

The Adventures of  
**Uncle Dungeoning Ma'att**

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# **Nu Chi Compound**

Well, Nephew. Perhaps after reading my latest adventure, you'll begin to believe me that the dungeons are more than simply constructs doodled onto the paper of our world by all-seeing gods who play games with dice and men's lives. I've been to a dungeon that was created by the hands of men and, this time, I have a witness to prove it.

Ferguson has been bored with our questing lately, but my coin keeps his loyalty. As we entered the town of Shireton, we were confronted by the statue of a mighty party. A great warrior stood in the center, her sword point on the ground as she held the handle lazily. A mage and a man with a crossbow flanked her, and a roguish figure in a cloak stood at their back. The statue was exquisitely rendered. The cost had not been spared in its preparation.

I approached one of the silly townsfolk and asked about the statue. I was then regaled with the kind of over-enthusiastic tale of heroism reserved for the mythical sword swingers of ancient fairy tales. From what I was able to gather, a cult had taken up residence in a cave system not far from the town. When the daughter of a local noble vanished into the cult's hive, a party of adventurers risked life and limb to bring her back. As I said, it was all very bland stuff, until the townie mentioned that the surviving cult members are still heavily taxed by the local government for their folly.

Ah. Now that had my interest. How long ago had this event taken place? Less than ten years, apparently. The events would be very fresh in the minds of any survivors, so if I could question them about the dungeon's origin I knew I could have the evidence I wanted.

I began asking around for one of the survivors, which annoyed Ferguson. He claimed that the best way to find information was to just sit in the inn until someone burst through the front door in hysterics. I stared at Ferguson to detect any sign of sarcasm in his face, but there was none.

Eventually, I was directed to a poor house on the far edge of town. There, I found a man named Eugene who was working at the house as a cook. When I broached the subject of the cult, Eugene flinched as if he expected to be accosted. When no violence came, he relaxed and asked what it was I wanted. I asked him to sit down and talk with me about the experience. He was hesitant until I offered to pay for drinks, then he asked me to wait for him at a grubby bar nearby until he was finished with his work.

Several hours later, Eugene was savoring a warm ale and gradually warming up his voice.

He insisted on being referred to as Baba Eugene, his title in the cult. Nu Chi was a loose commune of believers who followed the teachings of Doug the Supreme, a holy man who traveled the land for many years, gathering followers, before settling down in the cave nearby. He said the cave had called to him for years and that it was their rightful home. It took them nearly two years to build the complex that was found there now.

Every time the name of the cult was mentioned, Baba Eugene traced a V above an X on his palm. Apparently his faith was still strong, despite the near eradication of his faith. The alcohol had its effect, however, and I convinced Baba Eugene to accompany us to the site. He was hesitant, saying that he'd not been there since the cult was broken, but I promised to bring him on the road with us and he agreed.

The next morning we set out, skirting a large lake not far from the town. In the old

days, Baba Eugene told us, a skiff piloted by a cult member would be available to take people across to the compound, but these days the only way to get there was on foot.

I was surprised that the main cave entrance was not the entrance to the compound. Instead, one approached along the side of an underground ravine. A cunningly built stone bridge spanned the gulf between the approach side and the door to the compound. Baba Eugene told me that he helped carry in the stones used to make it, and that the entire structure was held up by Doug the Supreme's mighty will until the span was complete and could support its own weight. Ferguson rolled his eyes, but surely the gods would not create a dungeon with no way to get in, therefore it all had to be built by men.

The edifice was simple and, were it not for the square angles of the entry way, could be mistaken for just part of the stone wall. The door was ornate metal, decorated with the same V over X symbol that Baba Eugene had been tracing the day before. Inside, we found a large, rectangular room. Baba Eugene walked over to a shelf and pulled down two pictures - one was filled with oil, one with water. He poured both into cisterns on either side of the room, then dipped our torch toward them. The cisterns were designed in such a way that a small amount of oil was pushed up through the water which had separated on top of it, and when lit the oil wicked up through the water like a lamp.

On the opposite side of the room were two sets of doors and Baba Eugene immediately walked through one of them. Ferguson and I followed and found a simple chapel with wooden pews. Baba Eugene headed toward a dais on one wall and fell to his knees. While he prayed, I continued to explore. A door on the far side of the chapel lead into the compound proper. To the left was a large room, like a gymnasium, but empty so that I had no clue as to its purpose. To the right was a series of rooms occupied by bunk beds.

"This is where the women stayed," Baba Eugene said. "Males were never allowed back here, not even to assemble the furniture. We dropped the wood in the chapel and the women carried it in and assembled it themselves."

"I bet you dropped your wood," Ferguson muttered. I elbowed him.

Further down, Baba Eugene started at a collapsed section of hallway.

"We'll have to go around," he said, "through the men's dorms."

We took a door to the left and found a large room with wooden tables. This was their cafeteria. Baba Eugene continued through the cafeteria to a kitchen and pantry area, then into another hallway on the opposite side of the complex. We passed an armory, which Baba Eugene said was well stocked at the time of the assault, but the cult members were not fighters. Through another door, we found a wall with slits in the wall. Through the slits, we could see the ravine and the path we took up to the bridge. This surprised me as I'd not seen these slits as we approached, and an archer with only a modest talent would be able to target anyone making their way toward the bridge.

I suddenly realized I was alone, and by "alone" I mean that Ferguson was standing by smirking silently but Baba Eugene was nowhere to be found. Ferguson nodded his head toward a door at the far end of the hallway.

I moved with speed through the door and found another room filled with bunk beds. A door on the far side of the room was opened and I headed across. I was now in the hallway with the collapsed ceiling, but on the opposite side of the rubble. A twinkling blue light came from a doorway about halfway down.

There was a small, underground lake here, and Baba Eugene was standing on its shore. In his hand, he held a skull which he raised toward me as I entered the cavern.

“Here she is!” he said. “Here is the Baron’s daughter!”

“She went home,” I said.

“No!” Baba Eugene yelled. “We replaced her with one of THEM!”

He pointed toward the lake and the water began to ripple. After a moment, several greyish shapes became visible. As they marched up the slope of the beach I could see that they were massive albino crabs with arched backs. I involuntarily gasped when I realized that the natural markings on their shells formed a V over an X.

“That’s Doug’s greatest joke!” Baba Eugene laughed. “And now, I go to join my brothers and sisters in Nu Chi.”

He walked backwards into the water until he was hip deep. Then, with vicious speed, one of the crabs took his arm off. Baba Eugene laughed even harder. Another crab snipped off his remaining hand, then two more grabbed him by his hip and chest and pulled him down, into the water.

Soon, both the crabs and Baba Eugene were gone and the water was still again.

Once Ferguson’s laughter subsided, we returned to the bridge to head back to town.

Perhaps Baba Eugene wasn’t the most sane person, but I have no reason to believe his information about the construction of the compound was wrong.

Ferguson told me that even if the cult did build the furniture, the dungeon was obviously here before them and that the crab monsters proved that. When I told him that you can have monsters without a dungeon, he laughed and said cryptically, “only when you’re wandering.”



