

The Adventures of
Uncle Dungeoning Ma'att

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**Marsh
Flint Mine**

Nephew, if I'd ever convinced myself that I could take on the professional adventuring life myself, the events of the past two weeks would have convinced me of my error. However, if I had to suffer to get here, then the reward was all the sweeter.

Ferguson has taken me to an ancient dungeon, one that dates into antiquity and beyond, to perhaps the early origins of Dungeon Land. And here I have found conclusive proof of the hand of man in the creation of a dungeon.

Although Ferguson still disagrees.

For the past ten days, Ferguson and I have trudged through a dead, barren land covered with a dry snow that made walking a chore. A crust of evil ice, scarcely a finger's width thick but as hard against the shins as shale, increased the punishment in the more open areas.

According to Ferguson, the bog across which we fought for the barest minimum distance has been frozen for at least a dozen generations. The people who fight for their existence here live much as they did when the frosts first came - and their diet of roots and mushrooms, grown in deep caves under their huts, has left me feeling heavy and tired and hating the journey all the more.

We were three days out from the ramshackle inn where we spent our last comfortable night, if, indeed, a night spent on a mattress of ancient twigs and dried moss covered with an irritating wool blanket could be called comfortable, when we struck our destination. Ferguson spied it first, although how his eyes were able, through the frigid, icy wind, to pick out the small, rectangular cropping of stones at such a distance remains a mystery to me for it was many minutes before I myself saw it.

A roughly rectangular sheet of sandstone sat atop three similar pieces stood upright, making a small, three-walled gazebo of sorts. From its center, where the lash of the wind was greatly lessened, one could see that the area surrounding the structure was raised above the surrounding territory by perhaps five, maybe ten lurngs, suggesting that the structure was built on an ancient island in the middle of the bog.

Not quite centered on the floor, we found a hole barely large enough for my pack, which had already been well thinned of the provisions I carried just less than two weeks ago. Ferguson slid down the hole and lit a lantern before I passed down our gear and then followed.

After stumbling down a short decline, I found myself in a low, wide natural cavern with several branching arms heading in all directions. Ferguson pointed out a skeletal foot in one of the entryways, the rest of the body disappearing into the darkness. We didn't investigate, but I wondered how difficult it would be to defend oneself in such cramped quarters.

Another short incline brought us into a short hall which had been tooled into a flat, rectangular shape. Two ancient wooden columns created a sort of doorway into the rest of what I can only explain as a mine. Chunks of flint on the ground confirmed my suspicion.

Two side rooms were carved with half of their far walls left untouched, creating natural benches. Their purpose was unclear, since all trace of tool or bedding has long since been looted or rotted away.

Past the open mining area, the hall sloped down again into a darker rock layer. The halls

here were carved with much finer tools, implying a later culture. We first came across three cells of roughly equivalent size. Tool rooms? Prisoner cells? Worker housing? Again, the rooms had been cleaned completely, leaving no clue as to their purpose.

And finally, we wandered into the rear chambers, which were deeper, more angular, and much colder than the other chambers. Here we found debris of some conflict, although the still air preserved the items and belied their age. A broken sword was propped against one wall, a crossbow bolt lie on the floor several feet away. A glinting in the dirt proved to be a small section of ring mail.

We found the arm first, then the other parts. Soon, we found more bodies, some in the hallways, some in the alcoves carved into the walls. This deeper section had been used as a mass tomb, with several bodies wrapped in bed clothes. No personal effects had been left with the bodies, so whether this were a family tomb or some way to honor local leaders I couldn't tell.

At the end of one of the halls, we found a chest-height stone column, its purpose, again, completely a mystery.

Ferguson, ever a man of mysteries, ran his fingers along the wall, tracing a line invisible to me until he found what he was looking for. He pulled with his fingertips until a section of the stone slid out of the wall, revealing another even lower passageway. It led to what seemed to be a dead end but which, again, hid a sliding stone entryway which Ferguson quickly discerned.

We were in a high-walled, cleanly chiseled room, triangular in shape. In its center, a column of similar shape but turned against alignment with the room. Strange symbols were carved into the column and, although it merged without seem into the ceiling and floor, it was a completely different stone than the rest of the room. Its deep color was a harsh contrast to the tan stone of the walls and its translucency became increasingly transparent the more I stared at it.

Ferguson pulled me from my hypnosis and led me down a tunnel in the far corner. It led us back to the first chamber we'd found, although I'd seen no such hall when we entered. When I turned around, I saw why - the angles of the tunnel had been so cunningly carved that even knowing its location I was unable to spy it from the surrounding rock faces. I had to approach twice to assure myself that the entrance had not closed behind us.

Although it bore few of the signs of combat we'd encountered in our previous explorations, and fewer of the remnants of found riches, this was, undoubtedly, another of the land's many dungeons. And the fact that its purpose and creators were both long forgotten, there could be no doubt that this underground structure was made by the hands of man, even if its entryway was created by natural forces.

It's not conclusive, I agree, but it gives me the drive to continue on in my quest.

