

THE CRUCIBLE

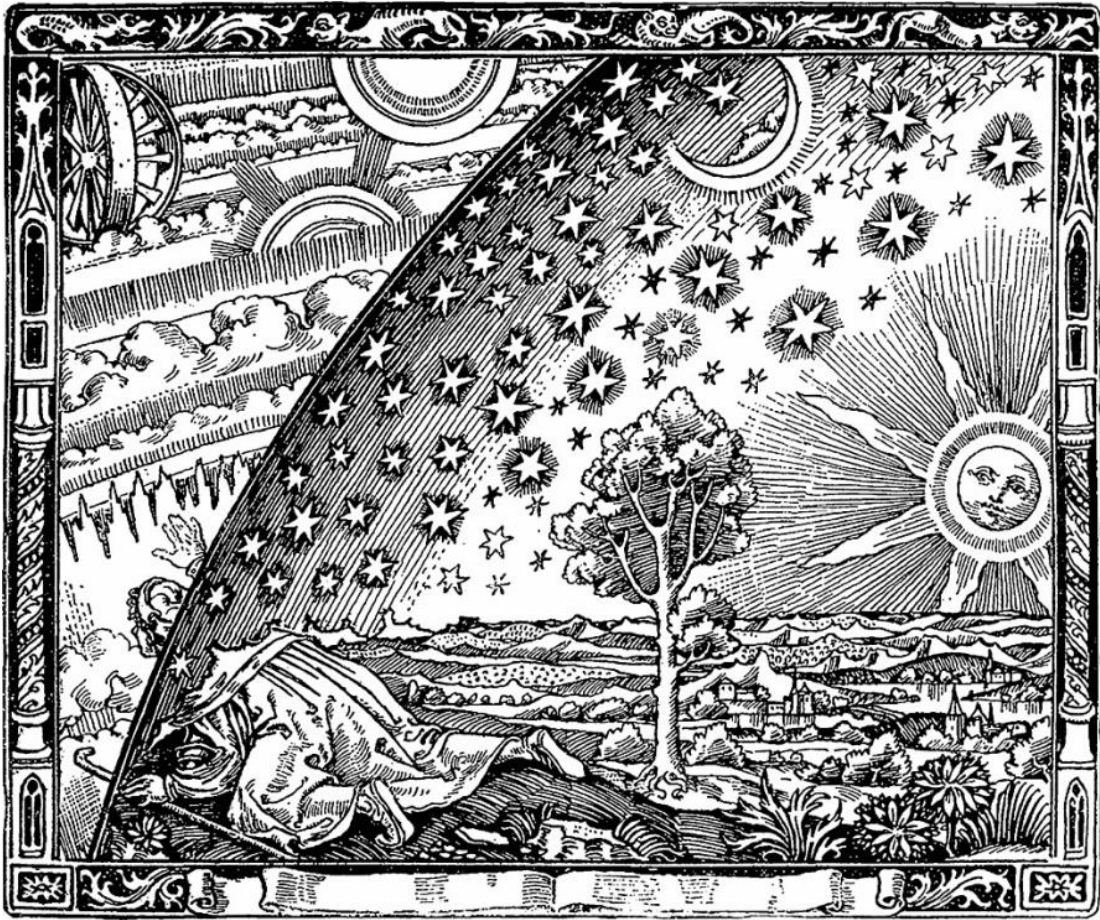
A 6 TO 8-HOUR ADVENTURE IN THE ASTRAL
PLANE FOR 5TH-9TH LEVEL CHARACTERS

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THE CRUCIBLE

THE INSTRUMENTS OF FATE - PART I



Introduction: The players get more than they bargain for when answering a night-time call for assistance from a mutual friend. Can they escape the Crucible and find their way home? The first in a series of four standalone (but connected) one shots that see the party fight their way to hell and back.

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INTRODUCTION: THE INSTRUMENTS OF FATE

Accept the things to which fate binds you, and love the people with whom fate brings you together, but do so with all your heart.

—Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations VI*

OVERVIEW

The Instruments of Fate is a series of connected one shot adventures originally designed to let parties to have a break between adventures or practise new skills, spells and abilities upon leveling up. Each adventure can be played by itself, or with a view to following the story to its climax as the players pursue their fates to the Abyss and try to prevent the destruction of the multiverse.

The overall story concerns an inquisitive young sorcerer, Askelon, who has two major (and as it turns out, related) problems: first, both his parents have disappeared; and secondly, he unwittingly made a deal with the demon lord Abraxas to obtain “*all that there is to know*” in exchange for his soul. The four parts are described in more detail below.

Indications are given in the text where content relates only to subsequent episodes in the overall story. That content can be excluded if the adventure is being played as a standalone session. Similarly, the character of Askelon is intended only to provide a common thread between the stories and an adventure hook for each one; apart from in Part IV, Askelon does not take an active role in the adventures. Suggested alternative adventure hooks are given should the players wish to run any one of the four parts of the adventure by itself.

ASKELON'S BACKSTORY

The following backstory should be shared with the players if they wish to play all four parts of the Instruments of Fate:

Askelon grew up on a farm north of Neverwinter, the son of Antonius and Philogena, Antonius looks human, but is a gold dragon. Philogena is an elf, ostracised by her family for her relationship with Antonius. Well-travelled adventurers in their own right, Antonius and Philogena settled down into what they hoped would be a peaceful life for their son Askelon.

Life was indeed peaceful for the half-elf growing up, with his parents teaching him numerous languages and basic spellcraft. When Askelon was in his late teens, however, his father departed on a mission and never returned. Philogena was tight-lipped about what happened, but evidently Antonius's past caught up with him. Soon after, Philogena left in search of Antonius, and she too disappeared.

Worried, Askelon has ventured out into the world in search of his parents. Early on in that search, he fell in with a fellow traveller, Brynn. At one point when Askelon bemoaned his lack of knowledge of his parents' whereabouts, Brynn jokingly said, “I bet you'd sell your soul if you could learn all there was to know”. Askelon laughingly agreed, at which point Brynn cried, “We have a deal!” before vanishing into thin air.

This is but another mystery to add to Askelon's search for his parents. It is in the course of that search that Askelon has met each of the players.

PART I: THE CRUCIBLE

In this part, the players share a dream in which their mutual friend, Askelon, appeals to them for help. With the assistance of another of Askelon's friends, Meg, the players are transported to a githyanki prison/asylum/zoo in the Astral Plane called the "Crucible". The Crucible consists of various interconnected environments, each with its own hazards and opponents. In the first cell the party encounters not Askelon but his mother, Philogena, who will explain that the party has been tricked into coming by a telepathic creature she calls the "Entity". Philogena will guide the party as they fight their way through the Crucible to an exit point, only to reveal that "Philogena" is in fact the Entity and has been using the players to secure its own escape. Through the intercession of the real Philogena, the players return to the Material Plane and tell Askelon that his mother has been located.

PART II: SOUL SURVIVOR

Armed with the knowledge that Philogena is in the Astral Plane, Askelon has been casting Astral Projection each night under the watchful eye of Meg, in an effort to secure his mother's release. During one such mission, Meg is startled when a fiery cage surrounds Askelon, prompting her to call on the players for help. Upon arriving, they are confronted by Brynn, a stranger from Askelon's past, who declares that he has come to claim Askelon's soul. Askelon separates his soul from his body, however, resulting in a race between Brynn and the party to recover Askelon's soul. In the course of doing so, the party will encounter the three aspects of the goddess of Fate, Istus, who will warn them that a terrible ordeal awaits them all.

PART III: REVENGE OF THE GITH

While Askelon and Meg are away researching the true identity of Brynn and attempting to further the recovery of Philogena, the players are approached by an enslaved githzerai messenger. He tells the players that they are summoned to Vlaakith's Glory (a githyanki training academy on the Material Plane) to answer for the destruction of the Crucible. Beloved family members have been kidnapped by the githyanki to secure the players' cooperation. The players must infiltrate the academy and rescue the prisoners, who include Philogena and the shapeshifting Entity. Pillaging the githyanki armoury also is not out of the question. The party must then escape, but not before facing combat with the Entity itself – a half-deva, half-rakshasa hybrid driven mad by its dual nature.

PART IV: INTO THE ABYSS

The recovery of Philogena's journal from Vlaakith's Glory reveals that Philogena made a deal with Abraxas, demon lord of forbidden lore and magic: in exchange for a spell to release Askelon's father from confinement in the Shadowfell, she must capture and return the Entity to Abraxas. In parallel, Askelon has discovered that Brynn is none other than Abraxas, who has sent his demon army to claim Askelon's soul by force. Rather than let that happen, Askelon will guide the party through the Shadowfell and various layers of the Abyss in the search for a legendary artifact that has the power to defeat Abraxas once and for all. The only catch is that Askelon's plan has the potential to unravel all of creation, an outcome that the goddess Istus is keen to avoid...

THE CRUCIBLE

The Crucible is a fast-paced, encounter-heavy story designed for a balanced group of four to six players. Encounters also can be tailored, however, to suit the party composition, level and number of players.

Suggested encounters and some bespoke creatures are included, bearing in mind that some of the inmates in the Crucible have been there for a very, very long time...

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

1. The Engine. Each player has a vivid dream in which Askelon asks for their help and that they trust a young gnome called Meg who then shows up at their respective doors. Meg, too, has heard Askelon's plea and takes the party to a transportation device of Askelon's design. The device transports to the party to the Astral Plane.

Rather than floating in the relative nothingness of the Astral Plane, the players find themselves in the Crucible, an open-air testing ground for young githyanki consisting of multiple linked environments, each with its own artificial gravity. The Crucible is shaped like a twenty-sided die, and its inmates reside in its interior in connected triangular areas that correspond to its faces. Each cell has a central platform with a circular panel marked with the number of the cell in Roman numerals.

2. Rescuing Philogena. The party arrives at cell 1, and their first task is to rescue an elf woman being interrogated by some githyanki warriors. She will introduce herself as Askelon's mother, Philogena, and explain that the party has been tricked into the Crucible by a telepathic creature masquerading as Askelon.

3. Gathering Gravity Orbs. Philogena has been in the Crucible for some time, and has devised a way to escape using five of the gravity orbs that provide the artificial gravity in each cell. Cell 1 provides the first of these. The party will need to move through four other cells and hold off their inhabitants while Philogena extracts the gravity orbs. They will need to move quickly; removing an orb causes a loss of gravity soon after, followed by a fiery death in the Crucible's central sun.

4. Confronting the Entity. Armed with five orbs, the party will arrive at cell 20, only to discover that "Philogena" is the Entity itself; the real Philogena lies unconscious in a teleportation circle in the middle of the cell. The circle awaits activation by the Entity using the orbs. The party must battle the Entity's confederates (fellow prisoners trying to escape) while the Entity begins activating its escape portal to the Material Plane. Just as the Entity completes its work, Philogena regains consciousness and intervenes, allowing the party to use the portal before it collapses but leaving Philogena and the Entity stranded in the Crucible.



CHAPTER 1: GETTING THERE

BRING ME A DREAM

The adventure begins when each player experiences a particularly vivid and realistic dream in which Askelon appears to them, and explains that he has gotten himself trapped and requires the player's help. It does not matter if the players are together or apart; the dreams do not necessarily occur simultaneously, just on the same night. For convenience, references will continue to be made to Askelon and his mother Philogena, but a single NPC character can be swapped in to replace both Askelon and Philogena (the actual person trapped in the Crucible) if subsequent parts of the Instruments of Fate will not be played.

Optional: Askelon also has a specific message for each player (this can be provided on a piece of paper, as they do not actually share the dream). The message is a clue to the physical layout of the Crucible (see Chapter 2 below), and it is up to each player whether to share the clue with the others. Example clues are:

- “Do not spend long roamin’ around.”
- “X marks the spot – twice!”
- “Seek the critical path.”
- “You won’t need a map, you already have it!”
- “Pursue a desirable natural solution.”
- “Let the good times roll!”

Askelon concludes the dream by saying, “Listen to the gnome, she knows what to do. Help me old friend, you’re my only hope”. Just as he says those words in the dream, the player is awoken by a knock at their door (or equivalent entrance to where the player happens to be sleeping).

A LITTLE GNOME TOLD ME

Standing outside each player's bedroom (or other sleeping place) is a young female gnome. She will introduce herself as Meg Uffin, and

explain that she is a friend of Askelon. She speaks quickly, however, and insists that “time is of the essence, or maybe it isn’t, I can’t be sure with these things”. Askelon has been speaking to her in her dreams and she has made something to his design to help them get to him. She is completely honest and genuinely believes everything she is telling the players.

She begs each player to come with her. Upon accepting, Meg will Teleport the player to the first location, the Engine.



MEG UFFIN

Roleplaying Meg. Meg is chaotic good and a masterful inventor. She is a rock gnome with gnome racial traits. Her specialty is spatial distortion, and she has been studying the planes of existence extensively. She talks very rapidly, and if given half a chance will speak at length about the principles of teleportation mechanics, crystal triangulation and other complex magical metaphysical concepts.

Her existing relationship with Askelon is unclear, although it will develop in subsequent parts of the Instruments of Fate.

THE ENGINE

The Engine is the means by which the party will be transported to the Crucible, located in the Astral Plane. It involves dropping a Portable Hole into a Bag of Holding. A map of the interior before and after activation is found in Appendix A.

OUTSIDE THE ENGINE

Meg's Teleport leads to an open field, in the middle of which stands a small, vaguely cross-shaped stone building with a low roof. Meg proudly explains that she made it; she calls it "The Adventurer Relocation Device (Improved Specifications)". She heads towards the only visible entrance and heads inside, beckoning as she does

Dwarves or stone masons in the party will recognise the building's workmanship as gnomish rather than dwarven, but sturdy nonetheless. There is nothing overtly sinister about the building, although it seems to consist of only a single room and it may be a tight squeeze. It may well be bigger on the inside, of course.

INSIDE THE ENGINE

The interior of the Engine is a plain, square room 20 by 20 feet. In the centre of the room a translucent crystal column rises from the floor to the ceiling. A glowing yellow crystal dome is set about four feet off the ground at the left hand end of each of the four walls. The room otherwise appears to be featureless.

A map of the Engine is included in Appendix A. Once the party is inside, Meg will ask that party members place a hand on each of the crystals. If asked, she will explain that they are focusing crystals, and begin a length explanation of how "it is not easy trying to triangulate the position of something in infinite space y'know, and the only way it can happen is with a personalised focus of some sort, the more the better". She

will continue talking about "transcendental frequencies" and offer to share with the party some of her fascinating findings in her published studies from the last 100 years.

Meg will then indicate that she is just popping out to activate the crystals, and will give the party a minute or so to get into place. She will then exit, and lock the only door, explaining as she does so that it is "for your safety". She also explains happily that it might tickle a bit. She may also concede that she has never tested the Engine before, but in theory it should work.

The door cannot be forced, and the room is warded against inadvertent Teleportation, Plane Shifting and similar mechanisms that might be used to leave the room. If the players use the time to investigate the crystal column in the middle of the room, they will find that it is 2 feet in diameter and unbreakable. At its base is a dark hole in the floor; hanging from the roof is a small bundle. A successful Arcana check (DC 22) through the crystal will reveal the hole to be the opening to a Bag of Holding.

Meg will yell out, "hang on, stay touching a crystal!". With a grinding sound like a key being scraped across the strings of a broken piano, unseen pistons will cause all four walls to move. Only one end of each wall (the end containing a crystal) will move, the other end acting as a pivot point, in an arc that eventually sees all four walls form a 10 feet wide square centred around the column – a very tight squeeze, but survivable. Even so, a player may well observe: "One thing's for sure, we're all gonna be a lot thinner!"

Once the party is corralled into that square, the bundle will be released from the roof in the middle of the column, and the party will see a portable hole flutter down and fall into the Bag of Holding, thus creating a gate to the Astral Plane.

There will be a blinding flash of light, and once the players' vision clears they will find themselves in Cell 1 of the Crucible.



CHAPTER 2: TRAVERSING THE CRUCIBLE

THE ASTRAL PLANE

Ordinarily, travelers to the Astral Plane visit as disembodied souls floating in a great silvery domain punctuated by wisps and whirlpools of colour, contrast and flickering lights. In this adventure, however, the players are there in their physical form. The challenge is finding their way back home.

Solid matter is rare in the Astral Plane. It therefore will come as something of a surprise when the party finds itself on the solid ground of Cell 1 of the Crucible. The following sections provide some background to the Crucible and its creators, the **githyanki**.

GITHYANKI

One of the few races to inhabit the Astral Plane itself, the githyanki are fearsome warriors, trained in martial abilities from birth. Githyanki are humanoid in appearance, but more slender. They have pointed ears and leathery pale skin. They are extremely fast, and have strong psionic abilities to match their martial prowess. Githyanki live in highly structured societies, and tend to be lawful evil in alignment.

Thousands of years ago, the githyanki were once slaves to the **illithid** race, but freed themselves in an uprising. Their hatred of illithids is matched only by their hatred of members of the other gith subrace, the **githzerai**.

Due to the timelessness of the Astral Plane (see below), the githyanki raise their young in crèches in carefully hidden locations in the Material Plane (one of which is the focus of Part 3 of the Instruments of Fate). They also are the creators of the Crucible, which they use as a training ground in which young githyanki warriors can test their mettle against various monsters, including **mind flayers**, in environments that simulate the Material Plane.

FEATURES OF THE ASTRAL PLANE

The Astral Plane has a number of features that affect gameplay. The following should be borne in mind when running the players through the Crucible.

Timeless. Time does not pass in the Astral Plane. Creatures in the Astral Plane do not age, feel hunger or thirst, or need sleep. On the plus side, this means that poison does not work while the poisoned creature remains in the Astral Plane. On the down side, natural healing also does not occur.

No rest for the wicked [Optional]. The timelessness of the Astral Plane means that the players gain no benefit from having either a short rest or a long rest, and cannot use hit dice to recover lost health.

Quickened spells [Optional]. Upon casting a spell or using any spell-like ability that has a casting time of one action, a player will discover that the casting is unusually fast, similar to the sorcerer metamagic ability, Quickened Spell. Such spells or abilities count as a Bonus Action, leaving the character free to take another action. That action cannot be another spell, however, unless it is a cantrip.

Subjective directional gravity. Outside of the Crucible (and inside a cell once it loses its artificial gravity), creatures are subject to subjective directional gravity. Unless a player has a relevant history of doing so, they will need considerable skill to use this feature to “fly”. See the “Gravity Orb” entry in the section on the Crucible below.

The artificial gravity of the Crucible means that players enjoy their usual walk and swim speeds. As an alternative, for combat purposes speed can be set to three times a player’s intelligence score (refer to the DMG, pg 46).

THE CRUCIBLE

The Crucible is a prison-cum-asylum-cum-zoo in which the githyanki imprison a variety of dangerous creatures that young githyanki warriors fight to hone their skills. It represents a huge investment of time and resources. It has a number of features with which the party must contend.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

The Crucible consists of twenty triangular environments connected to each other to form a regular icosahedron (that is, a twenty-sided die). The inhabitants of the Crucible occupy the interior of the icosahedron. Each cell is in the shape of an equilateral triangle, 1,056 feet (or one fifth of a mile) to a side.

A more detailed description of each cell is provided in Chapters 3 and 4, but all twenty cells share certain features.

CENTRAL PLATFORM

In the centre of each cell is a square, stone area that is twenty-five feet to a side. In the centre of the square is a circular metal disk, two feet in diameter, under which the cell’s *gravity orb* is installed.

The disk is inscribed with the number of the cell in Roman numerals. These should be described in neutral terms, as the characters will not have any term of reference for them, including correct orientation. For example, the inscription in cell 2 could be described as “two parallel lines”, and in cell 6 it could be described as a “less than or equals sign”.

In most cells, the central platform also tends to be the location where combat will occur.

CAPTIVE SUN

Above each cell, and fixed in the overall centre of the Crucible, is a small sun that supplies light and heat to the cell. Philogena can inform the party that it is nicknamed “The Death Star” by the inmates of the Crucible, because few who ever see it live to tell the tale.

MISTY WALLS

Each cell is separated from its three neighbouring cells by opaque walls of mist that stretch up from each boundary and meet far above near the sun. Ordinarily these walls prevent easy movement between cells, and are designed so that any inmate wandering into one becomes disoriented and simply ends up walking back into the same cell. Philogena will inform the party, however, that she has worked out how to avoid this, such that she and the party can move freely between the cells.

Inside the mist. The mist feels cool, but not cold. Occasionally nearby movement can be sensed, but the party is not attacked. A few feet into the mist, nothing is visible in front or behind, and creatures easily become disoriented. If a player tries to traverse the mist without Philogena's assistance they will find themselves back in the cell they just left.

Philogena will lead the way, and will have a rope that the party can use to ensure they stay together. After a minute's travel or so, players will experience a slightly stomach-turning sensation of their body being pulled in two slightly different downward directions. A few feet beyond that and the players will encounter a gentle upward curve, and then another. It will feel to the players as though they were walking up a hill, even though the ground is flat. Another minute's travel will see the party exit the mist into the next cell.



GRAVITY ORB

The Astral Plane's subjective directional gravity is modified in each cell by the presence of a *gravity orb*. These orbs maintain standard gravity conditions within each cell, to better mimic conditions in the Material Plane. The artificial gravity also prevents the physical environment and the creatures in it from floating up into the sun (which has a relatively high mass and exerts its own gravitational pull) and burning to death.

Removing a gravity orb. Most of the action in the adventure involves the party fighting creatures to enable Philogena to remove a cell's *gravity orb*. She will do this once the platform in the centre of the cell has been secured.

Once a *gravity orb* is removed, the artificial gravity in the cell will start to fail. When this happens, the party will need to move quickly to a neighbouring cell. If the players remain in the cell too long, they will discover that the environment starts to break up and all solid objects, including themselves, will begin drifting towards the sun.

Players can attempt to learn to use the Astral Plane's subjective directional gravity to escape by making a successful Concentration check (DC 10) for every 30 feet of unstable terrain that needs to be crossed. If all else fails, Philogena can swoop in and save a drifting player; it is in her interest to have as much protection as possible to obtain the orbs she needs to escape. A similar mechanic applies in the unlikely event that the party attempts to return to a cell whose *gravity orb* already has been removed.

WARDED AGAINST ESCAPE

A visit to the Crucible is usually a one-way affair. The githyanki can come and go as they please, but for all other creatures spells such as Plane Shift, Gate, Teleport and even Wish do not function as a means of escape. Misty Step and Dimension Door will work within the Crucible itself, but cannot be used to exit the prison.

NAVIGATING THE CELLS

Keeping track of the twenty different cells of the Crucible can be challenging, because each cell has three possible exits, each to a different neighbouring cells. In Appendix A two diagrams are provided to assist.

In the first (“Schematic Map”), the links from each cell to neighbouring cells are shown relative to the direction in which players might choose to exit a cell. This map can be used when determining what cell comes next when the party decides which of a cell’s three misty walls they will use to exit the cell.

In the second (“Level-Based Map”), the cell layout is simplified into a series of levels. In a standard game, the players arrive at level 1 and save Philogena (cell 1), collect one orb from a cell in each of levels 2 to 5, and then finish in level 6 where they battle the Entity’s colleagues (cell 20). This map can be used to track overall progress.

Once the players work out that the Crucible is shaped like a twenty-sided die, and if they keep track of the cell number marked on the central platform, they will find it much easier to head from cell 1 to cell 20 by the most direct route. The optional clues from the players’ dreams are designed to facilitate that realisation. The player who first deduces the nature of the Crucible might even earn themselves an inspiration die...



CHAPTER 3: CELLS 1 TO 19

LEVEL 1

The only cell at level 1 of the Level-Based Map is cell 1, the players’ point of arrival. There the players must free Philogena, who is responsible for much of the exposition from there on.

CELL 1

The elf in the description below is the Entity, posing as Askelon’s mother Philogena. If other parts of the Instruments of Fate are unlikely to be played, the alternative NPC from the players’ dreams can be described instead.

While the flash of light clears, the party finds itself standing in the centre of a square, stone platform 25 feet across and one foot high. In the exact centre of the platform is a circular plate, two feet across, with what looks like a minus sign on it.

Surrounding the platform and stretching out in all directions is a featureless grassy plain, bounded by what appear to be three walls of thick mist form an equilateral triangle centred around the platform. At its closest, the wall of mist is about 300 feet away, and overall the whole triangle looks to be over 1000 feet a side. A small sun blazes overhead, close enough that its heat can be felt, providing light to the area.

Not far away a female elf is bound by ropes to a large stake driven into the ground. She is being interrogated by three humanoid males. Each one is relatively tall and slender, but they look lithe and muscular. They have long, pointed ears like an elf, but flattened noses set high on their faces, and dappled markings across their faces and shoulders. They have green skin, red hair braided in elaborate plaits and are wearing colourful armour that clashes with their skin and hair.

The woman is the Entity posing as Philogena; neither of those characters is known to the party at this stage. The three humanoids are **githyanki warriors** who have been sent to the Crucible to investigate disturbances caused by the Entity's experiments with the misty walls and *gravity orbs*.

One of the githyanki will notice the party, and say (in Common): "Hey, they told us no new intakes until we sorted this out!" The interrogator (and presumably the leader), says something in Gith and gestures for the other two to attack the party, before pulling out a *Gith Sending Stone* to start a conversation; this is similar to a regular *Sending Stone* (DMG, p 199) but allows constant use.

Boring conversation anyway. The leader will continue communicating via the *Gith Sending Stone* and observing the fight until he is attacked, or one of the githyanki falls.

Quickened spells. If the quickened spell mechanic of the Astral Plane is in operation, enemy spellcasters also receive the benefit.

TREASURE

One of the githyanki is carrying a strange, *forked metal rod* that is warm to the touch (see Appendix C); Philogena will take this if no player wants it. The *Gith Sending Stone* used by the githyanki leader is useless without its partner, although if a player picks it up they will receive a torrent of abuse, at first in Gith and then in Common, from the holder of the other stone.

DEVELOPMENT

Once the Githyanki are killed, the human prisoner in tattered grey robes will free herself, search the githyanki bodies for anything useful and then approach the party and thank them. She will explain the following:

- her name is Philogena;
- they are in the Astral Plane, and the creatures they defeated are githyanki, a warrior race that inhabits the Astral Plane;
- the party is standing in a place known as the Crucible, a large enclosed prison, zoo

and insane asylum rolled into one and into which its creators, the githyanki, dump all manner of dangerous creatures, political prisoners, and other undesirables;

- the Crucible also seems to serve as a testing ground for young githyanki wanting to test their mettle in a material environment;
- she was tricked into entering the Crucible by an adversary she calls the Entity, who was posing as her son, Askelon;
- she has met other adventurers from the Material Plane who have been tricked in a similar manner, with the Entity posing as valued companions or loved ones;
- as far as she knows, the Entity also is a prisoner in the Crucible;
- the githyanki come and go, and have some means of exiting that is unknown to her;
- the only sure way to exit (permanently) is to die, although she believes that she has found another way – but it will require the assistance of the party.

THE OTHER WAY

Should the party be willing to help, Philogena will explain that the Crucible consists of triangular cells facing a central, captive sun. She is unsure of how many cells there are, as their features change from time to time. She believes that they are numbered in some fashion, but not in any language known to her.

In any event, each cell has an artificial gravity that keeps inmates on the "ground" and stops them floating into the sun. The gravity is generated by a *gravity orb* embedded under the circular plates in the middle of each central platform. Philogena believes that if five such orbs are taken to the weakest part of the prison, they could be used as a focus to strengthen a modified Teleport spell to the point that she will be able to transport them back to the Material Plane.

The party must hurry, though; the githyanki are aware that something is going on in the Crucible, and will no doubt take lethal measures to prevent any escape.



MOVING ON

Philogena is keen to get moving before githyanki reinforcements arrive. She will begin extracting the orb from Cell 1, with a small pick that stonemasons or dwarves will recognise as an archaeologist's pick. As she does so, she will tell the party there is an important matter she forgot: once she takes out an orb, the artificial gravity will start to fail, and the party will need to get to an adjoining cell via one of the three walls of mist quickly, or risk "falling" into the sun (see the "Gravity Orb" entry in the section on the Crucible in Chapter 1).

As the players enter the mist, Philogena will explain that ordinarily these serve as barriers to prevent movement between the cells, but she has worked out how to move through them successfully (see the "Misty Wall" entry in the section on the Crucible in Chapter 1)

ROLEPLAYING PHILOGENA

Unbeknownst to the party, "Philogena" is the Entity. The Entity plays its part to perfection, and the subterfuge cannot be detected by the players before it is revealed in Cell 20. In the meantime, Philogena will act exactly as would an adventurous middle aged elf determined to escape the Crucible.

Traumatized by her interrogation, Philogena will not take any active part in combat, instead focusing on obtaining and protecting the fragile *gravity orbs*. If desired, she can provide information about the dangers in the Crucible.

If asked, Philogena can also reveal the following information:

- the basic properties of the Astral Plane, such as the absence of a need to eat or sleep, or natural healing;
- she is unsure how long she had been in the Crucible (since time does not pass there), but can put the date that she left the Material Plane as a date four years earlier;
- she has survived this long by forming alliances with the friendlier inmates;
- there is a constant supply of newcomers to the Crucible, who balance out the frequent deaths of the inmates.

LEVEL 2

Cells 7, 13 and 19 are found in level 2 of the Level-Based Map (being the numbers adjacent the 1 on a twenty-sided die). Suggested encounters of CR between 2 and 3 have been provided, but as with all cells in the Crucible (apart from cell 1 and cell 20), the DM is free to adapt or swap the content of cells.

CELL 7 (VII)

This cell is dry and sandy, with scrubby patches of long spiky grass. The cell is otherwise featureless, and it is possible to make out the central platform from the mist wall. This cell provides an opportunity to save a NPC (a **flumph**) with a potential link to a later cell, so it may be desirable to swap this cell with Cell 13 or 19 if the party goes that way.

When the players get within 60 feet of the central platform, the following description can be read out:

Strange whoosing sounds can be heard from the other side of the platform, and two strange jellyfish-like creatures with a pulsing red and yellow aura come into view. They are being pursued by a large pack of what look like black, eyeless panthers nipping at their heels (tendrils?). What is strangest about the sight is that neither the jellyfish-like creatures nor the panthers make any sound at all, apart from the gentle whoosh of air as the jellyfish propel themselves.

The tendrils of a jellyfish creature get tangled, and eight panthers surround it. The panthers do not seem to attack, but merely stand still. Nevertheless, the creature's aura changes from red to yellow then blue, becoming darker and darker.

The other creature makes it as far as the centre of the platform before it too trips. More panthers surround it. The party picks up telepathic waves of terror and pleas for help, presumably emanating from the creature.

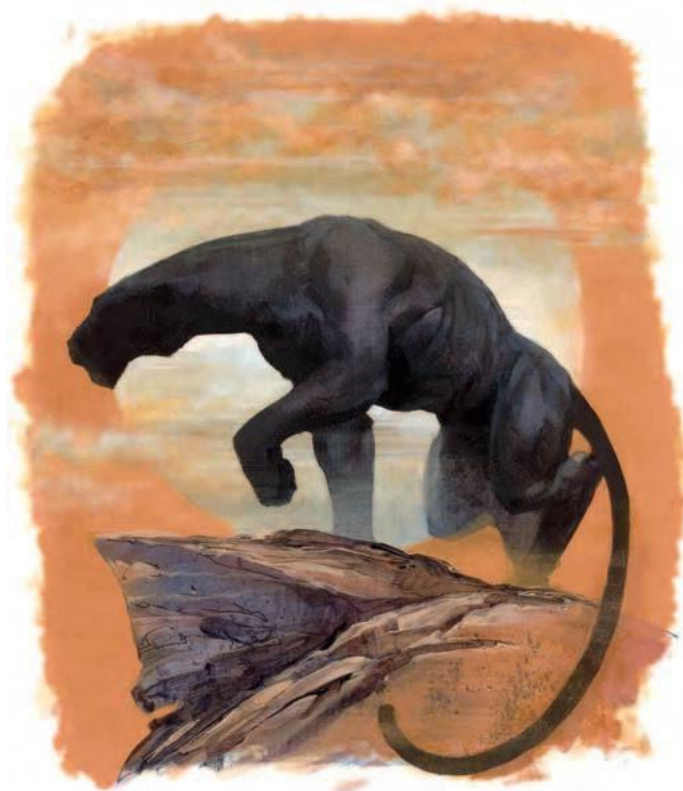
The jellyfish-like creatures are **flumphs**, and are completely helpless. The panther creatures are **psythers**, telepathic scavengers that feed off the emotions of the dying creatures that are in plentiful supply in the Crucible. Even though they do not need to eat in the Astral

Plane, psythers take pleasure simply from hunting down and debilitating their prey.

Natural born cowards. Psythers will run rather than fight if they can, but if undisturbed will stay on the central platform slowly draining the life of the unfortunate flumph. They will engage the players if they try to intervene, but after a few die the rest will attempt to use their Fade Away ability on the nearest threat so as to make a quick getaway.

Can we keep it? The party will be too late to save the more distant of the two flumphs, but the flumph on the platform will be unharmed by the psythers if the players try to save it. If they succeed, the flumph will generate waves of gratitude and begin glowing pink. It happily will accompany the party, gravitating towards the player that most obviously saved it, or the player whose thoughts are purest.

The flumph will be too traumatised to do anything other than exude happy feelings in any subsequent combat. Also note that the flumph can be used as a thrall of the **mind flayers** in Cells 8 and 14.



CELL 13 (XIII)

A forest grows in this cell, restricting visibility. Claw marks shred the bark on trees here and there, giving some hint as to the creature (or creatures) that might be imprisoned here.

This cell is home to an **owlbear**, a large creature that resembles a cross between a giant owl and a bear. It is normally unaligned, although its stay in the Crucible has taught it to be extremely distrustful of strangers (in other words, everyone). It has become fiercely territorial, and will lie in wait near the central platform ready to attack the first player to come near it. Even if a player manages to “tame” the owlbear (Animal Handling, DC 19), the owlbear will refuse to leave the confines of the cell it has come to call home.

CELL 19 (XIX)

This cell contains a sandy landscape, with scatterings of large rocks here and there. It otherwise appears to be featureless, although the ground is pocked with small holes leading to what could be tunnels big enough to fit a small humanoid.

There is indeed a small tunnel system just below the surface in this cell. As the party nears the central platform, the rocks will become more frequent and pile together forming small caves here and there. A number of such caves, accessible via the tunnel system, overlook the central platform.

Inside the caves is a **neogi** (or more than one, if desired), a small spider-like creature with a long neck. The neogi will not attack the party, but instead will move between the caves overlooking the platform in an attempt to get line of sight of a target within 30 feet and use its Enslave ability. If a player becomes enslaved, the neogi will command the target to stay put and serve as its protector for the duration. The target also will be commanded not to communicate with the other players.

Note that the neogi’s poison will not apply in the Crucible, due to the timeless nature of the Astral Plane.



LEVEL 3

Cells 3, 5, 9, 11, 15, and 17 are the most likely third destination for the party. Transition between some of those cells also is possible, but not efficient. Suggested environments and encounters of CR between 4 and 5 are set out below, but again the DM is free to adapt the content of each cell.

CELL 3 (III)

This cell is filled with murky, waist-high (or neck-high, for smaller characters) water covered with random bits of flotsam. It is difficult to see much below the surface, although occasional ripples here and there suggest that the cell is occupied by... something.

The aquatic floor of this cell counts as difficult terrain if the players want to wade; otherwise their usual swim speed will apply. Once the *gravity orb* is removed from this cell, upon

exiting the party will hear a loud hiss as the water is vaporised by the captive sun.

This cell is home to a **juvenile aboleth**. The first thing the creature will do is drag a random player underwater for one minute (inflicting no damage) before depositing them on the edge of the submerged central platform. An appropriate dialogue before that happens might look like:

- Player 1: "I've got a bad feeling about this."
- Player 2: "There's something alive in here!"
- Player 3: "Something just moved past my leg!"

The juvenile aboleth is experienced enough not to target any elves or half-elves with its Enslave ability. It lacks the underwater disease-causing mucous cloud that fully grown aboleths generate, but its tentacle attacks can still cause a disease that will be particularly inconvenient if not cured by one of the party.

CELL 5 (v) AND CELL 9 (ix)

This cell is filled with clear, waist-high (or neck-high, for smaller characters) water. Semi-submerged trees are dotted about at strange angles, resulting in dappled patches of shade throughout the water. In the distance, crude shelters seem to have been built on the central platform, made out of driftwood and felled logs.

The aquatic floor of these identical cells counts as difficult terrain if the players want to wade; otherwise their usual swim speed will apply. After the *gravity orb* is removed from one of these cells, when exiting the party will hear a loud hiss as the water is vaporised by the sun.

These cells are home to a group of **kuo-toa**, fish-like humanoid creatures who usually dwell in the Underdark. A **kuo-toa**, a **kuo-toa whip** and a **kuo-toa monitor** are lazing in the shelters on the central platform (but not asleep); they will become visible when the party gets closer to the central platform (see Appendix A for a map). Two other kuo-toa are swimming in the water on patrol, keeping to the shadows so that they are difficult to detect (but not impossible: Perception check to notice both patrollers, DC 21). A stealth approach is possible (Stealth, DC 21) but it is more likely that the patrol will detect the party first, and awaken their sleeping fellows.

CELL 11 (xi)

This cell contains a barren, grassy landscape dotted with boulders and large rocks. The corpses of fallen adventurers can be seen here and there. Bizarrely, they have been propped up against boulders or piles of their own weapons, armour and equipment, in poses that look festive and joyful. In many cases, a smile has been painted on their faces in blood. The sound of laughter and singing can be heard in this cell towards the central platform, although there is no clear line of sight to the platform due to the large number of rocks and boulders.

As the party approaches the central platform, they will see five creatures singing and dancing in a circle centred around the *gravity orb* cover. Although they are goblins, these particular goblins have been possessed by **nilbogs**.



The nilbogs are almost completely insane but will converse with players that are not openly hostile if they first tell the nilbogs a joke (the more terrible the better). The nilbogs have been here for a while, but may also reveal that their greatest and hated rivals are some **ancient nilbogs** in the neighbouring cell (see Cell 12) who have been there even longer. The nilbogs have gigantic egos and are very responsive to flattery. If the party flatters them enough and acknowledges their superiority to the players in every conceivable way, they may allow them free access to the *gravity orb*. They will be less accommodating once the orb is removed and the gravity starts to fail, of course, so a quick getaway is advisable.

In combat, a nilbog will use its Reversal of Fortune action the first time it takes damage in each round (although subsequent damage in that round may well kill it). If a nilbog is killed, its goblin host will attempt to run away rather than fight.

CELL 15 (XV)

This cell evidently has been contoured, because gentle hills rise and fall in each direction. The central platform is obscured by the hills, but the terrain appears to be easy enough to traverse.

This cell has only one occupant: an **ettin** called Bor'Dum. Bor'Dum is perfectly happy staying in his cell, because of the regular supply of things for him to kill. Since neither head can sleep in the Astral Plane, however, Bor'Dum's two heads are constantly awake at the same time and are thoroughly sick of each other's company.

Hills surround the central platform on all four sides. Set into one of the hills, and affording a view of the platform, is a cave that Bor'Dum has made for himself out of his victims' bones and one mammoth skull. As the party approaches the central platform, they will hear coming from this cave the sound of Bor'Dum's heads arguing (although until

the ettin is in sight, this will be presumed to be an argument between two creatures).

Bor'Dum has learnt to be very suspicious of strangers and tends to attack first and ask questions later. Unless he is hailed first, he will charge out of his cave and attack any creature that sets foot on the central platform.

Bor'Dum is willing, however, to chat to the players to relieve the boredom of the Crucible. If the conversation goes well Bor'Dum will be extremely disappointed at any suggestion that the players intend to leave. If this happens he will attack, and try to incapacitate the players with a view to keeping them as his permanent guests.



CELL 17 (XVII)

The cell contains a dry, temperate forest environment. The trees are not densely packed, and paths wind here and there. Dotted throughout the forest are humanoid statues, most of them missing heads and limbs. Their poses suggest that they were not originally statues, unless the cell is home to a sculptor with a penchant for statues that look like they are being attacked...

The statues are victims of the **basilisk** that inhabits this cell. They do not have any equipment or treasure that has not also been petrified, although one or two may well have dropped a mirror or reflective shield before they died.

Some distance on, the party will enter a clearing with an unusual scene:

In the centre of the clearing is the corpse of a blue creature with eight legs and fearsome spikes; seasoned players will recognise it as a basilisk. A large incision has been made in its side, affording a view of internal organs.

Across the clearing a fallen log has been made into a makeshift table, on which sits glass beakers and a mortar and pestle. A statue of what appears to be a figure in robes bends over the equipment; behind it stands the remains of a statue of a warrior in plate armour. It is difficult to discern the circumstances of their death as both heads are missing.

The statues are of an unfortunate pair of adventurers who managed to slay the fallen basilisk, only to be surprised by its mate while in the process of distilling a flask of *oil of depetrification* from the basilisk's innards using the *alchemist's supplies* set up on the log. The only remaining step was to heat the contents of one of the beakers with a small fire. Any alchemist in the party will be able to deduce what the equipment was being used for, and complete the process. Otherwise players will need to make a successful Arcana check (DC 14) to do so. The cell also can be used as an opportunity to pick up an NPC, if desired, using the flask of *oil of depetrification*.

The remaining **basilisk** lies in wait nearer the central platform; it has learnt that strangers will try to harm it and its basic instinct is to attack any creature it sees.

LEVEL 4

Cells 4, 6, 10, 12, 16, and 18 are the most efficient locations from which the party can collect its fourth *gravity orb*. Again, transition between some of those cells is possible, but will prolong the journey to cell 20. These cells are designed to be more puzzle-based (but may still involve combat). As ever, the DM is free to adapt or swap around the content of each cell.

CELL 4 (III)

This cell is filled with a swampland. Much of the swamp seems to be ankle-deep, but darker patches of murky water indicate channels of deeper water. Moss-strewn, twisted trees grow everywhere, reducing visibility. Strips of relatively dry land snake throughout the area. As the party enters the cell, the sound of croaking frogs can be heard: a rare innocuous sound of smaller living creatures.

The croaking of frogs is the sound of frog-like humanoids called **bullywugs** communicating the fact of the party's arrival. The bullywugs will track the party's progress towards the central platform via channels of deeper water (and have advantage on any necessary Stealth checks required to do so).

When the players arrive at the central platform, they will discover that most of the platform is bordered by deep water, with only a 5 foot wide strip leading up to it at the front and back. The platform appears to be deserted.

When a player steps onto the platform, however, ten **bullywugs** will emerge from the deeper water and step on to the edges of the platform. Each bullywug wears a gold coin on a leather thong around its neck, save for the bullywug furthest from the party: it has two gold coins, and is wearing a crudely-fashioned wooden crown. The bullywug with two gold coins and a crown gurgles something in Bullywug. Another bullywug standing next to

him translates in very poor Common:

“Strangers! Give all your golds and shinies things to King!” The “King” and the remaining bullywugs all then turn their attention to the party, evidently awaiting a response.

The Common-speaking bullywug is proud that she is the only bullywug able to speak anything but Bullywug, and is amenable to having a conversation with the players. She will introduce herself as Gurrugula. The “King” will not tolerate a very long conversation with Gurrugula, however. If the players are sufficiently nice to Gurrugula (Persuasion check, DC 14) she may reveal that:

- the bullywugs love gold and shiny things;
- the other bullywugs think the “King” is an arrogant toad, but need a leader to unite them and he’s the best option;
- the “King” got to be king because he has managed to obtain two gold coins, compared with everybody else’s one;
- the “King” is otherwise no different to any other of the bullywugs there;
- the bullywugs will let the party pass through if they give up their gold and anything made of shiny metal (excluding weapons and armour, which just weigh the bullywugs down in their swamp).

The party can try to shift the balance of power among the bullywugs by giving one or more of the other bullywugs a second gold piece; this will lead to some confusion and debate, which can be fanned into fighting between the candidate bullywugs and the “King” with some encouragement using Gurrugula to translate. The bullywugs also can be distracted by a player throwing gold pieces into the nearby swamp; the bullywugs (including the “King” and Gurrugula) will dive after them and fight one another in their haste to gather more gold.

Killing the “King” will lead to a temporary moment of confusion among the bullywug as they consider who should now lead them, but unless they can be encouraged to pursue that discussion (Persuasion, DC 18) they will unite in combat against the party first.

TREASURE

Despite their tendency to demand that any strangers surrender their valuables, the bullywugs have not accumulated much wealth. They can be stripped of their gold piece necklaces, of course, for a total of 11 gold pieces. The *crown of the bullywugs* worn by the “King” also can be taken; it is a magical item that, if placed on a player’s head, will bestow a curse of avarice upon them (see Appendix C).

CELL 6 (VI)

The base of this cell appears to be some sort of polished metal, although much of the ground is obscured by patches of sand. Twelve foot tall metal pylons topped with shining metal spheres rise up out of the ground at even intervals of 60 feet in all directions, forming a network of equilateral triangles throughout the cell. Their purpose is not apparent. There does not otherwise appear to be anything in this cell other than the central platform.

There are no creatures in this cell. Instead, the metal pylons pose the greatest threat. The pylons will discharge electricity at anything that makes a noise above a whisper within 60 feet of the pylon, inflicting 1d4 lightning damage (or 2d4 lightning damage if the target is wearing metal armour or wielding a sword, pike or other metal weapon). If the target is within the range of multiple pylons, however, only one will discharge electricity.

The metal pylons are positioned such that all points within the cell are within range of at least one pylon. Due to the arrangement of pylons at the corners of a network of tessellating equilateral triangles, each pylon is within the range of at least one six other pylons, except for those on the edges of the cell.

The party will need to make its way to the middle and out again as quietly as possible. Players wearing metal boots will need to keep

to the patches of sand, since walking on the metal surface of the cell will generate noise.

An individual pylon can be destroyed by 20 points of physical or acid damage; they are immune to fire, cold, lightning, psychic and poison damage. Any melee attack on a pylon will be noisy enough to prompt a discharge from a neighbouring pylon. A player who uses a ranged attack will not be attacked by a pylon; instead the relevant projectile will be targeted, after it hits a pylon.

CELL 10 (X)

This cell contains nothing but a blank expanse of sand. In the distance, some objects can be seen near the central platform, but their nature cannot be discerned at this distance.

When the party nears the central platform, they will see four tall stone obelisks rising from the sand, set at the corners of a 45 foot square with the central platform at its middle. Each obelisk is 15 feet tall and is made of a dark blue, indestructible crystalline material.

The obelisks each bear strange carvings of interlocking rings. These evidently are written in the Gith language, because a translation of sorts has been scratched into each obelisk below the carvings in a variety of languages (including at least one known by a party member). These have been left there by previous inmates of the Crucible.

Each obelisk has a different message, the four messages being:

- “Five must stand”
- “One in a row”
- “One for each column”
- “Only one in any diagonal”

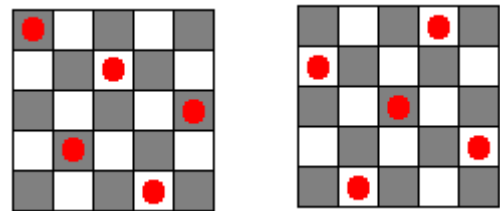
The central platform also is slightly different: it bears a black and white chequered design with each square being 5 feet to a side (see Appendix A).

When any character (including Philogena) sets foot on the central platform, an invisible and impenetrable wall of force will spring into being between the obelisks and above the

platform, trapping any character located within that space. The walls of the trap cannot be destroyed, and characters cannot exit the trap via magical means (like *Misty Step*). The messages on the obelisks remain visible to those inside the trap.

To deactivate the trap, five creatures must stand on the central platform in a way that does not infringe the rules written on the obelisks. If less than five characters are within the trap when it activates, then enough duplicates of the players (or Philogena) will materialise to bring the total number of trapped characters to five. The duplicates have no will of their own and cannot communicate with the party in any way, but will follow instructions to stand at specified locations on the platform. Once the trap is deactivated, the duplicates vanish.

There are two possible solutions (together with rotations and reflections of the diagrams below):



The trap does not reactivate if characters step on and off the platform, or when Philogena removes the *gravity orb*.

CELL 12 (XII)

This is a heavily forested cell, with a number of well-worn paths that lead towards the middle. The corpses of adventurers and monsters (some of which are very fearsome) lie dotted about.

If the corpses are examined, players will discover that the creatures all appear to have died from scores of tiny wounds, as would be caused by a small dagger. Anything useful carried by the dead adventurers has long been removed, although strangely some of the corpses will still have on them *Potions of*

Healing (since these are harmful to the two **ancient nilbogs** that inhabit this cell). Due to the timelessness of the Astral Plane, it is impossible to discern just how long the corpses have been there.

It is relatively easy for the party to approach the central platform by stealth, due to the cover afforded by the trees. Not far from the platform, the party will hear the sounds of laughter. The laughter is coming from the cell's inhabitants, two **ancient nilbogs**. They are indistinguishable from goblins (regardless of any ability check made by a player to discern their true nature).

As the party approaches the platform, the following description can be read aloud:

Two goblins stand at opposite corners of the central platform, laughing and telling crude jokes. Next to one there is the corpse of what appears to be a huge barbarian. As the party watches, the goblin rifles through the barbarian's pack, and pulls out a potion of some sort. The goblin takes a swig, but spits it out in disgust before throwing it aside. The other goblin laughs at its companion derisively; there is no disguising the crazy in that laugh...

The party can attempt to speak with the **ancient nilbogs** (who for all intents and purposes look like ordinary goblins), but they are well and truly insane. They will describe themselves as the (self-proclaimed) "Kings of the Crucible" and will hurl insults at the party members in conversation and throughout combat. They will not follow any instructions to move from the platform, which poses some challenge for the party due to the creatures' Confusion aura. They also will attack anyone that attempts to move onto the platform.

The **ancient nilbogs** are quite different from the new-fangled **nilbogs** in Cell 11. The ancient nilbogs can only be harmed by healing spells; conventional damage simply heals them (up to their hit point maximum). In combat, the **ancient nilbogs** will try to disguise this

fact by dancing around madly and taunting their attackers with insults like "missed, fathead!" Perception checks can be made (DC 12) to detect whether an attack hit; on a high success (DC 18) the player will notice that the ancient nilbogs' wounds instantly heal.

The discarded potion is a *Potion of Healing*. A player that chooses to investigate the potion will readily discover this fact.

If injured by a healing spell, an ancient nilbog may well use its attack to harm itself and try to recover hit points that way.

CELL 16 (XVI)

Upon entering this cell, the party is struck by a wave of heat. The source of the heat is obvious: the base of the cell appears to be covered in molten lava of unknown depth. The perimeter of the cell is comprised of a narrow, five foot wide shelf of blackened, hardened magma. Between that and the central platform are chunks of the same, black rock, forming islands of varying sizes.

The islands are connected to the base of the cell; the lava flows around them. They represent a means of getting Philogena to the central platform. Generally speaking, the islands are separated by 10 foot gaps and the largest of the islands is 80 feet across. The party will need to pass across five of the largest islands to get to the central platform, and another five to exit the cell. Appendix A includes an example map extract for this cell.

The lava field is inhabited by a large number of **magmins**, mischievous fire elementals contained within a black shell of magma. Whoever summoned them is long gone; their only goal is to burn everything they can.

Every time an island is visited for the first time, a mischievous **magmin** will appear at one edge and begin climbing onto the island. It will then move towards and attack the nearest player in its quest to burn anything it can. Another magmin will appear for each

round that there is a player on the island. The goal in this cell is for the party to get to the central platform and then make a hasty exit before the players are overwhelmed by magmins. Individually magmins are not much of a threat, but in groups they can become more dangerous, especially due to their Death Burst.

If the party all travel together by jumping onto the same island, then any character with Dexterity of 13 or less will need to make a Dexterity check (Acrobatics or Athletics, DC 10) to maintain their footing on the rocking island; on a failed check, they fall prone and on their turn will need to spend half of their movement standing up. If the party splits up between two or more different islands, no check is necessary – but the number of magmins will be greater since more islands are being visited.

Philogena will need one clear round on the central platform to remove the *gravity orb*.

CELL 18 (XVIII)

This cell is filled with clear, cold water. Some of it is frozen over in strips that are between 5 and 10 feet wide. In other places chunks of ice of varying sizes bob in the water. In the distance, the central platform is visible. No solid path is visible that leads all the way to the centre.

There are no creatures in this cell. Instead, the environment itself poses the greatest hazard: the water is so biting cold that any player who falls into it takes 1d4 cold damage per turn.

The strips of frozen terrain are thick enough to support the players' weight if they move in single file. The strips do not, however, extend all the way to the central platform. The platform can be reached in a variety of ways. Most likely, the party (including Philogena) must cross at least three of the larger chunks of ice or brave the icy waters to get to the platform, and another two chunks when departing the cell.

Flying to the platform. Players with the ability to fly or levitate are free to fly the 300 feet between the edge of the cell and the central platform.

Swimming to the platform. If a player wishes to simply swim to the platform, they must cover a total of 150 feet getting there (and take, for example, 5d4 cold damage if they are a character with a swim speed of 30 feet) and another 150 feet to exit the cell. This may be a viable option for characters who are immune, or resistant, to cold damage.

Balancing act. An alternative is to cross the floating chunks of ice. At least three crossings are required to get to the central platform, and another two to get out of the cell. Each chunk of ice has the following properties:

- it is separated from the frozen paths by 5 feet of bitterly cold water;
- its surface is slippery and is treated as difficult terrain unless a player has experience with walking on frozen surfaces, is carrying a javelin, spear or similar long, pointed object, or is wearing spiked boots;
- it is not fixed to the base of the cell, and will tilt if weight placed on it is not evenly balanced around its central point;
- a significant amount of unbalanced weight will cause the ice chunk to tilt at a very sharp angle, such that any unsecured players standing on it will slide into the water;
- when a chunk of ice is tilted, each foot of movement costs an extra foot if a player wishes to move upwards; conversely, moving downwards is much easier, and a player can move at their normal movement speed if moving in that direction;
- stationary objects, including players, on a tilted chunk of ice will move downwards at a rate of 20 feet per round;
- removing weight that is causing the ice to tilt, or counterbalancing the weight with roughly equivalent weight on the opposite side of the chunk, will right the surface;

- a player who builds up momentum can run and jump from the edge of the ice chunk at their normal movement speed, but upon landing will slide a further 15 ft on the surface on which the player lands, in the direction of travel.

The players should be required to traverse three large (at least 50 foot across) ice chunks to get to the central platform. For an additional challenge, two such chunks can be placed in a row as part of the path to the platform. If the players prove adept at navigating the ice chunks it may be appropriate to not require that they repeat the process for the two ice chunks required to be crossed on the way out of the cell.

LEVEL 5

Each of the three cells on this level contains a single (tough) creature, but also offers the possibility of avoiding combat. Cells 8 and 14 both contain a **mind flayer**: in the githyanki culture, young warriors are not recognised as adults until they have slain an illithid. Those cells are particularly interesting if the party has collected a **flumph** (See Level 1, Cell 7) or other NPC along the way. Cell 2 contains a **young green dragon** that will seize any opportunity to escape from the Crucible.

CELL 2 (II)

This cell is filled with a small forest; tall trees stretch up towards the distant sun. Dotted throughout the forest are corpses or unfortunate inmates and adventurers. The timelessness of the Astral Plane makes it impossible to determine how long they have been here, but they all bear numerous bite and claw marks. Of their attacker (or attackers) there is no sign.

Further investigation of the area (Investigation check, DC 15) will lead the players to discover claw marks and the occasional body part higher up among the trees, and that some of

the dead creatures appear to have died from falling damage.

A **young green dragon** patrols the forest canopy in this cell. It will be watching the party, although due its familiarity with the environment and effective camouflage it will be difficult to spot (Perception check, DC 22).

When the party approaches the central platform, the dragon will reveal itself by landing on the platform. Although traditionally the sort of creature that attacks interlopers without thought, this particular dragon has grown weary from its confinement. The merest hint of the possibility of escape will be enough to interest the dragon in entering discussions with the party rather than (or at least before) it attacks. The dragon will be amenable to accompanying the party to the final cell and will even promise to help them. If this occurs, however, in the final fight (see Chapter 4) the dragon merely will sit back and watch the combat with the intention of picking off the victors before making its escape.

Optional: the dragon will be well aware that its Poison Breath attack is ineffective on the Astral Plane, so in combat it exclusively relies on its Bite and Claw attacks.



CELL 8 (VIII) AND CELL 14 (XIV)

This Cell resembles a war zone. It is a concrete and cement expanse, with the remnants of walls dotted about. The walls are covered with graffiti in an unknown language, presumably Gith. From the edge of the cell it appears that the central platform was fully enclosed by a wall at some point, and much of that wall seems to be intact.

Philogena will tell the party that although her command of the Gith language is weak, the graffiti seems largely to consist of boasts and crude insults.

If the party has picked up an NPC like the **flumph** in Cell 7, their companion will begin to act differently as the players approach the central platform. For example, the flumph will begin pulsing with pink light and transmitting flashes of joy to the other party members. This is because the NPC is a thrall of the **mind flayer** imprisoned in this cell, and will impart to its master (telepathically) all key details of the party, including who is carrying the *forked metal rod*.

The mind flayer stands in the middle of the central platform; due to the ruined walls, it will be visible only when the party is relatively close. The mind flayer will not necessarily attack, but will wait for the party to decide what to do.

A successful Perception check (DC 8) will reveal that in all likelihood the mind flayer is as much a prisoner as the party members; moderate success on the check (DC 12) also will reveal that the taunting graffiti probably was directed at it; and high success on the check (DC 17) will have the player realise that in the Astral plane there is no need to eat, so the mind flayer's usual imperative to stun and kill (that is, to eat brains) is probably not high on its agenda.

Unless a player happens to speak Deep Speech or Undercommon, the mind flayer will

communicate telepathically. Its sole desire is to escape the Crucible. Normally it could cast Plane Shift without components, but wards in the Crucible prevent it from doing so. If aided by a githyanki magical component (specifically, the *forked metal rod*), however, then it can escape by casting Plane Shift. If the party has an NPC with it, the mind flayer will know who is carrying the rod and will only communicate with that person (including Philogena, if she is the one carrying it). Otherwise, it will seek out that information first.

Any communication from the mind flayer will be laced with menace. It will make it clear that it considers the players to be beneath it, and lucky that it has not killed them where they stand. If the *forked metal rod* is handed to the mind flayer, it will cast Plane Shift and leave without any expression of gratitude.

If the party engages the mind flayer, its primary strategy will be to use its Mind Blast ability whenever available, targeting the character carrying the rod, and then attempt to retrieve the rod from the stunned target to allow it to cast Plane Shift.



CHAPTER 4: FINALE

The denouement takes place in Cell 20. It is here that “Philogena” is revealed to be the Entity, and the party part of its plan to escape.

CELL 20 (XX)

As the party enters it, “Philogena” will announce offhandedly that she recognises the Cell as being the location of the weak point in the Crucible, and will thank the party for their efforts. The Cell is otherwise a featureless grassy plain, similar to Cell 1. The central platform is visible 300 feet away, and several objects can be seen on it.

Before the party can react, “Philogena” will cast Dimension Door, such that she vanishes and reappears on the central platform. It is at this point that the party may sense that something is awry.

CENTRAL PLATFORM

As the party approaches the central platform, they will be able to see that five stands have been placed on it, at the points of a pentagram etched onto the ground. Each stand appears to be designed to hold a small spherical object: a *gravity orb*. Weird circles and sigils also have been drawn on the ground (see Appendix A).

On a crude stool in the middle of a pentagram there sits a bound prisoner in tattered grey robes, head slumped forward and obviously unconscious. The party will recognise her immediately: it is (the real) Philogena. She is there because the Entity’s modified Teleport spell requires an anchor to the Material Plane.

Nearby, and still in the form of Philogena, the Entity is busy inspecting the set up of the stands. It will ignore the party, safe in the knowledge that the Wall of Force it has cast will protect it from being disturbed long enough to ready the orbs and complete the ritual to create an escape portal. The players will get the distinct sense that they need to act quickly...

FINAL BATTLE

When the party gets within 30 feet of the central platform, the Entity will say, “Well done my friends, you have done an excellent job in guarding our departure site. We can’t have these fools tagging along with us for the ride, though. Please dispose of them.”

With that, five previously invisible **githzerai monks** appear, and attack the party while the Entity sets up the orbs on the five stands. The Entity activates one orb for every one or two rounds of combat, depending on the desired duration of the final fight. Certain events occur as the fight progresses.

After three orbs are placed. Once three orbs are in position, two humanoids wearing half plate will appear. They are **githyanki gish**, come to investigate the events in the Crucible. They take one look at the scene and demand to know what is going on, clearly outraged that the participants are have been interfering with the workings of the Crucible. One will say, “We have felt the disturbances in the force...of gravity that binds the prisoners to the Cells!”

The gish will notice the githzerai, and waste no time in engaging them (“Githzerai scum!”), believing them to be the primary culprits. For their part, the githzerai will break off from the party and attack the githyanki gish, as the two subraces hate each other with a passion. Githzerai and githyanki alike will use Misty Step to move as close as possible to their enemies.

Particularly perceptive players (Perception, DC 18) might also notice that the real Philogena is stirring a little...

After five orbs are placed. Once all five orbs are placed, the Entity will move into the centre of the pentagram and start casting a spell.

At the same time, the real Philogena will leap to her feet, evidently having untied her bindings while pretending to be unconscious. She will tackle the Entity while also casting Disintegrate on the Wall of Force, removing the barrier between the party and the platform.



Taken by surprise, the Entity is grappled by Philogena and the two of them roll clear of the platform just as a portal appears in its centre. Philogena yells out to the players: “I don’t know who you are strangers, but I assume you were duped into coming here. Get yourselves into the centre NOW, and focus in your mind on whoever it was you thought you were coming here for – it is the only way to escape. Hurry – you only have a few seconds before the portal closes forever!”

Philogena and the Entity will then wrestle in an untidy heap such that it is impossible to determine which is which.

THERE’S NO PLACE LIKE HOME

The party must stop whatever it is doing and make haste to the portal. They should picture Askelon in their mind and step into the centre of the pentagram. If they do, they will be Teleported back to the Material Plane to wherever Askelon happens to be. Unconscious (or dead) players can be carried through the portal without needing to think about Askelon. The portal will blink out of existence once the final player goes through.

EPILOGUE

The players will appear in front of Askelon, much to his surprise. No time in the Material Plane has passed since the players left through the Engine.

Through the players, Askelon learns the answer to one of the mysteries that plagues him: the location of his mother. But many more questions remain. Where is his father? Why was Philogena in the Astral Plane? Who or what is the Entity? And how can Philogena be rescued?

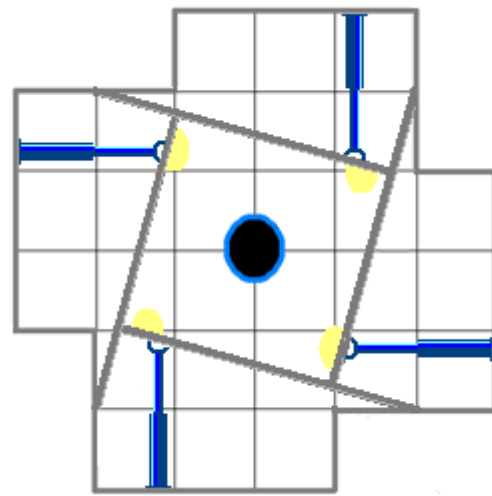
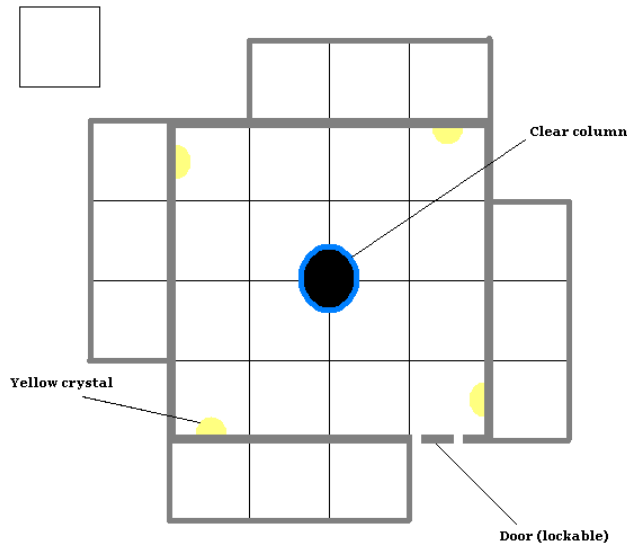
The answers to those questions are found in the subsequent one shot adventures that comprise the Instruments of Fate. In the next episode, *Soul Survivor*, the players learn more about Askelon’s inadvertent deal to trade his soul in exchange for knowledge.

APPENDIX A: MAPS

THE ENGINE

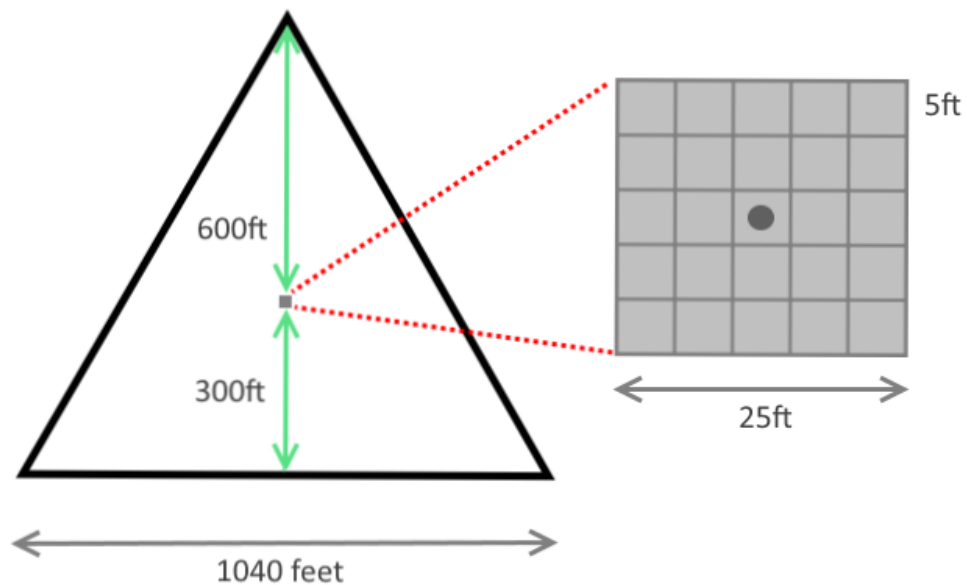
BEFORE ACTIVATION

AFTER ACTIVATION

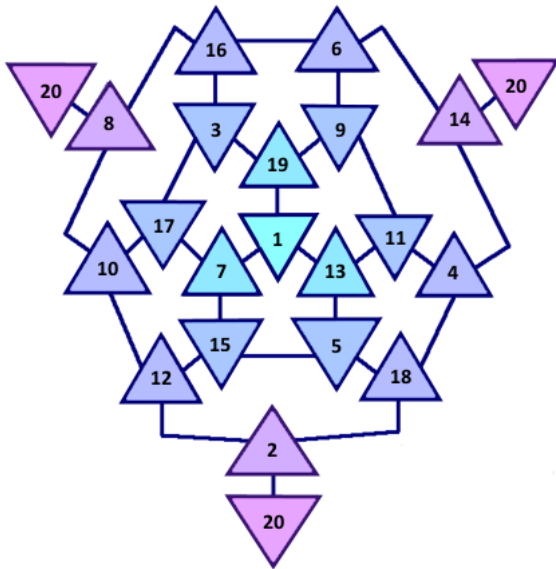


THE CRUCIBLE

GENERAL CELL LAYOUT AND DIMENSIONS



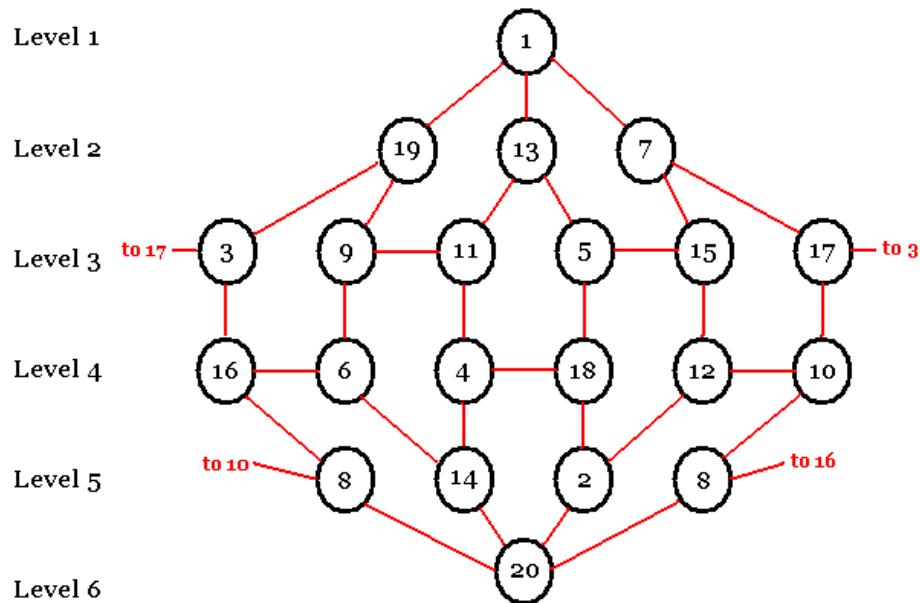
SCHEMATIC MAP



Cell	Contents
1	Philogena, githyanki
2	Young green dragon
3	Juvenile aboleth
4	Bullywugs
5	Kuo-toa
6	Pylons
7	Psythers, flumph
8	Mind flayer
9	Kuo-toa
10	Obelisk trap

Cell	Contents
11	Nilbogs
12	Ancient nilbogs
13	Owlbear
14	Mind flayer
15	Ettin
16	Magmins
17	Basilisk
18	Ice floes
19	Neogi
20	Final battle

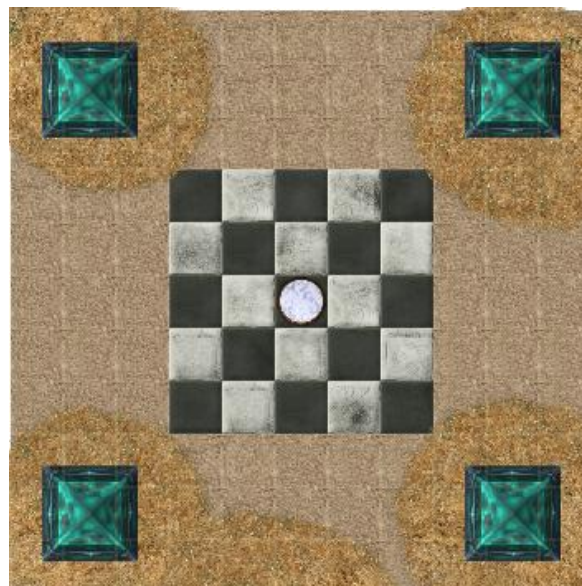
LEVEL-BASED MAP



CELL 5 AND CELL 9 (KUO-TOA – CENTRAL PLATFORM)

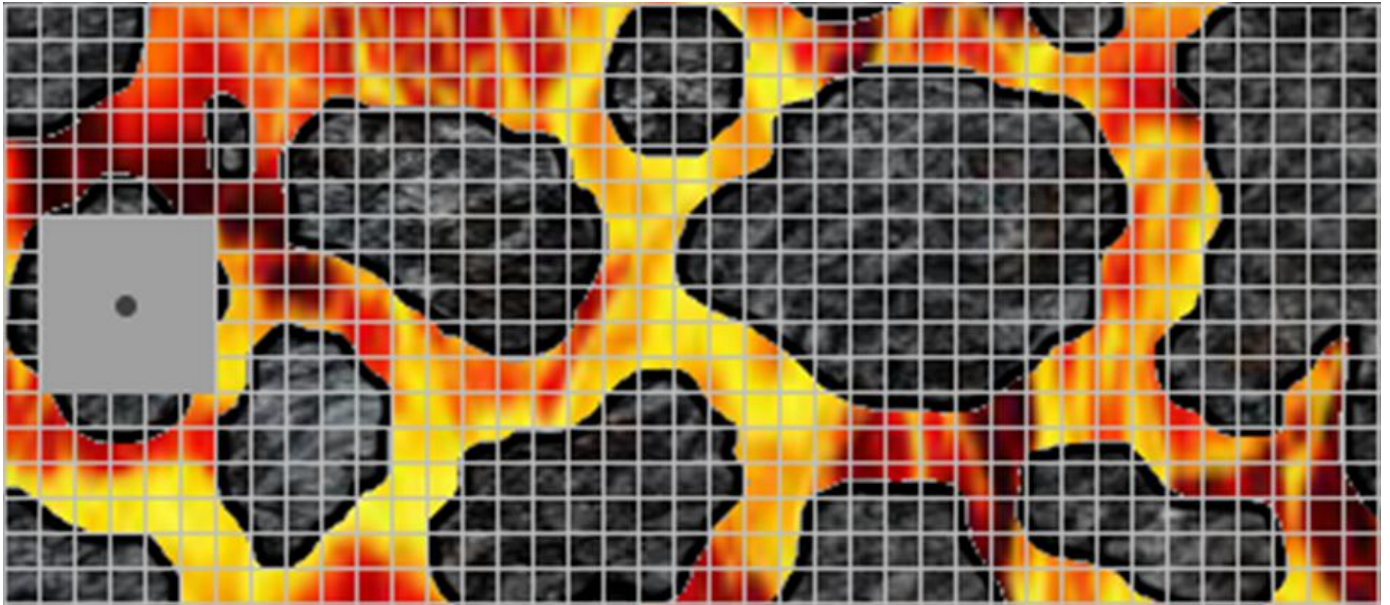


CELL 10 (OBELISK TRAP – CENTRAL PLATFORM)

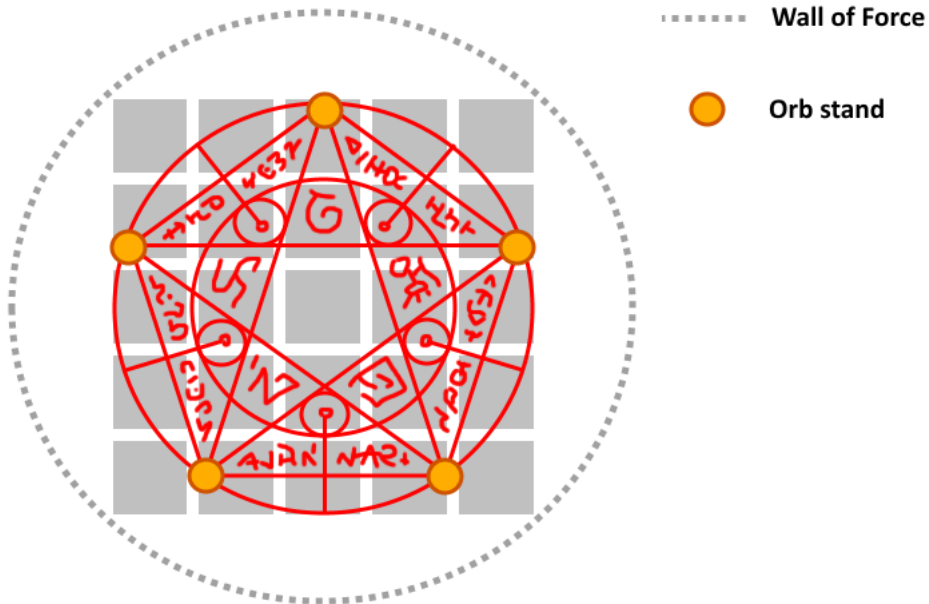


Obelisk

CELL 16 (MAGMIN – CENTRAL PLATFORM APPROACH)



CELL 20 (FINAL BATTLE – CENTRAL PLATFORM)



APPENDIX B: NPCs

ABOLETH, JUVENILE

See entry under “Juvenile Aboleth”

ANCIENT NILBOG

Small humanoid (goblinoid), chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (Leather Armour)
Hit Points 5 (1d8+1) (and up to the same in extra hit points when attacked from Damage Reversal)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11(+1)	13(+2)	12(+1)	10(+0)	9(-1)	6(-3)

Skills Perception +5, Stealth +9
Senses Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 5
Languages Common, Goblin
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Damage Reversal. When struck by any attack that would normally damage the ancient nilbog, it actually gains hit points equal to the damage the attack would have otherwise dealt. An ancient nilbog gains any extra hit points above its normal total as temporary hit points, though it can never have more than twice its normal hit points; excess hit points are simply lost. The ancient nilbog can only be damaged through the use of curative magic and effects (cure light wounds and healing potions, for instance). Curative magic deals damage equal to the amount it would normally heal.

Spatio-temporal Reversal. An ancient nilbog constantly emanates an aura of confusion in a 20-foot-radius. A creature in the area (other than another ancient nilbog) must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw (DC 11) or be affected by confusion. The effect of that confusion is the same as for the *confusion* spell, and the creature must roll on the appropriate table to determine its action on its turn.

ACTIONS

Morningstar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +1 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage.

Javelin (3 carried). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, range 120/200 ft., one target. Hit: 2 (1d4) piercing damage.

BOR'DUM

See entry under “Ettin”

BULLYWUG

Medium humanoid, neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (Hide Armour, Shield)
Hit Points 11 (2d8+2)
Speed 20 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12(+1)	12(+10)	13(+1)	7(-2)	10(+0)	7(-2)

Skills Stealth +3
Senses passive Perception 10
Languages Bullywug
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Amphibious. The bullywug can breathe air and water.

Speak with Frogs and Toads. The bullywug can communicate simple concepts to frogs and toads when it speaks in Bullywug.

Swampy Camouflage. The bullywug has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide in swampy terrain.

Standing Leap. The bullywug's long jump is up to 20 feet and its high jump is up to 10 feet, with or without a running start.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The bullywug makes two melee attacks: one with its bite and one with its spear.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 3 (1d4 + 1) bludgeoning damage.

Spear. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage, or 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

DRAGON, YOUNG GREEN

See entry under “Young Green Dragon”

ETTIN

Large giant, chaotic evil

Armor Class 12 (Natural Armour)
Hit Points 85 (10d10 + 30)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21(+5)	8(-1)	17(+3)	6(-2)	10(+0)	8(-1)

Skills Perception +4
Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 14
Languages Giant, Orc
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Two Heads. The ettin has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks and on saving throws against being blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, stunned, and knocked unconscious.

Wakeful: When one of the ettin's heads is asleep, the other head is awake.

ACTIONS

Multiattack: The ettin makes two attacks: one with its battleaxe and one with its morningstar.

Battleaxe: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 14 (2d8 + 5) slashing damage.

Morningstar: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 14 (2d8) piercing damage.

Note: In Bor'Dum's case, he also speaks Common and the Wakeful trait does not apply in the Astral Plane.

GITHYANKI GISH

Medium humanoid, lawful evil

Armor Class 17 (Half Plate)
Hit Points 123 (19d8 + 38)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17(+3)	15(+2)	14(+2)	16(+3)	15(+2)	16(+3)

Saving Throws Con +6, Int +7, Wis +6
Skills Insight +6, Perception +8, Stealth +6
Senses Passive Perception 16
Languages Gith
Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Innate Spellcasting (Psionics). The githyanki's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

At will: *mage hand* (the hand is invisible)

3/day each: *jump*, *misty step*, *nondetection* (self only)

1/day each: *plane shift*, *telekinesis*

Spellcasting. The githyanki is an 8th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). The githyanki has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *blade ward*, *light*, *message*, *true strike*

1st level (4 slots): *expeditious retreat*, *magic missile*, *sleep*, *thunderwave*

2nd level (3 slots): *blur*, *invisibility*, *levitate*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell*, *fireball*, *haste*

4th level (2 slots): *dimension door*

War Magic. When the githyanki uses its action to cast a spell, it can make one weapon attack as a bonus action.

ACTIONS

Multiattack: The githyanki makes two longsword attacks.

Longsword: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage, or 8 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage if used with two hands, plus 18 (4d8) psychic damage.

Note: these particular githyanki gish also can speak Common.

GITHYANKI WARRIOR

Medium humanoid, lawful evil

Armor Class 17 (Half Plate)
Hit Points 49 (9d8 + 9)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15(+2)	14(+2)	12(+1)	13(+1)	13(+1)	10(+0)

Saving Throws Con +3, Int +3, Wis +3
Senses Passive Perception 11
Languages Gith
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Innate Spellcasting (Psionics). The githyanki's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence. It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

At will: *mage hand* (the hand is invisible)

3/day each: *jump*, *misty step*, *nondetection* (self only)

ACTIONS

Multiattack: The githyanki makes two greatsword attacks.

Greatsword: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 9 (2d6 + 2) slashing damage, plus 7 (2d6) psychic damage.

Note: these particular githyanki warriors also can speak Common.

GITHZERAI MONK

Medium aberration, lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (Psychic Defense)
Hit Points 38 (7d8 + 7)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12(+1)	15(+2)	12(+1)	13(+1)	14(+2)	10(+0)

Saving Throws Str +3, Dex +3, Int +3, Wis +4
Skills Insight +4, Perception +4
Senses Passive Perception 184
Languages Gith
Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Innate Spellcasting (Psionics). The githzerai's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom. It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

At will: *mage hand* (the hand is invisible)

3/day each: *feather fall*, *misty step*, *see invisibility*, *shield*

Psychic Defense. While the githzerai is wearing no armor and wielding no shield, its AC includes its Wisdom modifier.

ACTIONS

Multiattack: The githzerai makes two unarmed strikes.

Unarmed Strike: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage plus 9 (2d8) psychic damage. This is a magic weapon attack.

JUVENILE ABOLETH

Medium aberration, lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (Natural Armour)
Hit Points 100 (10d10 + 45)
Speed 15 ft., swim 35 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17(+3)	9(-1)	15(+2)	18(+4)	15(+2)	17(+3)

Saving Throws Con +5, Int +6, Wis +5
Skills Perception +8
Senses Darkvision 120 ft., Passive Perception 18
Languages Deep Speech, telepathy 120 ft.
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Amphibious. The aboleth can breathe air and water.

Probing Telepathy: If a creature communicates with the aboleth, the aboleth learns the creature's greatest desires if the aboleth can see the creature.

ACTIONS

Multiattack: The juvenile aboleth makes two tentacle attacks or one tentacle and one tail attack.

Tentacle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or become diseased. The disease has no effect for 1 minute and can be removed by any magic that cures diseases. After 1 minute, the creature's skin becomes translucent and slimy, the creature can't regain hit points unless it is underwater, and when out of water will take 6 (1d12) acid damage every ten minutes unless moisture is applied to the skin before the 10 minutes is up.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage.

Enslave. (once per day). The aboleth targets one creature it can see within 30ft. The target must succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or be Charmed by the aboleth until the aboleth dies or is on a different plane of existence. The Charmed target is under the aboleth's control and cannot take reactions, and the aboleth and the target can communicate with each other over any distance. Whenever the Charmed target takes damage, the target can repeat the saving throw. On a success the effect ends.

Psychic Drain. (once per day, costs two actions). One creature charmed by the aboleth takes 10 (3d6) psychic damage, and the aboleth regains hit points equal to the damage the creature takes.

KUO-TOA

Medium humanoid, neutral evil

Armor Class 13 (Natural Armour, Shield)
Hit Points 18 (4d8)
Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13(+1)	10(+0)	11(+0)	11(+0)	10(+0)	8(-1)

Skills Perception +4
Senses Darkvision 120 ft., Passive Perception 14
Languages Undercommon
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Amphibious. The kuo-toa can breathe air and water.

Otherworldly Perception. The kuo-toa can sense the presence of any creature within 30 feet of it that is invisible or on the Ethereal Plane. It can pinpoint such a creature that is moving.

Slippery. The kuo-toa has advantage on ability checks and saving throws made to escape a grapple.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the kuo-toa has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) piercing damage.

Spear. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage, or 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

Net. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 5/15 ft., one Large or smaller creature. *Hit:* The target is restrained. A creature can use its action to make a DC 10 Strength check to free itself or another creature in a net, ending the effect on a success. Dealing 5 slashing damage to the net (AC 10) frees the target without harming it and destroys the net.

REACTIONS

Sticky Shield. When a creature misses the kuo-toa with a melee weapon attack, the kuo-toa uses its sticky shield to catch the weapon. The attacker must succeed on a DC 11 Strength saving throw, or the weapon becomes stuck to the kuo-toa's shield. If the weapon's wielder can't or won't let go of the weapon, the wielder is grappled while the weapon is stuck. While stuck, the weapon can't be used. A creature can pull the weapon free by taking an action to make a DC 11 Strength check and succeeding.

KUO-TOA WHIP

Medium humanoid, neutral evil

Armor Class 11 (Natural Armour)
Hit Points 65 (10d8 + 20)
Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14(+2)	10(+0)	14(+2)	12(+1)	14(+2)	11(+0)

Skills Perception +6, Religion +4
Senses Darkvision 120 ft., Passive Perception 16
Languages Undercommon
Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Amphibious. The kuo-toa can breathe air and water.

Otherworldly Perception. The kuo-toa can sense the presence of any creature within 30 feet of it that is

invisible or on the Ethereal Plane. It can pinpoint such a creature that is moving.

Slippery. The kuo-toa has advantage on ability checks and saving throws made to escape a grapple.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the kuo-toa has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Spellcasting. The kuo-toa is a 2nd-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). The kuo-toa has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *sacred flame*, *thaumaturgy*

1st level (3 slots): *bane*, *shield of faith*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The kuo-toa makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its pincer staff.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Pincer Staff. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it is grappled (escape DC 14). Until this grapple ends, the kuo-toa can't use its pincer staff on another target.

KUO-TOA MONITOR

Medium humanoid, neutral evil

Armor Class 13 (Natural Armour)

Hit Points 65 (10d8 + 20)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14(+2)	10(+0)	14(+2)	12(+1)	14(+2)	11(+0)

Skills Perception +6, Religion +4

Senses Darkvision 120 ft., Passive Perception 16

Languages Undercommon

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Amphibious. The kuo-toa can breathe air and water.

Otherworldly Perception. The kuo-toa can sense the presence of any creature within 30 feet of it that is invisible or on the Ethereal Plane. It can pinpoint such a creature that is moving.

Slippery. The kuo-toa has advantage on ability checks and saving throws made to escape a grapple.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the kuo-toa has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The kuo-toa makes one bite attack and two unarmed strikes.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Unarmed Strike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage plus 3 (1d6) lightning damage, and the target can't take reactions until the end of the kuo-toa's next turn.



MAGMIN

Small elemental, neutral evil

Armor Class 14 (Natural Armour)

Hit Points 9 (2d6 + 2)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7(-2)	15(+2)	12(+1)	8(-1)	11(+0)	10(+0)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities fire

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Ignan

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Death Burst. When the magmin dies, it explodes in a burst of fire and magma. Each creature within 10 feet of it must make a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Flammable objects that aren't being worn or carried in that area are ignited.

Ignited Illumination. As a bonus action, the magmin can set itself ablaze or extinguish its flames. While ablaze, the magmin sheds bright light in a 10-foot radius and dim light for an additional 10 feet.

ACTIONS

Touch. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 7 (2d6) fire damage. If the target is a creature or a flammable object, it ignites. Until a creature takes an action to douse the fire, the creature takes 3 (1d6) fire damage at the end of each of its turns.

MIND FLAYER

Medium aberration, lawful evil

Armor Class 15 (breastplate)

Hit Points 71 (13d8 + 13)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11(+0)	12(+1)	12(+1)	19(+4)	17(+3)	17(+3)

Saving Throws Int +7, Wis +6, Cha +6

Skills Arcana +7, Deception +6, Insight +6,

Perception +6, Persuasion +6, Stealth +4

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Deep Speech, Undercommon, telepathy 120ft.

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Magic Resistance. The mind flayer has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Innate Spellcasting (Psionics). The mind flayer's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 15). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

At will: *detect thoughts*, *levitate*

1/day each: *dominate monster*, *plane shift* (self only)

ACTIONS

Tentacles. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 15 (2d10 + 4) psychic damage. If the target is Medium or smaller, it is grappled (escape DC 15) and must succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence saving throw or be stunned until this grapple ends.

Extract Brain. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one incapacitated humanoid grappled by the mind flayer. Hit: The target takes 55 (10d10) piercing damage. If this damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the mind flayer kills the target by extracting and devouring its brain.

Mind Blast (Recharge 5–6). The mind flayer magically emits psychic energy in a 60-foot cone. Each creature in that area must succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence saving throw or take 22 (4d8 + 4) psychic damage and be stunned for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Note: The mind flayer cannot cast Plane Shift unless and until it retrieves the *forked metal rod*.

NEOGI

Small aberration, lawful evil

Armor Class 15 (Natural Armour)

Hit Points 33 (6d6 + 12)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6(-2)	16(+3)	14(+2)	13(+1)	12(+1)	15(+2)

Skills Intimidation +4, Perception +3

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Deep Speech, Undercommon

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Mental Fortitude. The neogi has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened, and magic can't put the neogi to sleep.

Spider Climb. The neogi can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The neogi makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage plus 14 (4d6) poison damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for 1 minute. A target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 8 (2d4 + 3) slashing damage.

Enslave (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). The neogi targets one creature it can see within 30 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or be magically charmed by the neogi for 1 day, or until the neogi dies or is more than 1 mile from the target. The charmed target obeys the neogi's commands and can't take reactions, and the neogi and the target can communicate telepathically with each other at a distance of up to 1 mile. Whenever the charmed target takes damage, it can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success.



NILBOG

Small humanoid (goblinoid), chaotic evil

Armor Class 13 (Leather Armour)

Hit Points 7 (2d6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8(-1)	14(+2)	10(+0)	10(+0)	8(-1)	15(+2)

Skills Stealth +6

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages Common, Goblin

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Innate spellcasting. The nilbog's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *mage hand*, *Tasha's hideous laughter*, *vicious mockery*

1/day: *confusion*

Nilbogism. Any creature that attempts to damage the nilbog must first succeed on a DC 12 Charisma saving throw or be charmed until the end of the creature's next turn. A creature charmed in this way must use its action praising the nilbog.

The nilbog can't regain hit points, including through magical healing, except through its Reversal of Fortune reaction.

Nimble Escape. The nilbog can take the Disengage or Hide action as a bonus action on each of its turns.

ACTIONS

Fool's Scepter. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

REACTIONS

Reversal of Fortune. In response to another creature dealing damage to the nilbog, the nilbog reduces the damage to 0 and regains 1d6 hit points.

NILBOG, ANCIENT

See entry under "Ancient Nilbog"



OWLBEAR

Large monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (Natural Armour)
Hit Points. 59 (7d10 + 21)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20(+5)	12(+1)	17(+3)	3(-4)	12(+1)	7(-2)

Skills Perception +3
Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 13.
Languages none
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Keen Sight and Smell. The owlbear has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight or smell.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The owlbear makes two attacks: one with its beak and one with its claws.

Beak. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 10 (1d10 + 5) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 14 (2d8 + 5) slashing damage.

PSYTHER

Small beast, neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (Natural Armour)
Hit Points. 6 (1d10 + 1)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16(+3)	15(+2)	12(+1)	2(-4)	13(+1)	15(+2)

Skills Survival +5
Languages none
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Track. Psythers have advantage on any Survival checks made to track their prey.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Debilitate. (1 per day). 100 ft., Wisdom saving throw (DC 14, half damage). Once a day, a psyther can assault the psyche of its enemy, debilitating its confidence. The target takes 1d4 of psychic damage, or half that amount (minimum 1 point) on a successful save; a target that fails also is Dazed for 1 round.

Fade Away. 25 ft. range, duration 1 minute. Wisdom saving throw (DC 14). Three times a day, a psyther can attempt to make itself completely undetectable to a target by erasing all awareness of its presence from the target's mind. This power has the following effects. First, the psyther is Invisible and Inaudible to the creature; the creature cannot even detect your presence by means of blindsense or similar abilities – the creature cannot pinpoint the psyther's location by any means. Second, the subject remains unaware of the psyther's actions, provided it does not make any attacks or cause any obvious or directly

threatening changes in the subject's environment; the effect ends upon an attack. An attack or any action that creates a sustained and obvious change in the subject's environment—for example, attacking a creature aside from the subject or moving a large or attended object the subject can see—immediately grants the subject a new Wisdom saving throw against the power. An ally of the subject creature that is able to see or perceive the psyther can use a Move action to warn the subject and thereby grant it a new saving throw.

YOUNG GREEN DRAGON

Large dragon, lawful evil

Armor Class 18 (Natural Armour)
Hit Points. 136 (16d10 + 48)
Speed 40 ft., fly 80 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19(+4)	12(+1)	17(+3)	16(+3)	13(+1)	15(+2)

Saving Throws Dex +4, Con +6, Wis +4, Cha +5
Skills Deception +5, Perception +7, Stealth +4
Damage immunities poison
Condition immunities poisoned
Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 17
Languages Common, Draconic
Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Amphibious. The dragon can breathe air and water.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragon makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 15 (2d10 + 4) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) poison damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Poison Breath (Recharge 5–6). The dragon exhales poisonous gas in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw, taking 42 (12d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Note: While in the Astral Plane players do not take damage from the poison component of the Bite attack or any damage from Poison Breath.



APPENDIX C: ITEMS

There is very little treasure to be had in the Crucible; it is, after all, a prison. Consumable items tend to be used sooner rather than later, and magical items tend to be claimed by the more powerful inmates. Nevertheless, there are a few items referred to in the cell descriptions above that may be of interest, and the DM is free to add trinkets, items and treasure as rewards or adventure hooks.

CROWN OF THE BULLYWUGS

Magic item (cursed), very rare

The crown worn by the “King” of the bullywugs in Cell 4 is fashioned out of small twisted wooden sticks bound together with leather. Any player who places the crown on their head will become cursed with a Curse of Avarice. The curse remains even if the crown is later removed or discarded, and persists until removed by a Remove Curse spell or similar effect. The cursed nature of the crown will not be revealed by an Identify spell, although when holding the crown a character will sense it has something to do with treasure.

While in effect, the curse will cause the player to squabble over the distribution of any treasure that the party happens to encounter, and vehemently will insist that it all belongs to them. If the party receives treasure the total value of which exceeds 100 gp, then when the player next goes to sleep he or she also will sleep-walk and try to steal all of that treasure.

FORKED METAL ROD

Spell component, uncommon

The forked metal rod carried by the githyanki captain in Cell 1 is the means by which the githyanki enter and exit the Crucible. It is, in effect, a key that can be activated by a githyanki to return to their home base in the Astral Plane.

The rod is made of platinum, and is worth 300 gp. It also is slightly warm to the touch, as it is attuned to the Elemental Plane of Fire.

Accordingly, it can be used as a material component to a Plane Shift spell. Further, because it is of githyanki construction, it will work for this purpose within the Crucible, but only to transport its user to the Elemental Plane of Fire.

GITH SENDING STONE

Wondrous item, uncommon

Similar to a standard *sending stone*, Gith Sending Stones come in pairs and allow one holder to cast the Sending spell and communicate with the other. Unlike normal *sending stones*, however, a Gith Sending Stone can be used any number of times in a day.

Any player who acquires the githyanki captain’s stone (Cell 1) will know from touching it that someone holds its mate, evidently the captain’s superior. Every so often, that githyanki will contact the player (in Common) and abuse them in increasingly strident terms, before demanding that they surrender to the mighty githyanki.

GRAVITY ORB

Wondrous item, very rare

The gravity orb that maintains the artificial gravity in a cell resembles a blue, glowing crystal ball about 6 inches in diameter. Philogena will insist on carrying them, as they are extremely fragile. Its magical properties otherwise are unknowable to any player, even if an Identify or similar spell is used.

OIL OF DEPETRIFICATION

Potion, very rare

An oil of depetrification can be extracted from certain internal organs of a basilisk (Cell 17). A flask of such oil contains enough to remove the petrification from two medium or smaller creatures, or one large creature. The oil will not restore any body parts missing from a petrified creature. If a vital body part (like a head) is missing then the oil will still remove the petrification, only to yield a dead creature.

FURTHER INFORMATION

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Frontispiece: *Empedocles Breaks through the Crystal Spheres* (circa 1888, artist unknown); from Camille Flammarion's 1888 book *L'atmosphère: météorologie populaire* (*The Atmosphere: Popular Meteorology*)

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FEEDBACK

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