

# The Smell of a Toad

A short adventure for *Castles & Crusades* / *Hackmaster*

For characters levels 1-3

by J.C. Connors

## Adventure Summary

Yundun was the humble proprietor of Oghma's Eye, an upscale inn in the northeastern Sea Ward. He tended his inn with his wife, Fale, serving up some of the best fried eels and onions the city had to offer. His inn was also known for its fine wine cellar, which Yundun had inherited from his uncle, an minor wizard who appreciated his drink more than his magic.

What Yundun did not know was that his now-deceased uncle (along with several of his colleagues) had constructed a portal in the wine cellar to escape the inn should it ever come under attack. The portal would take the mages into the manor of one of their mentors, where they could quickly escape to sea. The inn, of course, never came under attack and the portal was forgotten... until Yundun's wife accidentally stumbled into it, and disappeared.

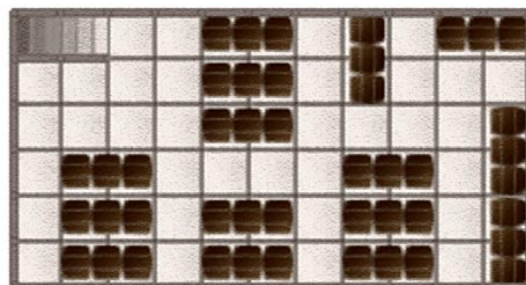
Yundun's wife appeared in that same manor, but it was now owned by a different family. Teleporting into the quarters of a young noble lady, Asper Xorlan, the poor woman was quickly taken captive by Asper's fiance, a suspicious wizard of ill-character. He holds her prisoner in one of the manor's towers, suspecting her of being a sorceress out to steal his few, precious secrets.

## The Setup

A local Dwarven bard and his elven sister (they were raised together, he says, after she was orphaned by drow!) have recently taken up residence in Yundun's Inn after defeating an undead beholder outside of Skullport, and making off with some of its riches. They are at Oghma's Eye this night to celebrate. In the middle of this festive party, they ask to open up an expensive bottle of fine elf wine. Yundun and his wife Fale head into the cellar to retrieve a suitable bottle, but minutes later Yundun comes running back upstairs, greatly distressed that his wife has vanished and the cellar is now occupied by devils!

Yundun begs for help, but sadly it seems this hero and his sister are too drunk to even stand straight. The innkeeper offers the PCs free room and board for a year if they can quickly investigate the matter and recover his wife, Fale. All he knows is that she dropped a bottle and suddenly vanished in an explosion of light, and in her place were several small devilish creatures who chased him away.

## Yundun's Cellar



## The Cellar

The wine cellar is quite large for such an inn, with barrels and casks extending in all directions. Yundun tells the PCs that the portal, and the devils, appeared in the back by the rare elf wines.

The innkeeper was not imagining that the cellar had been occupied. Several Implings, small Nefarian devils that delight in the abundance of wine, appeared through the portal shortly after Yundun's wife stumbled through. They're quite noisy, and their foul, squeaky voices can be heard even from the top of the cellar stairs.

Beyond the Implings are several broken caskets of wine, as well as a large, tipped-over cabinet. Behind this cabinet are strange etchings in the stone, obviously

**3 Nefarians - Implings** (XP 270, AL LE, AC 16, Base Attack +1, MV 6" / 12"; HD 1d8+1; SZ S, #AT 1; D 1d6 or 1d4 + poison; SA: Poison (Poison save or lose 10% to 100% hit points instantly); SD 50% resistance to fire; Darkness 5' radius twice each day; regenerate 1 hp each round; Severity: d8)

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- 3) HPs      □□□□□ □□□□□ □□□□□

The implings have stashed the following in a barrel nearby (goods they stole from Asper):

- 200 hs
- 330 gp
- 1 smokey quartz (50 gp)

signs of a magical portal. Reading the signs requires a Read Magic spell (or similar Decipher Script capability). It reveals that the words “This smell is truly awful” will open the portal for a few seconds. If Yundun is told this, he does recall that his wife said those very words after dropping a bottle of wine on the floor. The script on the door does not reveal where the portal goes, or whether it can be triggered from the other side. If Yundun is questioned more closely, he will reveal that he inherited this inn from his uncle, a wizard of sorts, though he didn’t think his uncle was powerful enough to create such a gateway.

### Through the Portal

The PCs will find themselves in the fireplace of an ornate, noble woman’s bedroom when they walk through the portal. The room appears to have been used quite recently, but is currently unoccupied. A quick search will find a diary (an Intelligence check will allow the character to quickly skim it and realize it belongs to a noble named Asper Xorlan, and that she is recently betrothed to a wizard named Alroy Rhuul), fine jewelry worth 600 gp, and another Impling hiding under the canopy bed.

This cowardly Impling is brother to the three that appeared in Yundun’s cellar. He says his name is Yagthurk (though not really; that’s a brother’s name), and that he is one of Princess Asper Xorlan’s bodyguards

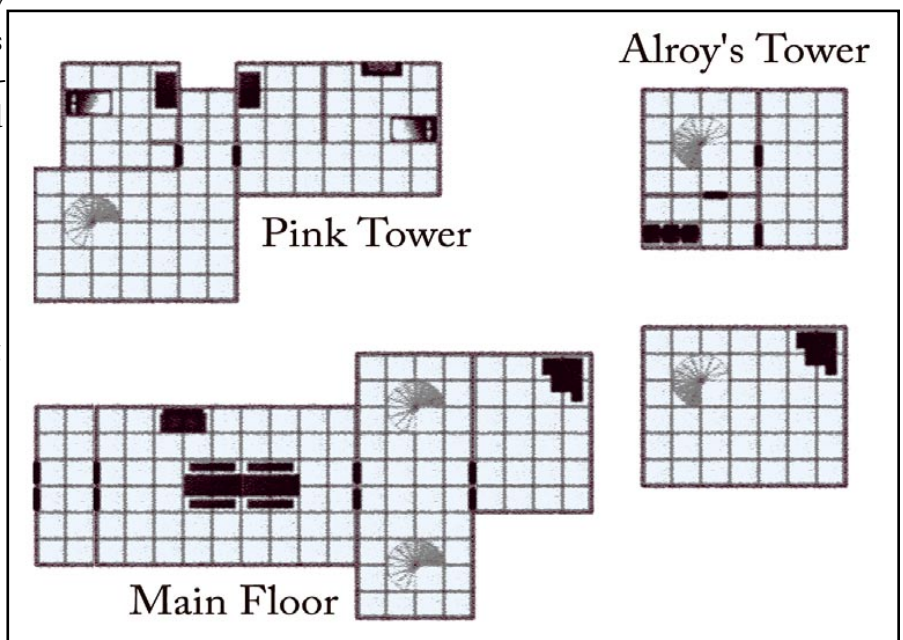
(another lie; he’s an unwanted pet). He swears by many evil gods that he never saw the innkeeper’s wife, but that a portal opened up in the fireplace and his brothers leapt in, glad to be free of Asper’s control. But, he claims, he loved Asper too much to leave, so he hid under the bed.

Yagthurk is a skilled liar, and nearly everything he says is false. He *hates* Asper, who received the Implings as a gift from her wizard fiancé, Alroy Rhuul, who is fascinated by such devils and demons and practices as an apprentice to dark magic in an adjoining tower of the manor. Furthermore, Yagthurk *did* see the innkeeper’s wife appear in the fireplace — she was hauled off by Alroy, who was snooping around his fiancé’s room looking for evidence that she was cheating on him. A naturally suspicious, foul-tempered fellow, Alroy suspected Fale of being some sort of sorceress, and quickly imprisoned her in his tower.

Yagthurk will beg that the PCs don’t find and harm his mistress, but he only does so to keep up his role as her bodyguard. What he really wants to do is force the PCs to escort him out of the manor, so that he can be free of the charm put on him by Alroy, that forbids him escaping the manor under his own free will.

The manor is divided into three main parts. The main floor holds the kitchen (in the east), dining area, and entrances to the two residence towers.

The “Pink Tower,” so named for Asper’s decorating trends, holds two bedrooms. The smaller one is her fa-



ther's, who is rarely at home since he travels as a captain on a merchant vessel, and the bigger, master bedroom which has been taken over by Asper. If the PCs explore the father's quarters, they will find it surprisingly humble, with only an old ship's wheel on the wall and a dull sailing log in a desk drawer.

Alroy's tower is two levels; he is renting both of them from Captain Xorlan. The first level holds a small storage closet and bedroom; the second is his workspace, which holds his magical equipment as well as the innkeeper's wife.

Yagthurk will tell the PCs that if the innkeeper's wife is on the premises, she's likely in the basement of the manor, which can only be accessed from the outdoors. He tells the PCs that there are many guards downstairs (a lie, there is only one) and that Asper is a powerful sorceress in her own right (another lie), and the best way down is via rope from a window. He tells the players that he can't possibly leave on his own will, and that they'll have to drag him out themselves if they want him to give them the secret that will allow them to find the basement, as it is hidden by an illusion (another lie — it's just a door at the foot of the manor).

If the PCs actually escape out the window with Yagthurk, he'll flee at the first chance he gets, hopping the iron manor fence with ease and running happily into the City of Splendors.

## The Manor Basement

The manor basement itself is empty, other than a few chests of old clothes, and a trunk that is wriggling. Inside it is a ratweiller — a disgusting crossbreed that Alroy purchased from an orc. He feeds it daily and hopes to use it in an experiment, or train it enough that he can give it to his bride-to-be on their wedding day as yet another unusual pet. The Ratweiller is hungry, vicious, and merciless if released.

**1 Ratweiller** (XP 270, AL NE, AC 13, Base Attack +4, MV 15"; HD 4d8; SZ M, #AT 1; D 2d4; SA: 5% chance of disease with each bite; SD nil; Severity: d10)

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## The Main Floor

Princess Asper is having a late dinner with her actual bodyguard, Sir Hamblen, an elder paladin who offers his services to protect young ladies while their father is gone. Though the princess pretends not to like old Hamblen, she's actually quite fond of him. Neither have any idea of what's happened upstairs. It's quite easy to sneak past these two as long as the PCs stay out of the dining hall. Only a natural roll of '1' on a Dexterity check will allow them to hear the PCs snooping about.

If the PCs engage Princess Asper or Sir Hamblen in conversation, they will both be naturally suspicious, and demand their names, that they allow themselves to be searched, and their quick exit from the premises. Princess Asper herself is a beautiful teenager who is blinded to her fiance's dark side, and simply imagines him to be a studious wizard with great potential.

The aged Sir Hamblen, on the other hand, dislikes Alroy and secretly wishes Princess Asper to find another mate. He has not observed the depth of Alroy's darkness, else he might take action against him. Clever PCs can find an ally with this old paladin.

**Sir Hamblen, 3rd Level Paladin** (XP 220, AL LG, AC 14, Base Attack +3, MV 12"; HD 3d10; SZ M, #AT 1; D 1d12+1; SA: Nil; SD Nil; Severity: d10). Carries chainmail, fine tunic, steel helmet, greatsword +1.

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## Alroy's Tower

Alroy is currently in his quarters, reading a book about magical portals and trying to divine how to reactivate the one that appeared in his fiance's room, and take his "would-be-assassins" by surprise.

Fearing more wizards, he used a scroll to summon a Beholderkin to guard the outside of his room. Fortunately for the PCs, his door is enchanted with a Silence spell outside his room so nothing would break his concentration, though the Beholderkin will send a Message spell to him if it's in serious danger. If that's

**1 Beholderkin - Watcher** (XP 420, AL N, AC 13, Base Attack +3, MV 7"; HD 3d8+3; SZ S, #AT 1; D 3d6; SA: Electricity (Con save or unconscious for 22-Con rounds); True-Seeing; ESP; Advanced Illusion; Demi-Shadow Magic; Telekinesis; Teleport; Message; Tongues; Suggestion; SD Nil; Severity: d10)

1) HPs            □□□□ □□□□ □□□□  
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**Alroy Rhuul, 4th Level Wizard** (XP 315, AL CN, AC 12, Base Attack +3, MV 12"; HD 4d4; SZ M, #AT 1; D 1d4+1; SA: Spells; SD Nil; Severity: d8). Carries robes, Ring of Protection +1, Bead of Force, and a Dagger +1.

1) HPs            □□□□ □□□□ □□□□  
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**Spells:**

Burning Hands x2 (1st) - 5' x 10' flame does 1d3, +2 pts damage / level.

Protection from Good (1st) - +2 AC, +2 Saves, prevents touch for 3 rounds per level

Stinking Cloud (2nd) - 20' cube of noxious vapors. Save versus poison or be unable to attack for d4+1 rounds after leaving the cloud.

Magic Missile of Skewering (2nd) - 1d4+1 damage (plus 1d4+1 per full 3 levels). Missile "skewers" a target and hits an additional target within a 90-degree arc for a progressive 1d4+1 less damage.

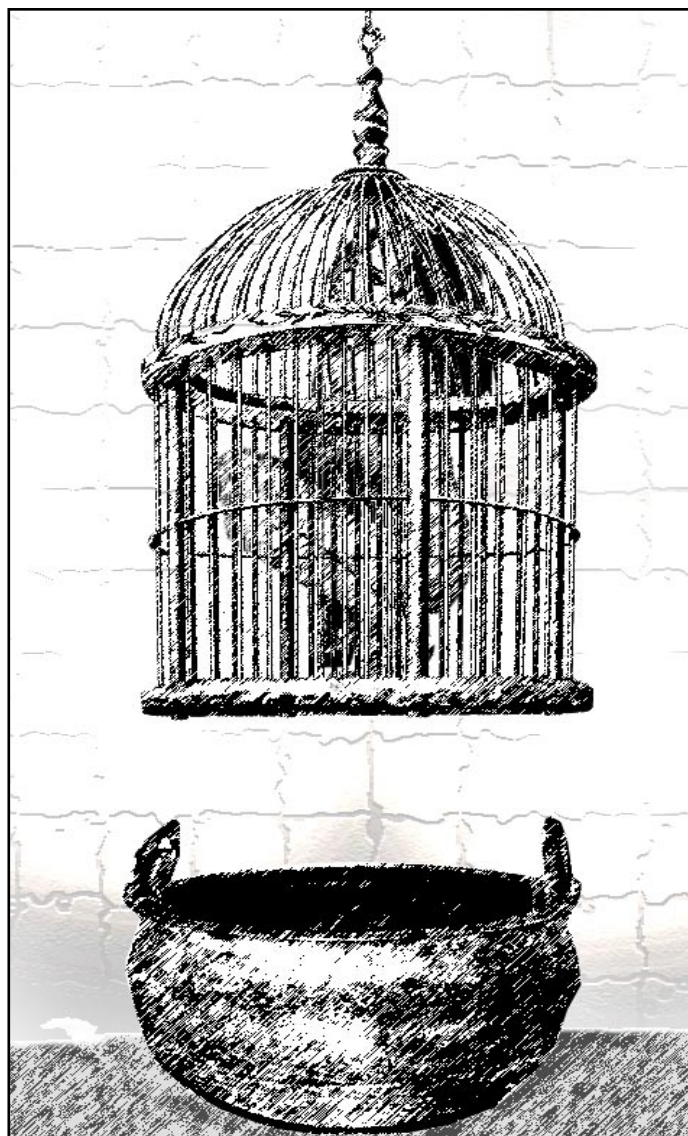
the case, Alroy will open a small window in his door (-6 to hit due to cover) and cast spells through it, shouting insults and accusing the PCs of being wizard-assassins. The door is also trapped with a Glyph of Warding, which will zap anybody who does not speak the password ("Alroy and Asper") for 5d4 electrical damage (though the subject may Save versus Traps; it can also be disarmed). If Alroy is seriously wounded, he will offer all of his possessions in exchange for his life, including his future bride!

If the PCs can get inside Alroy's locked, trapped, quarters they'll find numerous pictures of toads, frogs, and Asper, in addition to his spellbook (containing the spells he's memorized, plus Magic Missile, Identify, Silence 15' Radius, and Read Magic), along with a Ring of Cloaking, and a Scroll of Protection from Petrification. Hidden in the room behind the bed's toad-shaped headboard is a locked coffer containing 550 gp and miscellaneous spell components.

Upstairs on the top floor is Alroy's workspace. Miscellaneous magical equipment, scattered notes, broken pentagrams, and half-written scrolls litter the area. A Wisdom check to search the area will find a Potion of Healing, Oil of Impact, and a Potion of Flying buried amidst some broken alchemical equipment. In the middle of the room is a large cauldron -- above it hangs a cage with the innkeeper's wife, Fare. She seems conscious, if not a bit battered, though the cage is enchanted with a magical Silence spell so she cannot call out for help.

The room also contains Alroy's familiar, a giant toad, that will attempt to devour any intruders it does not recognize.

The cage is locked, and requires some method of breaking it open or picking it to release Fare. She is still in shock about the whole experience, and explains that



**1 Giant Spotted Toad** (XP 119, AL N, AC 14, Base Attack +2, MV 6"; HD 2d8+4; SZ M, #AT 1; D 2d4; SA: Swallows whole on a roll of 20; victim suffocates in Con/3 rounds; can attack with daggers at AC 13; SD: The toad's vibrant spots make it impossible for it to hide itself; Severity: nil)

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Alroy accused her of being a witch immediately after her arrival and quickly cast a spell on her to put her to sleep. When she awoke, she was in this cage, and he threatened to feed her to his toad unless she turned over her spellbooks and the information about who hired her. When she refused, claiming ignorance, he stomped downstairs. She hasn't seen him since.

## Escaping the Manor

The only way out of the manor is by roping down a window into the yard, or through the front door off the main hall. From there, the PCs will find themselves in the richer part of the western Sea Ward, which is a mere half-hour walk back to her home at Oghma's Eye.

## The Conclusion

Yundun will be thrilled to see his wife back again safe and sound, and will offer to reward the players with a bottle of his best wine, as well as free room and board in his best room for an entire year.

If Alroy is killed during the adventure, his fiance Asper will be distraught and, despite Sir Hamblen's advice, do her best to find his assassins. Since she was mostly oblivious to her paramour's dark wizardry, she will spend her father's money on the best investigators Waterdeep has to offer. If, during the adventure, the PCs can convincingly reveal to her Alroy's deeds (showing a caged Fale is a good start), the emotional girl will order him out of the house, and fall into a deep state of depression for weeks. Though either way is unhappy for the princess, both her friendship or hatred can provide many more interesting adventures.

## About this Adventure

This adventure uses the basic *Castles & Crusades* system, with a few modifications from *Hackmaster*. Namely:

- Small monsters receive a +10 hp kicker. Medium monsters (and PCs!) receive a +20 hp kicker.
- Some monsters, magic items, and spells are taken from the *Hackmaster Player's Handbook*, though GMs are free to change them to something more suitable to his campaign.
- Monsters have a critical hit "Severity" listed. For simplicity's sake, this is bonus damage the creature inflicts on a natural to hit roll of 20. A more detailed, *Hackmaster*-inspired system can be found at [www.threefates.com](http://www.threefates.com).
- XP values are *Hackmaster* ones, which tend to be higher than official *Castles & Crusades* values.
- *Hackmaster* players can likely use this adventure as is, noting that monsters' Armor Classes are high (convert to *Hackmaster* AC with  $(20 - AC)$ ), so an AC 14 giant toad in this adventure converts to an AC 6 *Hackmaster* toad).