Sealed Library

Have You Heard about the Beast?

by Matt Sauers



Have You Heard About the Beast is a game of tavern rumours and hearsay. More often than not it turns out to be entirely true.

That beast the drunk saw? Every bit as foul as he said.

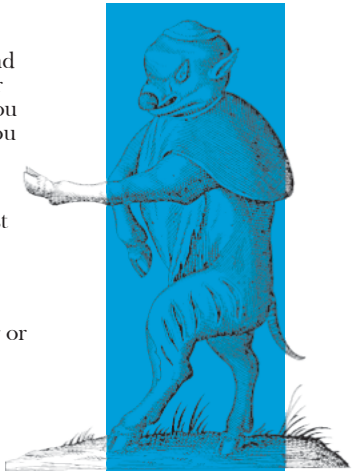
It's all about creating ludicrous encounters with beasts for oneshots or campaign play.

Content Warnings:

Sealed Library always recommend making use of safety tools at your table and being mature in how you behave towards other players. You never know what is traumatic for other people.

Have you Heard About the Beast potentially includes triggers for animal-related phobias and body horror.

If content warning needs revising or expanding, contact us.



Credits

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In the tavern...

Have y'all heard about the Dire Bear of Grimdank Woods?

Well I heard it has 16 eyes and a tentacle in place of one of its legs. Suckers like dinner plates, it'll pull your face as soon as look at you.

Well I heard the reason we call him 'old peculiar' is on account of his fearsome stench. It knocked farmer Graham out from 60 feet away and he couldn't smell nothing else for a week!

Well I heard it can shoot fire from its eyes. Great black scorch marks on the ground by the big stump on the road. I've seen them with my own two eyes.

Well I heard it's as big as a barn and older than even Samuel Todger, the village elder. He says he it ate his great-grandfather's leg and that wooden leg above the bar is the one made for him way back when.

My pappy told me he once stole a whole cow from the farmer's auction, right in front of everybody, ate that sucker whole and now the bell rings in his stomach wherever he goes. If you hear that noise at night you're basically already dead.

I heard it lives in the trunk of a fallen oak tree with a roost of ravens. They peck out the eyes of any that approach and act as an alarm. Hard to get a drop on the damned thing when there's ravens cawing left and right.

I heard in that trunk there is the skull of a witch that will tell how you'll die.

Tom Higgins said he heard it chattering away in the woods one night as the beast walked with it on its shoulder. Wouldn't tell me what it said though, just went pale and stared into his beer.



Instructions

Write the categories on small scraps of paper, fold them, and put them in a bowl.

Choose who draws first.
Players draw out categories until there are none left. (save your ideas for later)
Whoever has 'What it is' starts by saying what kind of creature it is.
Begin with "Have you heard about the...?".
(If they need help, use the tables for ideas.)
The next player adds an embellishment using one of the categories they have. "Well I heard..."
Finally, go and fight the damn thing!
It's ok to vary from "Well I heard".



Ideas: "Someone told me" / "my father says" "legends tell us".

It's ok to skip one or more categories if you want to.

The Categories

Where you are
Who is telling you about it
What it is
Where it lives
What it has done
Age and size
What it looks like
A special ability it has
A treasure or something it guards
Its nickname

Playing the Encounter

However ridiculous the tall tales you hear are, they're all true, to the very letter of what you were told. Embrace the ridiculous nature of it, make its stats up, and go save someone from whatever it is that's terrifying them.

Where you are

D10	Suggested Answer - We are...
1	in the village tavern, snowed in on a bleak winter's night
2	at a roadside camp with a travelling caravan
3	huddled around a small sputtering fire in a mountain cave
4	quaffing beer and swapping stories at a village fete
5	passing the time on the back of a slow-moving cart on a muddy road
6	arriving at the bustling docks of a port city and scouting for rumours
7	hunting deep in the forest, miles from the nearest farm or village
8	playing cards in the hold of a ship as a storm rages outside
9	waiting for corrupt guards to 'certify' your weapons and enter town
10	trudging along a beach, battered by wind and rain

Who is telling you about it

D10	Suggested Answer - We are listening to...
1	a wild-eyed old person who you're sure has leaves and twigs in their hair
2	a scarred, muscled veteran soldier who has seen more battles than most
3	a pale and sickly young hermit who is rarely seen away from their hideout
4	a travelling salesperson who has lost most of their goods
5	a garrulous elf who feels the need to one up everyone else
6	an ancient wizard bedecked with jingling trinkets
7	a mumbling drunkard with a missing hand
8	a scruffy looking street urchin who speaks with a gap-toothed whistle
9	a farmer who jumps at every loud noise and has dark bags under their eyes
10	a talking horse who constantly complains about the quality of local turnips

What it is

D10	Suggested Answer - Have you heard about the....?
1	fearsome dire bear
2	brutish ogre
3	malevolent ghost of wee Jimmy the candle-maker
4	marauding crocodile
5	green-eyed dragon
6	giant spider
7	loathsome snake
8	man-eating troll
9	slimy octopus
10	mooing cow

Where it lives

D10	Suggested Answer - Well I heard it lives...
1	inside an ancient and gnarled oak tree's trunk
2	in an insect-filled cave where the buzzing can drive a person mad
3	in a malodorous swamp, dead in the centre where the fog is thickest
4	in an abandoned, burnt-out tavern on the road out of town
5	in a quarry where the miners delved too deep and unleashed evil
6	in a dark and foreboding forest where the very trees resent your presence
7	in a muddy hole next to a stream, no fish dare swim near
8	atop the tallest mountain in the whole range in an igloo of black ice
9	in a shell it carries on its back, bedecked with bones of its prey
10	in a purple dimensional portal created by a mad wizard

What it has done

D10	Suggested Answer - Well I heard it...
1	ate farmer Johnson's prize bull and spat the bones in his face
2	demanded tribute from every harvest, only the most unshapely produce
3	stole the mayoral chain while he slept, left a huge hole in his bedroom wall
4	kidnapped little Bryn while he was playing and his mum was at market
5	raided a caravan guarded by six men-at-arms, guts everywhere apparently
6	burrowed tunnels under the village, one swallowed up the smith's anvil
7	brought a plague upon the crops, all full of maggots
8	made every book in my house a left boot
9	insulted the mothers of everyone in town, never seen something so rude
10	recited a poem of such unparalleled lewdness it made a priest faint

Its age and/or size

D10	Suggested Answer - Well I heard it lives...
1	it's 15 feet long but surprisingly thin
2	it can change size to fit through a keyhole or flatten a barn
3	as old as the bones of earth and cantankerous to boot
4	dies every night and is reborn every morning, therefore it knows no age
5	is the biggest damn creature you ever laid eyes on
6	big enough to swallow a horse in a single mouthful without chewing
7	as a big as a dragon, give or take, I think, I've never seen a dragon
8	as old as the town, in fact it was the town founder's pet once upon a time
9	just a baby, so I sure hope it's mother don't show up
10	twice as big as any creature like it you've seen before

What it looks like

D10	Suggested Answer - Well I heard...
1	it's got four tails, each has one of the suits from a deck of cards on the end
2	its eyes glow in the dark and suck in light during the day
3	it's got two heads that whisper secrets to each other
4	it has two extra arms, each with double the usual number of fingers
5	it's missing a leg that has been replaced with a magical sword
6	it has coins as eyes. When it died the ferryman was too scared to take it
7	its skin is rotting and oozes a bright green slight that burns to the bone
8	it has a thick shaggy coat of fur, thick enough to swallow a dagger
9	it's translucent in the moonlight, and your hand'll pass right though it
10	it has the face of human on each of its palms

A special ability it has

D10	Suggested Answer - Well I heard...
1	it can stand on two legs like a man, or on two hands if it likes
2	it sneaks up silently and kills you before you even see it
3	it speaks in the voice of the last person it killed
4	it can outdance or perform any bard in the land
5	it speaks with the dead and tells tales of how your loved ones died
6	can cleave a person in half with a single swipe
7	can paralyse you so you're alive as its you from the inside out
8	its screams can turn your insides to jelly, or possibly stone
9	it spits liquid fire and the burns can only be healed by its blood
10	it will sneak into your dreams and drain away your soul

A treasure it guards

D10	Suggested Answer - I heard say it guards
1	a magic sword that can pass through the armour of anyone evil
2	a mirror that reflects on your finest qualities
3	a mountain of gold teeth that give any who wear them a winning smile
4	a helmet that protects your from arrows and miscellaneous projectiles
5	a glowing emerald as a big as a fist. All who own it succumb to death.
6	a lost of book of romantic poetry that will make a barbarian weep
7	a mysterious black ball that answers questions truthfully
8	a dagger that forbids those it kills from making a sound as they die
9	a sentient rope that obeys its owners commands and makes bad puns
10	a bottomless stein of beer that only a sober man can open

Its nickname

D10	Suggested Answer - Well I heard...
1	some of the farmers have taken to calling it Mouthy Karen
2	the mayor put up a poster that called it the Minging Menace
3	my mother said it reminded her of Uncle Boris and the name stuck
4	its true name is Lord of Shadows, Arbiter of the Void
5	it answers to the name Shinwell McQuade
6	it's called old peculiar on account of its stench
7	some of the folk in town call it the Keeper of Knowledge
8	the kids in town are all scared of stories about the Bogglemunster
9	it has the letters G, A, R, Y scratched outside its lair.
10	folk who've seen it just call it IT.







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