

King's Challenge: Character Funnel

Designed by Mark Tasaka, 2017

"Gather around. Come closer if you please. I am an old man, and my voice is not as strong as it used to be. Today is the day of the King's Challenge. It is the first day of autumn and the last day of summer. It is a day of death and a day of re-birth. We are gather here, around the old ruins, as we have gathered here every year before.

'In a few moments, I will ask those of you, who are bold and brave, to step forward and accept the King's Challenge. But, before I ask you to do so, I must tell you the tale of the King's Challenge. Yes, I know, I have told this tale every year! And yes, I know, you are tired of hearing this tale! However, this a tale that must be told!

'Long ago, in ages long forgotten, there existed a mighty kingdom on the ground on which we stand. Now, all that remains of this once mighty kingdom are the ruins you see around you, and the portal that stands before you. The kingdom was ruled by a powerful Mage-King, who sought men and women of worth to serve his land. The King believed that anyone, no matter what station in life they are from, should have the opportunity to prove their worth.

'This standard of worth came in the form of a test, a magical dungeon connected by magical portals. Those who took up the King's Challenge would enter this portal, the one that stands before you, where they would be teleported to the first portal room of the dungeon. Their goal was to navigate the dungeon to the second portal room. The survivors would enter the second portal where they would be teleported back here, proving their worth to the Mage-King. The return journey through the second portal brought with it a transformation that granted the survivors the privilege of adopting new titles and choosing professions worthy of being in the Mage-King's service.

'Men and women, ordinary folk, like you and I, would travel from afar to take the King's test. For many, the risks of accepting the King's Challenge were justified by the rewards of the transformation. As with all kingdoms, over the millennium, the Mage-King's kingdom was lost to the passage of time. What remains of his once mighty kingdom is the magical portal that you see before you and the magical dungeon that lies beyond. Now, I will ask those of you, who are bold and brave, those of you who seek a new life, to step forward and accept the King's Challenge...."

Background

The character funnel takes place in a small part of the world known as the Villages of the Muir Forest. The Villages of the Muir Forest are a collection of small villages, each having a hundred or so residents, located in the forest and the surrounding lands. The Villages of the Muir Forest is a shared setting with the adventures of 'The Temple of the Onyx Cat', 'Kobolds Stole My Cat' and 'The Gong Farmer's Revenge' taking place in this setting.

Travellers rarely visit the Villages of the Muir Forest, as most do not know there exists villages inside the Muir Forest ("Who in their right mind would want to live in that dull mosquito infested forest", outsiders would say). As for the villagers themselves, most villagers are born, grow old and die in the villages, as travel outside the villages is rare. Those few villagers who depart the villages are never seen from again. This has led to the belief that those who have left the villages have travelled too far and have fallen off the edges of the world (most villagers believe that the world is flat, and the boundaries of the world ends a hundred or so miles outside of the forest; this has led to the belief that if you travel too far you are going to fall off the edges of the world).

Most of the villagers are simple folk, content to live their simple day-to-day lives. "Who'd in their right mind would want to become an adventurer", most would say, "Living life away from home, never knowing where you'd sleep from one day to the next." However, there of those among the villagers who aspire for a life greater than the life they live. There are those who dare to see the larger world (even if it means falling off the edges of the world). This is where the King's Challenge character funnel starts. Your players' characters are villagers, tired of living their simple day-to-day lives, who aspire to be Adventurers, and are willing to risk their own lives to take up the King's Challenge.

The King's Challenge takes place on the first day of Autumn and the last day of Summer, a day unique to the Villages of the Muir Forest (outside of the villages this day is known as the 15th of September). It is a special day for the villagers as on this day the King's Challenge takes place. In the heart of the ruins is a magical portal designed to test the worth of men and women; this test is known as the King's Challenge, a test created by a powerful Mage-King a long time ago. Volunteers will enter the portal, and be teleported to the first portal room of a magical dungeon. Their goal will

be to find the second portal room, which contains the portal that will teleports them back to the ruins. Their journey through the second portal will bring about the transformations necessary to become 1st level characters.

Every year a crowd of villagers gathers around the portal in the old ruins. There, the Teller of Tales, tells the story of the King's Challenge, and asks for volunteers to step forward to accept the King's Challenge. Each year there will be a group of volunteers who will take up the King's Challenge and enter the magical portal. The Teller of Tales and the villagers will wait near the portal for the return of the surviving volunteers. While waiting, the villagers will set up camp fires and tents, sing songs, tell stories and drink to their heart's content. When the surviving volunteers return through the portal, the villagers will mourn the fallen and congratulate those who have passed the King's test.

About the Character Funnel

The King's Challenge is a randomly generated Dungeon Crawl Classics compatible zero-level character funnel designed for a group of 15 to 20 zero-level characters. Many of the zero-level characters will perish in the funnel; thus, each player should have multiple characters (3 or 4 characters per player works best for smaller groups; 2 or 3 for larger groups). Every adventure through the King's Challenge is unique, due to the random programming mechanics of the funnel.

In the tradition of 'old school' role-playing games, the King's Challenge is filled with hidden items and secret doors. However, to uncover these the characters will need to search different areas of the funnel and to be specific as to what/where they are searching (i.e. opening ceramic jars to look inside). If your players are new to 'old school' gaming, let them know in advance, that

exploration and searching are the key to find items and treasure that will help both with this funnel and on their next adventure as 1st level characters.

Dungeon Features

Light source: Magical light illuminates the King's Challenge, making the need for lanterns and torches unnecessary (zero-level characters rarely start out with light sources; thus, it would be unfair to require the characters to have light sources to navigation the dungeon).

The hallways: In the King's Challenge, encounters take place in rooms and hallways. The hallways are only wide enough for two characters to travel abreast. Therefore, when the characters are travelling down the hallways, it will be necessary to know which two characters are in the front of the marching order (knowing the second set of characters of the marching order will be helpful, as hallway encounters can be deadly).

Doors: There are several doors throughout the dungeon. The doors are unlocked. The placement of doors is used to spark role-playing and to build tension. For instance, a character may try to listen to a door to hear any sounds coming from the other side before deciding to open the door. Likewise, if the characters are being chased by monsters from a hallway encounter, they may close and barrack a door to prevent the monsters from catching them.

Secret passageways: The descriptions of the secret passageways refer to the secret passageways as a singular noun. However, some of the hidden rooms have two secret passageways connecting to the room. In these cases, the description provided applies to both secret passageways.

Dungeon Crawl Classics is a Trademark of Goodman Games