters are tough, and direct combat with them would probably end in disaster for the characters – they're intentionally set up as an unbeatable menace, and the characters awoke in the cage completely unarmed! Their possessions are held in a small room beyond the only door out of this complex.

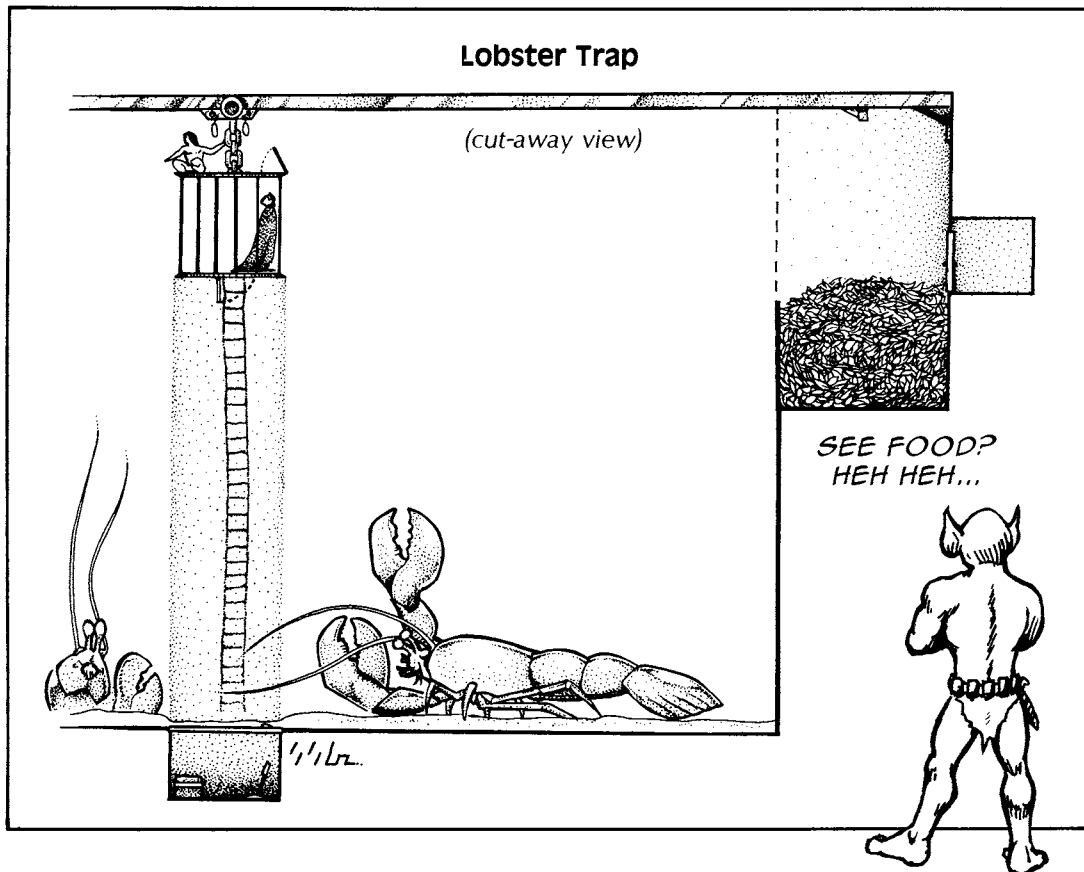
The delvers cannot simply kill the lobsters to escape. A single character must crawl on top of the cage and pull on the handhold rings with all his might. This will drain from the character some predetermined amount of strength, causing the cage to slide along the track in the ceiling and then drop. If the character is strong enough to fulfill the winch's requirements, then the cage will move through the false wall section to fall into the bed of feathers beyond. If the character in question lacks the required strength, then the cage will move a considerably shorter distance before falling – this time down to the lobsters below. Too bad.

Should the characters be fearless, and decide to climb down the rope ladder, they will almost certainly notice that the lobsters keep a respectable distance from the shield, and will probably thus learn of its existence. Any character who reaches the floor of the room will probably find the secret hollow.

The hollow contains a chest full of treasure – plentiful or poor, depending on the GM's whim. Beside the chest is a lever, the function of which is indiscernible.

Levers lead to doom for dungeon delvers. Pulling the lever immediately, irrevocably, cancels the invisible-wall spell projected by the cage. The lobsters, being sensitive to such things, will rush in greedily for the kill.

As previously noted, the characters' possessions await them in the room just off the chamber full of feathers. If you feel really mean, booby-trap them.



**The Deluxe Centerpost** by Rick Loomis is a much simpler trap. In the center of a simple square room, a single, indestructible deluxe magic staff is wedged betwixt floor and ceiling. The staff, a coveted prize, supports the ceiling: a free-standing 10,000-lb. block of granite. Aside from this handicap, the staff is free for the taking.



**The Dastardly Lava Room**, by Scot Rhoads, is another elegantly simple trap. Delvers encounter it when they enter a standard dungeon room that contains several mounds of glowing (and imperceptibly growing) lava. Regular exits through standard doors are easily accessible from any point in the room.



A medium-sized tunnel leads from this room; at the end of this tunnel the delvers can clearly see a sign. Exactly *what* the sign says, however, is indistinguishable.

A character who journeys down the tunnel to see what the sign says will be greeted with the inscription, “You Blew It”. When the character turns around, he’ll see that the lava mounds have moved behind him to block the tunnel entrance, leaving him hopelessly trapped.

The devious dwarvish mind of Todd Diesen was responsible for the **Hoovermatic Trap**, which takes great pains to prove the effects of a partial vacuum upon dungeon delvers.



The delvers enter this room through its only door, which will slide noiselessly shut and lock behind them once the last party member is inside the room. The door fits flush into the wall and will be very difficult to rediscover.

The room itself is lit by a strobe light. The floor is 3’ deep in gold coins. The walls are made of black basalt, smooth and featureless; the ceiling is difficult to see, due to the lighting.

As the delvers greedily pack up the riches, the ceiling will begin to pull away from the floor. This causes the room pressure to change, making the air incredibly thin. After six to eight minutes of this treatment, characters will probably begin to faint.

After ten minutes, the air will be thin enough to kill the unconscious characters. Sputtering torches or lamps, the fainting of small animals the delvers might have brought along, a feeling of pressure in the ears, or the fact that characters are dropping dead right and left will probably tip off the characters. Those who fall unconscious under these conditions will bleed from the nose.

If the trapped characters realize what’s going on, they would be well advised to search for the door they entered through. If they appeal to the Gods for something to breathe, feel free to fill the room with poison gas . . .

Mike Stackpole has developed a room trap he calls **The Bigger They Are**. Once again in his infinite generosity Mike has subjected delvers to another form of cliché doom.



Delvers encounter the trap when they enter a large natural cavern. The entrance is quickly sealed behind them – by door, falling rocks, or what-have-you.

## Room Traps

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At the same time, the room begins to fill with water.

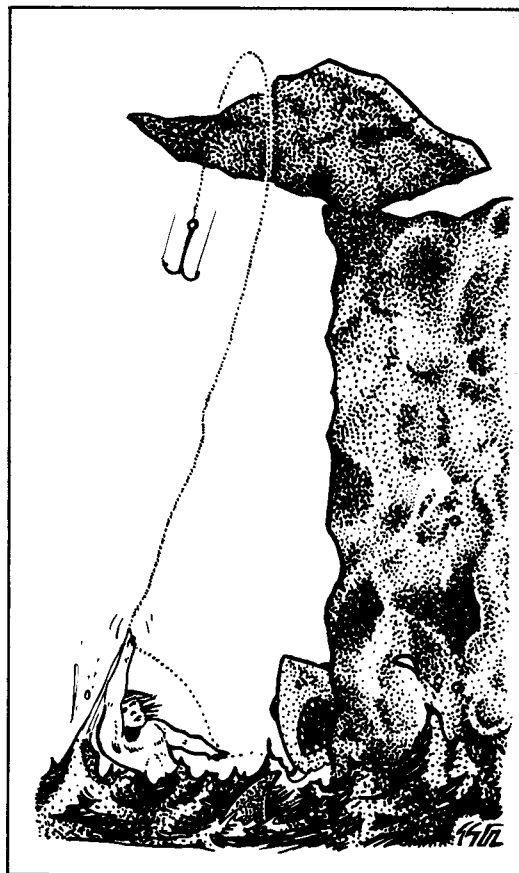
Somewhere near the ceiling, overhanging a ledge, is a large rock doing a credible imitation of a piton. Some smart delver will probably try to loop a rope around this rock so as to climb to safety – especially if you introduce sharks or similar nasties into the water.

The rock, however, is delicately balanced in place. Any sort of tugging upon it will cause the rock to drop – usually onto the heads of the party trying to rope it. In any event, the rock will fall – and the bigger it is, the harder the fall.



This watery room trap, submitted by Brandon Corey, is jokingly titled, **Is it the Piccolo, or Is it Memorex?**

It provides several levels of danger with an interesting visual effect thrown in for free.



The trap takes the form of a glassy-walled room, obviously located deep within some body of water. Large and ponderous sea creatures float by in the murky gloom visible beyond the glass. The effect is breathtaking.

Within the room, set upon an elaborate pedestal, is a beautiful bejewelled piccolo. Guarding this treasure, however, is a shambling shoggoth, as described in the works of H.P. Lovecraft.

When confronted with this situation, most characters will attempt to play the piccolo, and thus exploit the shoggoth's well-known weakness for the sounds of the same. Sure enough, the shoggoth will lurch into a ponderous dance; the shriller and higher the note from the piccolo, the less dangerous the shoggoth will be.

The real trap here, however, is the fact that the glass walls of this room are sensitive to certain pitches which an unlucky piccolo player might very well sound while entertaining the shoggoth. When such a pitch is played, the glass walls will shatter, admitting several tons of seawater into the room . . .



A truly absurd room trap is **The One That Got Away**, by Michael Austin. This trap goes to such incredible lengths to be silly that I really had no choice but to include it here.

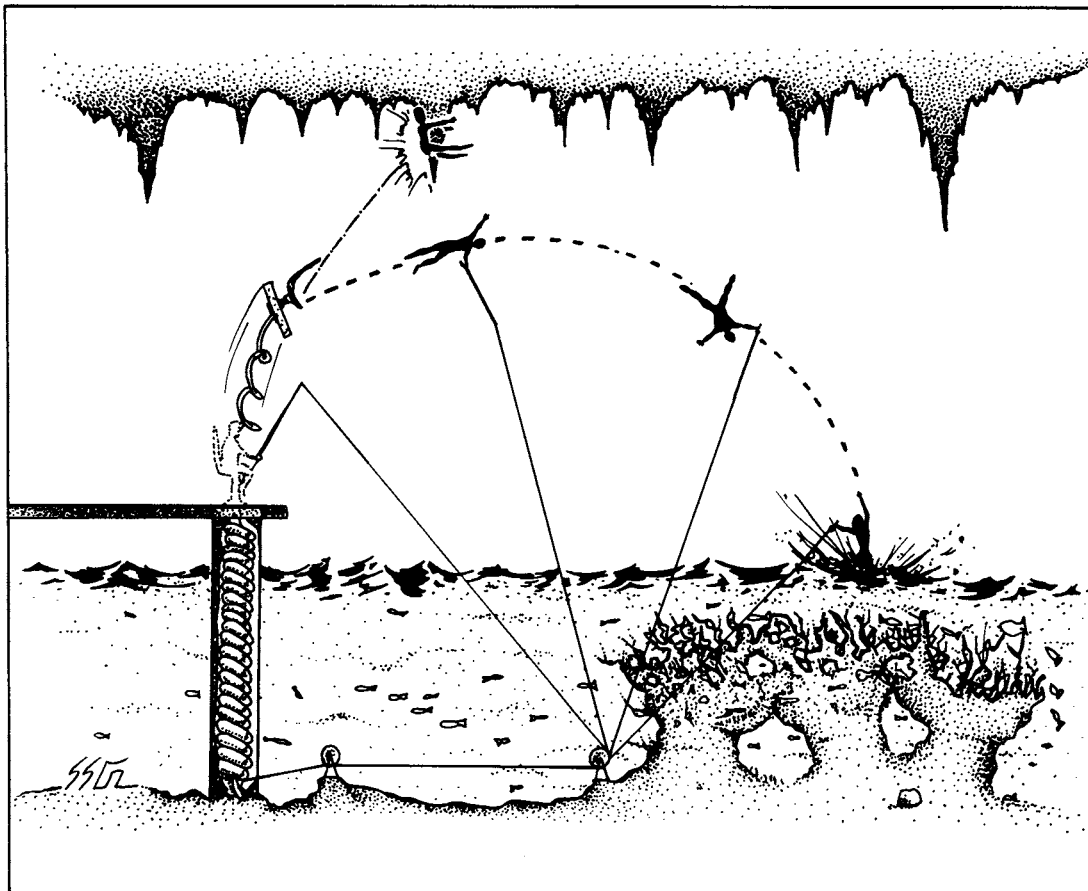
The room is formed from natural rock, complete with an array of menacing stalactites hanging from the ceiling. Most of the floor area is covered by a freshwater lake. Set out some distance onto this lake is a pier of sorts, upon



which stands a fisherman's chair, complete with pole. The water below is patrolled by numerous hungry – and deadly – fish. There is already some tension on the fishing line, which disappears into the water below.

The chair is set upon a spring-loaded shaft; the spring will release when the fishing line becomes taut. Thus, when a character seats himself upon the chair and begins to reel in the line, the trap is (quite literally) “sprung”.

The chair is thus hurled high, sending the character flying. If the character releases his grip on the fishing pole, his trajectory will intersect with one of the ceiling's stalactites with a resounding splat. If the character hangs onto the pole for dear life, he'll easily clear the ceiling – and land upon a hidden reef located just inches beneath the surface of the water.



Michael Austin has developed a pair of strange room traps. Each is designed to deal with unnecessarily violent and/or greedy characters.

**The Atlas Affair** is a room filled with exquisite Greek statues. Each statue is mounted upon a turntable that slowly spins to show the statue from a variety of angles. To enhance the beauty of the statues – and thus ensure the delver's doom – a valuable gem has been set into the base of each figure.



Each statue is protected by a cylindrical magical barrier that runs from floor to ceiling. In addition to protecting the statue, the cylinders also serve to hold up the roof. Thus, if the delvers choose to loot the room by dispelling the magical cylinders, they will end up bringing the roof down upon their heads, with the appropriate effects.

## Room Traps

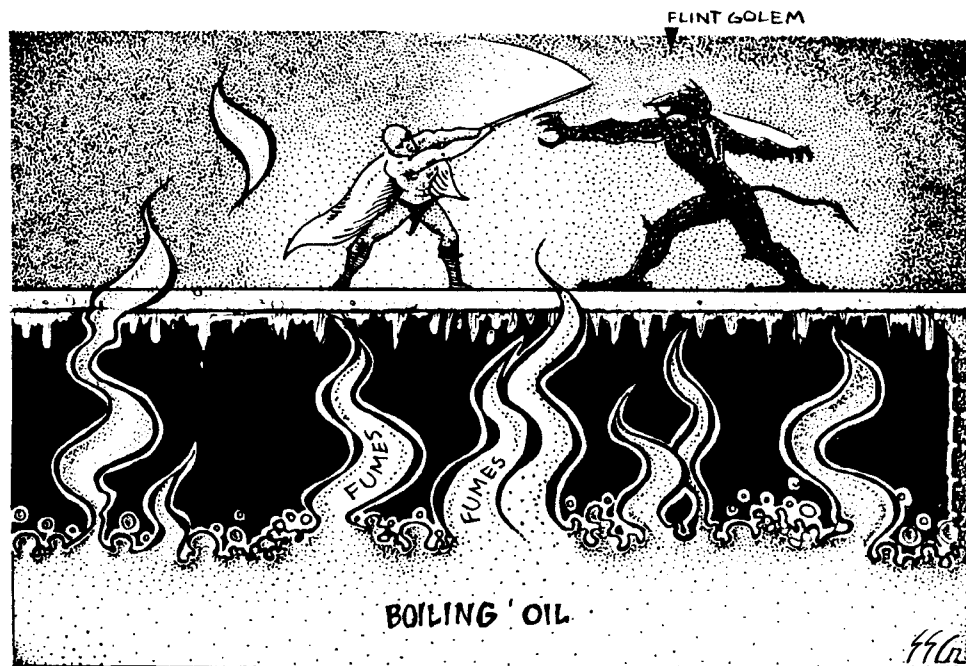
– NOTES –



**The Bridge At Rue Vincent** is Michael's second strange room trap. The trap is a room filled to a depth of ten feet with boiling wax. A narrow wooden bridge lacking guardrails and the usual safety items crosses the wax. The air is laden with vapors from the boiling wax below; the wax has splashed up upon the bridge, making it quite slippery. Guarding the bridge is a magical statue of living flint.

The characters should be able to smell the wax in the air, and feel it on the bridge and on their armor. A fall into the wax below is quite likely to be fatal – if the fall doesn't kill the character outright, being suffocated in boiling wax probably will.

The flint statue is the crux of this trap. If the statue is attacked with steel weapons, the flint should send up a shower of sparks. With a bit of luck, the wax vapor will ignite, setting fire to the bridge – and probably to a number of the characters as well.



*Editor's Note: For years, this Trap has remained on a mostly blank page. It was supposed to have an illustration with it, which was lost shortly before the original edition of this book was sent to the printer. Years later, the missing illo was found at the back of a desk during a move. So now after 30 years, this trap finally is reunited with its illustration!*