

TERRA INCOGNITA



JVC PARRY



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THE CASE OF THE KIDNAPPED CARTOGRAPHER

A dear friend of the party has gone missing; Boddyknock the gnome cartographer, supplier of maps and charting equipment. Can the party solve the mystery of his disappearance? Do they have the bravery to delve deep to recover their lost ally? What horrors will they uncover in the cavernous expanse beneath their feet?

A 6-10 hour Dungeons & Dragons 5e adventure for 5th-10th level characters

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INTRODUCTION

Terra Incognita is a one-shot D&D 5e adventure for a party of characters from 5th–10th level. It should take 6–10 hours to complete, depending on which elements you choose to use. It can be coupled with *Out of the Abyss* as an entry point for higher level characters, dropped into the Forgotten Realms or your own homebrew campaign.

TIPS FOR THE DM

As with any adventure, *Terra Incognita* should be adapted to work for your group. If you don't like the way an element works, please feel free to change it. If encounters are too difficult for your players, remove monsters or replace them with an easier, but fitting foe.

Similarly, if you would like to adapt *Terra Incognita* for your own world, you can easily substitute appropriate plot hooks, NPCs and items.

In order to deliver an optimum experience for your players, it would probably be best to read the adventure, in full, before attempting to run it. There are traps and puzzles that you need to understand fully in advance.

In my opinion, players may need to level up during this adventure, but do so at the DM's discretion. They may not have achieved all the necessary XP from combat, but I would suggest rewarding players XP for solving puzzles to make up the difference. Alternatively, you can use the popular Milestone leveling system.

Text to be read aloud to the players is in pale boxes. Feel free to tinker with this text to fit your roleplaying needs, but try to keep the original message clear as they may contain important information.

Try to have fun running this adventure! It was highly enjoyable to create and play with my own group, and I hope that you can share in that experience!

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Boddyknock Murnid has always been a friend to the party. His antics at the Cartographer's Guild of Mythradd never failed to make them chuckle, and he was well liked by all who knew him. Not only was he charismatic and charming, but his mind is like a well-oiled machine. Boddyknock was famous for his clockwork creations which would assist him, and his adventurous friends, in mapping the far-flung realms of the world.

Unfortunately, Boddyknock's ingenuity has landed him in some serious trouble. As he was working into the early hours on a new mapping device, he was stealthily kidnapped by duergar, and stolen away into the Underdark.

These duergar are the slaves of Kroth, a hideous, hulking but intelligent fomorian. Kroth was exiled from fomorian society after insulting his king, and took refuge in the Underdark. Here, he became a notorious slave trader and warlord, claiming ruined cities and expansive caverns for himself. Currently, he resides with his band of duergar slaves in the ruined gray dwarf city of Grindstone.

Although Kroth gave the order for Boddyknock to be kidnapped, it was not for his own means. Kroth is under the effects of a Geas spell, cast by Vadiana Kithryn, a drow priestess. She wants the gnome for his extensive knowledge of Underdark geography, attained during his adventuring youth. She wishes to use his knowledge to determine the most suitable tunnels from which to assault the surface world to capture slaves.

Vadiana and the drow will attack Kroth by assaulting Grindstone, killing the fomorian slaver, taking the duergar for themselves and capturing Boddyknock to do their bidding.

HOOKS

Hook 1: A Missing Friend

Boddyknock is a close friend to the party who has helped them travel to the far reaches of the world, and rewarded them for bringing back information about the geography of the places they have visited. When he goes missing, Dimble Garrick, his apprentice, reports it to the local authorities and to the adventurers themselves when they arrive in town.

Hook 2: Friends of House Mizzrym

If you want to use this adventure as a prequel to *Out of the Abyss*, you can have there be a direct tie between Ilvara Mizzrym of Velkynvelve and Vadiana Kithryn. The adventurer's patron, a previous drow captive, has a reward for anyone who can bring back Ilvara's head, and he knows that she is on the lookout for skilled cartographers. With the local cartographer missing, the adventurers have a solid lead.

Hook 3: Private Investigators

The town militia of Mythradd are at a loose end. The disappearance of the local cartographer has gone unresolved for two days, and they cannot crack the case. There's a hefty bag of gold coins for the adventurers if they can solve the crime, and bring back Boddyknock Murnid.

OPENING

The adventure starts once the party have made their way to the Cartographer's Guild of Mythradd. Mythradd itself is a bustling city filled with a mix of humanoid races, and the Cartographer's Guild is but one of the numerous societies, organisations and factions at work in the metropolis. As the adventurers near the Guild, they are accosted by a pair of **guards** who wish to know their business.

As you make your way towards the Cartographer's Guild, you are accosted by a pair of town militia; 'Whadder you doing here? Don't you know there's been a crime committed?!'

No check is required for the party to convince the militia that they are friends or Boddyknock, or useful assets hired onto the case. Through questioning and roleplay, the characters can acquire the following information from the guards;

- Mr Dimble Garrick (LG male rock gnome commoner) reported the crime. He's at the scene now and the players can question him if they wish.

- The guard forced down the door to gain entrance to the scene.
- The Guild is an absolute mess on the inside, almost as if the place had been raided or searched. If the characters are friends of Boddyknock, they will know that this is usual for the erratic master cartographer.
- The service door around the back of the building was barred from the inside when the militia arrived. Apparently, the front door was also locked this morning, and was opened by Dimble.
- The guards have the sign out sheet from the night of the disappearance, one name is clearly missing. It reads; Sebastian Farrowind
Kareem Mustaphar
Quinthar Liliathen
Dimble Garrick

THE CARTOGRAPHER'S GUILD

The following passages describe the Cartographer's Guild of Mythrad and any clues that can be found within its walls. The clues uncovered here and coaxed from its occupants should be enough for the players to find their way to the next section of the adventure; Grindstone.

THE CARTOGRAPHER'S GUILD

The Cartographer's Guild is a relatively large building of wood and stone. Over the gilded front door is a sign that reads Chart In Ignosis, the Guild's motto. The door itself is slightly ajar, and as you enter, you see the place is strewn with papers, quills, candles, bottles of ink, spanners, screws and a whole host of odds and ends. Upon the back wall hangs a breathtakingly large map of the world, unlike any you have seen before. Nervously wringing his hands whilst sat on one of the workbenches is a young rock gnome.

The guild's motto means 'Chart the unknown'. The rock gnome is Dimble Garrick (LG male rock gnome **commoner**), Boddyknock's apprentice. If the characters approach him, read the following;

As you walk toward the nervous looking gnome, he gives a violent start as if waking from a nightmare. His eyes quickly swivel around the room before focusing on you. 'So sorry,' he says 'I'm Dimble Garrick. You must be the marvelous adventurers sent to help find Mr Boddyknock!'

Through questioning and roleplay, the characters can find out the following information from Dimble;

- Dimble left the night before the disappearance with Boddyknock still inside. He was working hard on a new mapping invention, but Dimble was tired and wanted to get some sleep. Boddyknock sent the tired young gnome home, and locked up after him.
- When Dimble arrived the following morning, all the doors were still locked. He assumed Boddyknock had fallen asleep at work but couldn't open the front door as Boddyknock's key was still inside the door. He gained entry once the guard smashed open the front door.
- The service door around the back was barred from the inside, and hasn't been touched.
- Everyone except Quinthar Liliathen has arrived and been sent home already, as they have no new knowledge of the incident. Quinthar should arrive soon.

Dimble can also show the party around the Guild, including pointing out whose desks are whose, and which items belong to which cartographer. He can also identify handwriting. Whilst not helping the characters, he rocks nervously on his workbench, a look of utter sadness hanging on his face.

SEARCHING THE GUILD

Dimble and the town militia are more than happy for the adventurers to search around the Guild, provided they don't disturb any potential evidence. The Guild has a simple layout, one large, open work-hall where the cartographers would get on with their research, and a side room which contains all the necessary materials such as spare parchment, ink, rulers, paint etc. A small mezzanine floor is clearly used as storage for mechanical components. The following areas of interest contain clues for the party to discover.

BODDYKNOCK'S DESK

The largest of all the workspaces, this bench is also the untidiest. There are scrolls and quills all over the place, ink-stains and scratch marks cover the wooden surface, and the drawers are all wonky on their runners.

Characters can find the following clues at Boddyknock's workbench;

- A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check at the foot of the workbench allows characters to find a crinkled silver hair floating in a small pool of spilt ink. A DC 10 Wisdom or Intelligence (Nature) check reveals it to be dwarven beard hair. Dimble can confirm that no dwarves work at the Cartographer's Guild, but occasionally they come by to sell pigments.
- Characters who check the drawers of the workbench find that all of them are locked except one. The unlocked drawer has a number of blueprints for inventions filed inside. Dimble can tell the characters that his most recent invention was a 'clockwork cartographer'; a tiny mechanical spider which could sense the route a person had walked during the day, and then trace it onto a piece of parchment.



SERVICE ROOM

The backroom of the Guild has one wall stacked high with supplies on wooden shelves. Bundles upon bundles of parchment are packed into open scroll cases and stuffed into cracks in the stonework. Hundreds of pots of paint and ink line the highest shelves, only accessible by a rolling ladder on slanted iron rails. At one end of the room is a wooden door, barred from the inside. At the other end is an ornate display cabinet, containing maps of various regions.

Characters can find the following clues in this room;

- Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 12 or higher notice a dust-free space in the cabinet, where a map must once have been displayed. Dimble cannot remember what that specific map was, but manages to find a label that was previous attached to it. The label reads; 'A Section of the Underdark – Boddyknock Murnid', in Elvish.
- A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check around the area of the service door allows the party to discover a dusty footprint at the base of the door, across the threshold. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals that some of the dust is in fact fungal spores. A check which succeeds by 5 or more recognizes them as belonging to a Bluecap – found only in the Underdark. A successful DC 25 Wisdom (Survival) check can track these faint footsteps to a large pile of crates around the back of the building.

OUT BACK

The only feature of note around the outside of the building is a large pile of crates. They are labelled with numerous company names, most seem like parchment suppliers.

The duergar that captured Boddyknock have tried to dust away their footprints, but a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 15 or higher reveals a set which stop abruptly at the crates. Underneath the crates is a ten-foot-diameter rough tunnel which leads straight down into the earth. It can be easily seen if a few of the crates are moved, but otherwise can only be noticed by characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 20 or higher. A successful DC 18 Intelligence (Nature) check is enough to recognize it was made by an umber hulk. It is down this tunnel that Boddyknock was taken. It leads deep down into the cavernous expanses of the Underdark, but most relevantly to Grindstone, where Boddyknock is currently captive. If the characters delve down into this tunnel, move on to *Traversing the Underdark*.

MEZZANINE FLOOR

Around ten feet up from the ground floor is a small, balcony like floor covered in crates and barrels filled with cogs, gears, pipes, crystals, girders and chains. Much like the rest of the Guild it's a complete mess.

Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 18 or higher notice a ripped scrap of thick cloth hanging from the lid of the largest crate. It has a heavy top, which requires a DC 10 Strength check to open. Once open, read the following;

To your surprise, a grey-skinned half elf lies curled up inside this crate. He is asleep but restless, murmuring and flinching as if plagued by nightmares. Bizarrely, none of the poor boy's movements seem to make any sound.

This sorry soul is Quinthar Liliathen (NG male high elf **commoner**, currently suffering from four levels of exhaustion), the errand boy of the Cartographer's Guild. If the party find him trapped here, he can give the most comprehensive account of what happened to Boddyknock, and the role that he played in the whole affair. If the characters don't find him, he may remain trapped in the crate for some days and eventually perish.

Quinthar requires some food and water or magical healing before he can be brought back to his senses. As soon as he gathers his wits, he points to an amulet on a tight silver chain around his neck (This is a *Choker of Silence* Appendix A). A DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check indicates that it is magical in nature. A casting of *Detect Magic* reveals the item to be enchanted with illusion magic. The chain be dispelled with a casting of *Dispel Magic* or removed by using a magic weapon to cut through it. As soon as the magic is released from Quinthar, his outpouring begins:

'Thanks the Gods someone finally found me! I feel like I've been stuck in the crate for days! I was pounding and pounding to get someone's attention...' he holds out his bloody fists as evidence 'but it wasn't making any sound! I know I shouldn't have done it but I was so scared! Is Boddyknock okay?! I'm not sure they were his friends after all. It didn't seem like a prank. Were they even gnomes?!'

After wailing for a few more minutes, Quinthar finally calms down and slumps. If the characters question him, he immediately gives up the whole affair;

Quinthar was approach a few days ago by a group of gray skinned 'gnomes', or so they told Quinthar. They proclaimed that they were friends of Boddyknock's, and they knew that Quinthar worked at the Cartographer's Guild. They'd come a long way to visit Boddyknock, and wanted to surprise him one night with a good old gnomish prank. They were going to pretend to kidnap Boddyknock, and Quinthar was going to help them. Although he said no at first, the 'gnomes' (who are actually duergar), started threatening to get Quinthar fired, even to beat him up for being a wimp, until eventually Quinthar gave in and agreed to help.

Later that tendar, when Boddyknock was working into the early hours, Quinthar snuck back to the Guild with his new 'gnome pals'. He knocked on the door, claiming he'd left his hat inside, and Boddyknock happily let him in. Once inside, Quinthar went to the service entrance and let in the duergar, who knocked Boddyknock unconscious and dragged him out the back into a tunnel dug by their captive umber hulk. Before Quinthar could get away, they captured him, collared him with the Choker of Silence and shut him in the crate. He doesn't know what happened after that.

REVELATION

After realising that Boddyknock has been taken captive, and dragged down into the tunnels around the back of the Cartographer's Guild, the party should pursue him and his captors in the hope of returning him safely to his beloved maps.

TRAVERSING THE UNDERDARK

After the party have discovered Boddyknock's fate, they should head down the umber hulk tunnel in pursuit of their friend's captors. This tunnel leads down into the Underdark, a subterranean world of caves, chasms and gullies which stretches throughout the world. This deadly place is populated with the most horrendous monsters and evil races.

To reach the tunnel's conclusion at Grindstone the party will have to trek for six hours; two hours in the tunnels itself, and four hours picking their way through the alien landscape of the Underdark. For each hour's travel, have the party make a DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check to follow the tracks of the duergar. Each time the party fails a check, add another hour onto their travel time as they wander off course. For each hours travel in the Underdark, roll on the Underdark Random Encounters table to determine if any troubles arise. Reroll any repeat encounters. If the party fail three checks in a row, have them arrive to Grindstone after a long, winding trek with a level of Exhaustion.

UNDERDARK RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

d6 Encounter

- | | |
|---|------------------|
| 1 | Meenlock Ambush |
| 2 | Duergar Assassin |
| 3 | Grimlock Cult |
| 4 | Flumph Cloister |
| 5 | Chuul Pool |
| 6 | Chasme Demon |

MEENLOCK AMBUSH

As you pick your way through the bizarre landscape of a fungal forest, the hairs on the back of your neck stand up. Something just shifted between the fleshy stalks to your right. There it was again on your left. Suddenly a host of whispers pierce through the forest, and a wave of paranoia washes over you all.

The party have inadvertently stumbled too close to a lair of 4 **meenlocks**. Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 16 or more notice these insectoid creatures skittering around the large mushrooms on the edge of adventurers' vision. If the meenlock are not discovered, they wait until the party get within thirty feet of their lair before attacking. They attempt to ambush one random member of the party by surprising them from the shadows and paralyzing them with their claws. If they are successful, they will drag the character down into their den.

GENERAL FEATURES: MEENLOCK LAIR

The following features are prevalent throughout the twisting tunnels of the Meenlock Lair.

Black Moss. The walls, ceiling and floors of the warrens are covered with a thick black moss which muffles sound throughout. Creatures inside the lair have disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sound

Ceilings and Floors. The average ceiling height is 6 feet, dropping down to 3 feet in narrow tunnels.

Darkness. The Meenlock lair contains no natural light sources. The meenlock rely on their darkvision to see.

Narrow Tunnels. The tunnels leading around the warrens are less than 5 feet high and wide. Medium or larger creatures must squeeze through these passages.

Telepathic Hallucinations. The meenlocks project eerie illusions throughout their warren, including terrible whispers and fleeting movements at the edge of a creature's vision. All non-meenlocks have disadvantage on saving throws against being frightened whilst in their lair.

LAYOUT

The meenlock warren is a tangled maze of narrow tunnels which orbit a central chamber. Only one of these tunnels serves as an entrance and exit. Characters attempting to find the central chamber or exit whilst within the tunnels must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) check. They will be no more than 30 feet away from the central chamber or entrance at any time.



AMBUSHING THE PARTY

Hopefully the meenlocks managed to capture a character and drag them down into their lair, if not, the characters may still pursue these horrifying fey back to their warren. The meenlocks use their *Shadow Teleport* ability to try and trap the characters in the lair should they enter. If a meenlock is reduced to half its hit points or fewer, it teleports to the central chamber.

TORTURE CHAMBER

At the centre of the warren is a larger chamber wherein the meenlock psychically torture captured foes.

You emerge into a larger chamber entirely covered with thick black moss. Lying face down in this carpet of vegetation is a grey skinned dwarf.

The meenlocks managed to capture themselves a duergar slave named Weltha Steelshadow (LE female **duergar**, currently on 0 hit points). Weltha was owned by Kroth, but after being ambushed by the meenlocks has no intention of going back if she can help it. If the characters help Weltha by restoring her hit points or giving her useful items she will point them toward Grindstone. Give them advantage on their next Wisdom (Survival) check to traverse the Underdark.

DUERGAR ASSASSIN

If you roll this random encounter, check the character's passive Wisdom (Perception) scores. Characters with a score of 13 or higher feel like something is wrong, as if they are being watched. Characters with a score of 15 or higher notice a large spider scuttle around the corner of the tunnel ahead. Unbeknownst to the characters the duergar are aware that they are being followed, and have sent an **duergar soulblade** assassin mounted on a **female steeder**.

At any point between this encounter and the characters reaching Grindstone, have the assassin attempt to kill one of the characters. Try to do this in an interesting location or when the party is distracted or weakened. Make good use of the abilities of the duergar and steeder, such as the duergar's *Invisibility* and Hunter's Mark or the steeder's *Leap* and *Spider Climb*.

Treasure. The duergar assassin carries a belt pouch containing 2d10gp, 1d4 50gp gems and wears an engraved iron chain worth 25gp.

GRIMLOCK CULT

As you skirt your way along a narrow ledge overlooking a deep chasm, you hear the bizarre sound of chanting and wailing from below. Before long, the chanting intensifies and the wailing turns into screams of fear and pain.

Down in the chasm below is a cult of 3d4 **grimlocks** worshipping Kraxxix, an outcast **mindflayer** with the following changes:

- Kraxxix has a broken leg which reduces its movement to 20ft., and gives it disadvantage on Dexterity checks and saving throws.
- Kraxxix has 50 hit points.

- Kraxxix is entirely mentally unbalanced, and believes itself to be a divine being. This could be due to the maddening effects of faerzress if you intend to link this adventure to Out of the Abyss. Because of this madness, Kraxxix believes itself to be immortal, and will never flee from combat.

The characters may choose to entirely ignore the sounds, but if they peek down over the ledge read the following:

Below you is a harrowing sight. A group of degenerate humanoids are circling around a stone tablet, chained to which is a muscular half-orc, covered in shining beads of sweat. The half-orc pulls at the chains which bind him to the altar, but to no avail. As you watch, a tall, purple skinned humanoid with four tentacles where its mouth should be, levitates behind the half-orc. The chanting becomes more and more intense as the robed purple aberration places its tentacles over the half-orc's head.

At this moment, the party have the chance to intervene. Any attack against Kraxxix is enough to halt the ceremony. The floor of the chasm is 30 feet down and lit by *faerzress* (or bioluminescent fungi). Each turn Henk (CN male half-orc **berserker**) tries to escape but requires a successful DC 20 Strength check to break his bonds. If Kraxxix goes a full round without taking damage from the party, and Henk is still chained to the altar, Kraxxix uses *Extract Brain* upon him. The grimlocks attack the party and try to defend Kraxxix.

If the party manage to save Henk and kill Kraxxix, the half-orc offers to join them on their adventure to Grindstone. He is brash and stupid, but means well and enjoys the thrill of a good fight.



FLUMPH CLOISTER

Whilst making your way through a gigantic empty cavern, a strange green glow illuminates the vaulted ceiling, picking out a whole landscape of stalactites. As the glow increases, you are able to pick out what look like tiny floating jellyfish moving toward each other. As you look on in awe, they begin to spiral, slowly forming a column which begins a long, careful descent to the floor of the cave.

If the characters do nothing to escape, they are slowly surrounded by a cloister of several dozen **flumphs**. The flumphs are highly intrigued by the strange surface-dwellers who wander foolishly through the Underdark, and are particularly attracted to any who possess telepathic or psionic abilities. As they converse with the party, they change colour depending on the mood of the characters. These benevolent creatures can help the party find food and drink, or navigate the twisting tunnels of the Underdark. Give the characters advantage on their next ability check relevant to their conversation with the flumphs.

CHUUL POOL

A gentle lapping and skittering sound can be heard from up ahead. As you try to hone in on the sound, a resounding sploosh echoes throughout the caves. Up ahead must be a sizeable body of water.

As the characters emerge from the tunnel they were in, they find themselves on the shore of a huge underground lake (this could be the *Darklake* from *Out of the Abyss*). The ripples of whatever made the sploosh sound can still be seen drifting out into the darkness. Hidden beneath the surface of the water is a **Chuul**. A DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check is enough to spot the small stream of bubbles rising to the surface above it.

A DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check reveals that the water is not good to drink, but a character must be at the waters' edge to discover this.

Any character that makes its way down to the edge of the water is considered prey by the chuul, which surges out of the water to attack.

Once the chuul has been reduced to half its hit points, it begins back up into the water. At the end of the first round of backing up, 3d4 **ixitxachitl** burst up from below the lakes surface and attack both chuul and characters alike (provided they are in the water). If on the next turn the chuul is not dead, one **vampiric ixitxachitl** swoops in to join the fray.

CHASME DEMON

Suddenly, the near silence of the caves is broken by a horrifying droning sound. The disgusting noise seems to reverberate around the caverns and your heads start to ring.

Flying into the cavern is a **chasme** demon, droning as it patrols the Underdark for deserting demons. Clutched in its claws is a dead drow warrior. Despite already having a meal, the chasme will not shy away from attacking the party, diving down from the sky with its spear-like proboscis.

Treasure. If the party manage to kill the chasme, they can loot the body of the drow. It has a belt pouch containing 3d6gp, a +1 *chainshirt* (which loses its enchantment after spending 1 hour in sunlight), a hand crossbow and 7 bolts poisoned with *drow poison*.

GRINDSTONE

After travelling for hours through the strange landscapes of the Underdark, you emerge into an immense cavern. Here stands what was once an epic duergar fortress, but now lies in ruins after being ravaged generations ago by some gargantuan beast. An enormous hole in the side of the cave marks where the behemoth entered, and the scars it left on the fortress have never healed.

Once the characters reach Grindstone, they should attempt to find Boddyknock and release him from his captors. This may include fighting with numerous duergar and their allies, as well as taking on the notorious fomorian slaver Kroth.



What the players don't know is that Vadania Kithryn and her company of drow warriors are already on their way to Grindstone to attack the foolish Kroth and take Boddyknock for themselves. This battle can occur at any time you feel dramatic enough, I would recommend once the players free Boddyknock but before they escape Grindstone, or a round or two into combat with Kroth.

As well as the imminent invasion of Vadania, Kroth has another problem on his hands. Due to the Geas spell placed upon him by the drow priestess, he has let his duergar slaves run with more freedom than usual. This is about to come to a head with a group of rebellious gray dwarves known as the Triarchy. They have found the skeleton of the purple worm which destroyed Grindstone decades ago, and are attempting to harvest some poison from its decaying toxin sacs. Once they have succeeded, they will attempt to assassinate Kroth and make a break for freedom. Unfortunately for them, the purple worm eggs they discovered with the corpse are about to hatch.

GRINDSTONE RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

For the duergar and Kroth, Grindstone is a safe haven in the Underdark. The patrols of stone guard keep out rampaging demons and monstrosities. Most of the duergar have accepted their fate as slaves, and don't make trouble for Kroth and his loyal elites.

At the end of each short rest in Grindstone, roll a d20; on a roll of 15-20, an encounter takes place. Roll a d10 and consult the Grindstone Random Encounters table. If the characters are in Kroth's Palace, treat any random encounter as a Duergar Patrol. If characters are in the Worm Crypt, roll a d6 instead. Reroll repeat encounters.

GRINDSTONE RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

d10/6	Encounter
1	Escaped UMBER HULK
2-3	Giant Spiders
4	Hook Horrors
5-6	Rust Monsters
7-9	Duergar Patrol
10	Slave Caravan

ESCAPED UMBER HULK

The duergar keep several enslaved umber hulks to help them tunnel through the stone walls of the Underdark with ease. These deadly creatures are notoriously hard to capture, and the duergar only have a handful. They keep them docile with a potent fungal broth, and put blinders over their eyes to stop them using their *Confusing Gaze*. Every now and then, one of the monsters breaks free.

All of a sudden you hear shouts from the distance and the pounding of heavy feet on the stone. As you look for the origin of the noise, you see a large, insectoid hulk of a creature stampeding in your direction.

One **umber hulk** has broken free of its chains and now speeds toward the characters. It has pulled off its blinders, but is still somewhat disoriented by the fungal broth. It has disadvantage on ability checks, attack rolls and saving throws. The characters can make a Dexterity (Stealth) check to try and hide from the monstrosity, but any that fail are attacked by it the next round. 1d4 rounds later, a group of 6 **duergar** arrive and try to knock the umber hulk unconscious.

GRINDSTONE GENERAL FEATURES

The duergar fortress of Grindstone was ruined decades ago by an enraged purple worm. The buildings of this once epic city are now little more than stone shells.

Duergar Patrols. The paranoid Kroth has set up patrols of Grindstone by loyal gray dwarves. Every 10 minutes, a group of 4 **duergar stone guard** walk a circuit of the ruins. Consult the Grindstone Random Encounters section below.

Duergar Towers. Scattered around the ruined city are a few buildings that are still standing. These towers are around 20 feet wide and long, and 40 feet high. They house the majority of the duergar populace. Infiltrating a tower unseen requires a DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth) check. Each tower contains 18 (5d6) **duergar**. Each duergar carries 1d10gp and equipment noted in the statblock.

Fungal Alarms. Several thick patches of fungi sprout from the ruins of the city. Each of these contains at least one **shrieker**. The inhabitants of Grindstone know where these are, and avoid getting too close. Characters can identify the shriekers with a DC 14 Intelligence (Nature) check.

Light. Although most of the occupants of Grindstone have darkvision, the occupied areas are dimly lit by bioluminescent fungi.

Slavers. Any characters spotted by duergar in Grindstone will be immediately reported to a duergar patrol (see Grindstone Random Encounters below), who turn up in 1d4 rounds to capture them. To avoid this, characters must make DC 10 Dexterity (Stealth) checks when moving between locations in Grindstone. Any captured characters are taken to Kroth's Palace.

Triarchy Members. One in every ten duergar in Grindstone are loyal members of the Triarchy, a secret sect of individuals trying to assassinate Kroth and gain their freedom. The rest of the gray dwarves are loyal to Kroth, or simply resigned to their fate as slaves.

Unstable Ruins. Grindstone is filled with abandoned, ruined structures that could be climbed into by the characters. Each time a character enters such a place, roll a d20. On a 5 or less the building begins to collapse around them. Have creatures in the ruins footprint make a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw. Any creatures who fail the save take 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage. Ruins count as difficult terrain.

Webs. Some areas of Grindstone are covered in sticky spider webs. See *Dungeon Master's Guide* page 105.

GIANT SPIDERS

The characters encounter a group of spiders, roll on the following table to determine what occurs;

d4 Spiders

1-2 1d4 **giant spiders**

3 1 **giant wolf spider**

4 1d4+1 **duergar** herding 2d6 **male steeders**

The giant spiders attack the characters on sight, climbing down walls of ruins or jumping down from the roofs of caverns and tunnels.

The giant wolf spider waits for the smallest of the characters to walk past it before striking out and dragging them down into its 10-foot-long burrow.

The characters must succeed on DC 10 Dexterity (Stealth) checks or be noticed by the steeders. If a check fails by 5 or more they are also noticed by the duergar. If the steeders notice a character, there is a 40% chance they will attack. Any duergar that notice the characters immediately call out for a duergar patrol, which arrives in 1d4 rounds.

HOOK HORRORS

As you begin to settle down for a rest, you hear a strange clacking sound echo around you. As you wait, the clacking sound seems to be getting closer and closer.

A DC 18 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals this noise to be the echolocation of a pack of 1d4+1 **hook horrors** on a hunt. The hook horrors will attack and try to kill the party if they find them.



RUST MONSTERS

As you search for a place to rest, you hear a skittering sound from nearby. Peering into the dim light, you see a small pack of rust coloured insects gorging themselves on a rusted old gear.

If any character wearing or wielding metal weapons or armour comes within 30 feet of the 1d4+1 **rust monsters**, they all whip their heads around and flick their long antennae about in a searching manner. There is a 50% chance that the rust monsters will locate and attack the character.

The rust monsters can be distracted by throwing some ferrous metal behind them, or by hiding from them. In either case, they will go back to their previous meal.

Treasure. The rust monsters were in the process of consuming a worthless cog, but lying to one side of it is a nearly untouched longsword (-1 to hit).

DUERGAR PATROL

You begin to hear footsteps approaching your location. As they near, you can pick out a few voices grumbling to each other in dwarvish.

A patrol of 4 **duergar stone guard** are marching through the area, two of whom are invisible. If they spot the characters, they will attempt to arrest them and take them directly to Kroth at his palace. Invisible duergar can sneak up on a character by making a Dexterity (Stealth) check with advantage, contested by the character's passive Wisdom (Perception) score.

SLAVE CARAVAN

The sound of marching footsteps and whimpering interrupts your rest. You can hear the jangling of chains and occasionally the crack of a whip.

A group of 1d4+1 **duergar** slavers herding unarmed slaves (roll on the table below) passes by the character's location. The slaves wear iron collars and manacles that require a DC 20 Strength check or DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools to break.

d10 Slaves

1-3 1d4 human **commoners**

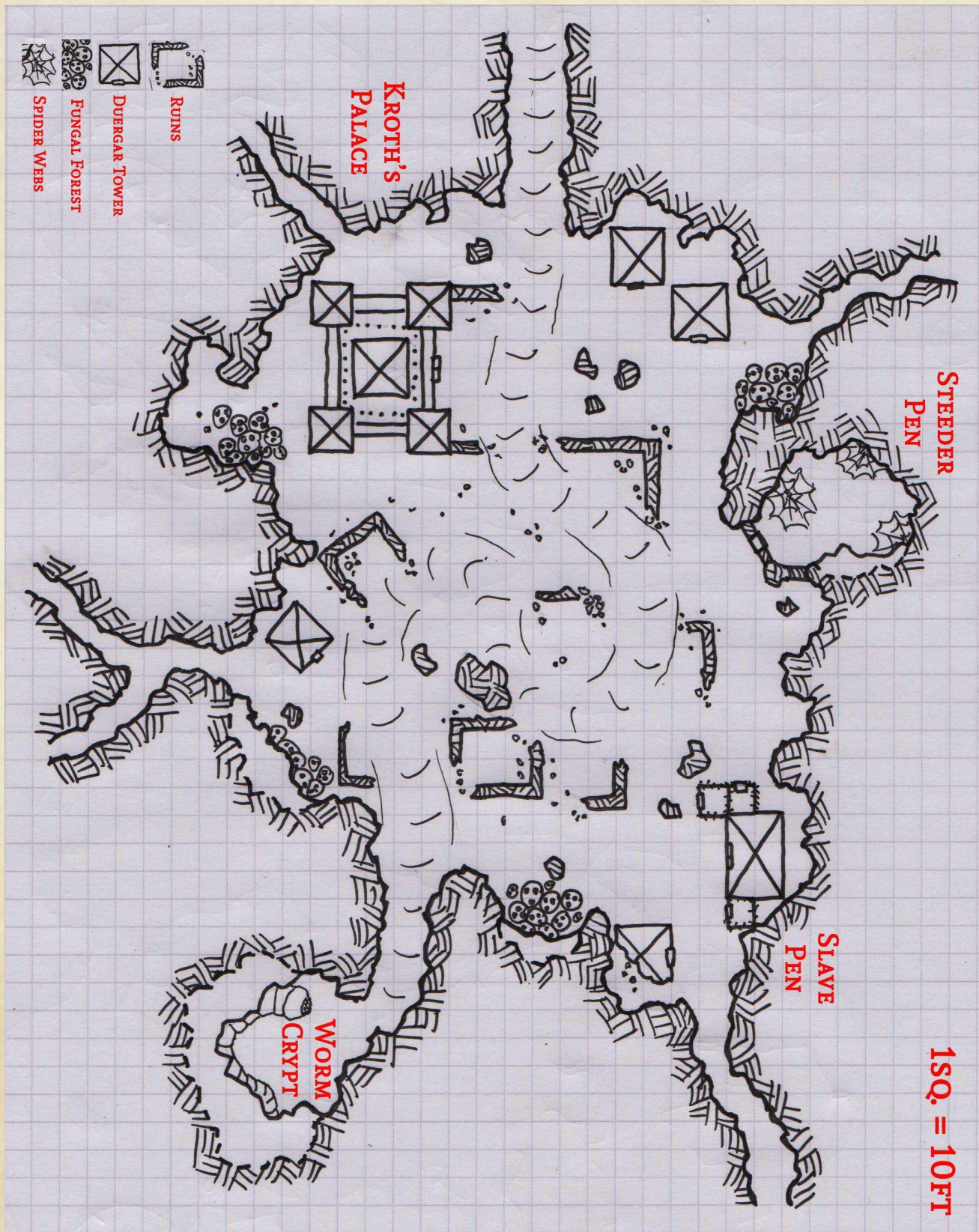
4-6 2d6 **grimlocks**

7-8 2d6 **goblins**

9 1d4 shield dwarf **commoners**

10 1d4 rock gnome **commoners**

MAP - GRINDSTONE



SLAVE PEN

Three pens made of sharp shards of metal hold a handful of slaves including duergar, grimlocks and humans. They are spread around a central, blockish tower of smooth stone, punctured regularly by thin window slits. A single gray dwarf stands watch outside the tower, her face drawn into a blank frown.

Split by race between the pens are 1d4 human **commoners**, 2d6 **grimlocks** and 3 **duergar**. The duergar are entirely despondent, they have accepted their punishment and wish to fulfil it. The humans are Betha and Urth Brightwood (LG female and male Illuskan human **commoners**) and Shui Wan (LN male Shou human **spy**). The Brightwoods were captured in a drow raid on their village near Luskan and were traded to the duergar. Shui Wan claims a similar story, but is actually a zhentarim spy sent to the Underdark to negotiate trade deals with the gray dwarves, clearly the negotiations failed. The grimlocks are near-mindless creatures who do not respond to the characters. Only Shui has any information about Boddyknock, and he will trade it only for his freedom. If the characters free him from the slave pen, he can tell them that the 'ugly little gnome' is being held in Kroth's Palace, in the southwest of the city.

The pens are guarded at all times by a duergar patrol (See Grindstone Random Encounters), three of whom remain invisible unless combat breaks out or a prisoner escapes. The visible duergar holds the keys to the pens.

The pens are made of five-foot-tall shards of metal. These can be scales with a successful DC 16 Strength (Athletics) check. A failed check results in a character cutting themselves, taking 4 (1d6) slashing damage. The doors to the pens are made of iron bars, and can be unlocked with the key, or with a successful DC 14 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. The doors can also be broken from their hinges with a DC 20 Strength check, but this makes a loud noise which draws in an additional duergar patrol who arrive in 1d4 rounds.

WORM CRYPT

Down a hundred-foot-long tunnel lies the bare exoskeleton of a gargantuan worm. Although clearly deceased, the creature is terrifying to behold, and must be the beast responsible for the destruction of Grindstone. Near the entrance to the cavern in which it died is a stone monument covered in dwarven script.

The monument reads; 'Here lie the bodies of those who fought for their city...' in Dwarvish. It is followed by a list of names which wraps around the stone monolith.

Although the cavern looks empty at first, a successful DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that behind the huge corpse of the purple worm is a makeshift camp of canvas and zurkhwood huts.

Living in these huts are three **duergar darkhafts** named Skaldur Blackstone (m), Helgreth Ironhew (f) and Mardred Darkhammer (f). These three make up a secret society called the Triarchy, a rebellious sect of duergar who aim to assassinate Kroth and free their gray dwarf kin. When the characters arrive, they are painstakingly distilling some purple worm poison using alchemist's supplies from the dry crystals left in the purple worm's toxin sacs. They do not attack any character unless they are attacked, or their secret existence is threatened. They will help the characters if the party intend to kill Kroth.

Treasure. Should the party kill the Triarchy, they can recover 10 50gp gemstones, a set of alchemist's supplies, sixteen rations, three full waterskins and all of the darkhaft's equipment. A character proficient with alchemist's supplies can spend another hour distilling the poison and gain one vial of *purple worm poison*.

PURPLE WORMLINGS

Whilst the characters are conversing or fighting with the Triarchy, have the following encounter occur;

Suddenly, a sound like the cracking of stone echoes throughout the cavern; "By the gods it's happening!" shouts one of the duergar.



Around the rear of the purple worm exoskeleton are three purple worm eggs which were thought dead, until now. Three **purple wormlings** hatch out from the eggs before the character's eyes, and begin lurching about, desperately seeking out some delicious prey.



STEEDER PEN

This area of the cavern is sealed off from the rest by a tall stone wall. Stood atop it are two duergar with heavy crossbow, eyeing up everyone that passes by. From time to time, a duergar is admitted to enter, and the heavy iron bar across the iron gate is pulled away to allow access.

In order to access this area, the characters must make their way through a barred-iron gateway in a stone wall which separates it from the main cavern. The wall is twenty feet high, accessible only by a ladder on the far side. Stood atop the wall are two **duergar kavalrachni**. They will only let authorised duergar pass. The gateway is barred from the inside, but can be broken down with a DC 20 Strength check. Doing so causes a duergar patrol to arrive in 1d4 rounds (see Grindstone Random Encounters). The wall can be scaled with a DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check. If the party reveal themselves, one of the kavalrachni will whistle, and a **female steeder** will clamber up the wall, allow them to mount it, and chase after the characters.

Once beyond the wall, read the following;

All around you are thick, sticky spiderwebs, some around twenty-five feet across. Lying low upon these, and plastering the walls and ceiling are tens of enormous tarantula. You feel unnerved by the hundreds of eyes that must be glaring at you from the shadows, but none of the arachnids seem hungry enough to attack.

This chamber contains eight **female steeders** and ten **male steeders**. None of them are angry or hungry enough to attack the party unless they are in danger. If any one of the steeders is threatened, all of them join in the attack.

Large portions of the floor, and all of the walls and ceiling are covered with webs (*Dungeon Master's Guide* p.105).

Treasure. If the characters kill all of the steeders, they can loot 3d8 steeder eggs, worth 50gp each to the right buyer.

KROTH'S PALACE

Standing tall above the ruins, this duergar fortress stands stoic as the last building of note in Grindstone. Since its previous occupants were brought low by the coming of the purple worm, Kroth, the hideous fomorian, has claimed it as his own. Although he occasionally leaves on slave raids and underdark excursions, Kroth spends the majority of his time in the palace, living a life of relative luxury. Despite his grand lifestyle, Kroth still feels the need to torture and mock other creatures, especially Fey, and he proudly displays the living trophies of those he has maimed throughout his palace of grotesques.

PALACE GENERAL FEATURES

The following features are common throughout the upper levels of Kroth's Palace:

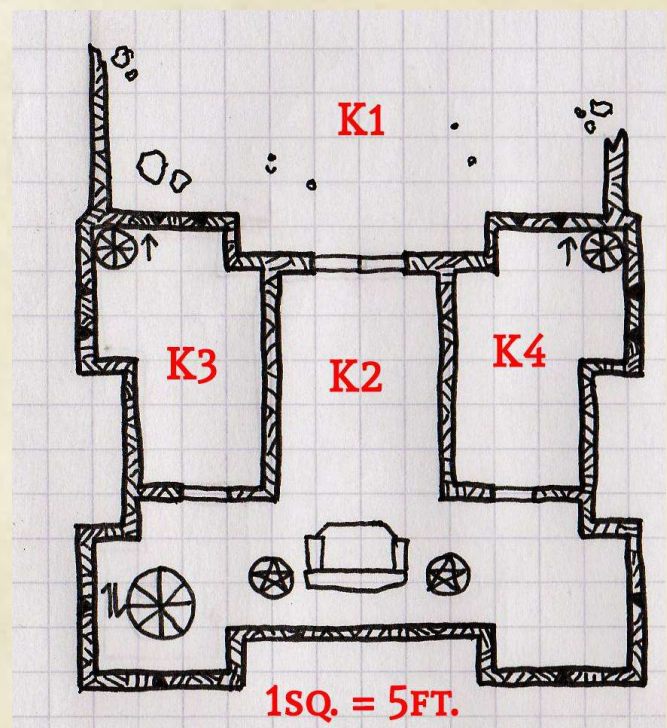
Balistraria. The tower elements of the palace have numerous arrowslits (marked on the map by black triangles in the walls). Creatures can fire in a straight line out of these from inside the palace, and have three-quarters cover whilst they do so.

Ceilings and Doors. The palace has high, vaulted ceilings that are 20 feet high. The doors of the palace are only five feet wide but are around fifteen feet high. Most are damaged from where Kroth has forced his deformed body through their frames.

Light. The chambers of Kroth's Palace are lit by torches in sconces on the walls. These are at a height of fifteen feet.

Staircases. The palace is filled with spiral staircases leading up and down. These count as difficult terrain. Changing floor via a staircase therefore costs 40 feet of movement.

MAP - PALACE GROUND FLOOR



K1. COURTYARD

Horrid, winged creatures of stone with gaping maws full of needlelike teeth stare down at you with eyes full of malice as you approach the half-ruined courtyard. Pieces of broken wall lie strewn around, as well as the smashed plinths of destroyed statues. A towering pair of engraved zurkwood doors marks the entrance to the palace.

Where the ruined walls of the courtyard meet the building are two **gargoyles** (one on each side). Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 20 or higher notice one of the gargoyles shift a claw ever so slightly. If the gargoyles are attacked, they fight back, and four **duergar** armed with heavy crossbows run to area K3 and K4, opening fire on the characters through the arrow loops. If the characters peacefully approach within fifteen feet of the palace doors one of them calls out in a gravelly tone;

"You're not going to want to do that. The master of this palace is no longer here."

If the party question the gargoyle, it tells the story of the destruction of Grindstone by the purple worm, and how Gruthin Blackstone the Deep King of Grindstone stood against the worm with his royal guard in the cavern to the south east. He killed the worm with a great blow from his adamantite Warhammer, but succumbed to the creature's potent venom and died a slow and painful death. After that Grindstone fell apart both literally and metaphorically. Now a foul creature calls the palace his home.



K2. THRONE ROOM

If the characters enter this room without causing a fight outside, they interrupt Kroth in the middle of a sanguine feast;

As you emerge into the room you're confronted by a horrific sight. Four gray dwarves stand along the walls, averting their eyes from what is unfolding before them. A hulking, horribly deformed giant with purple skin and one bulging, orange eye is dining on another duergar. The giant's meal lies splattered on the floor, whilst the misshapen giant picks apart his organs with clear delight. As you enter, the hulking monstrosity turns his head toward you, every vertebra in his twisted neck cracking with the effort. As his visage confronts you, you feel a shiver run down spines. "Who are theesh vishitorsh?" he asks aloud, bloody drool oozing from between his cracked lips.

Kroth the **fomorian** is not initially hostile to the party unless they attack him. He is guarded by four **duergar stone guard** who are loyal to him until death (theirs or his).

If the characters don't attack, Kroth will happily hold a conversation with them. His twisted neck and split lips result in a rasping voice that is truly awful to perceive, and drool constantly drips down onto his crumpled toes as he leans forward awkwardly in his throne. If the party do wish to talk to him, he will insist upon sitting at his throne, a process which takes a good few minutes as he drags his distorted frame around the room and awkwardly onto the great black iron throne in the middle of the chamber. Either side of the throne are two statues of perfectly formed, godlike humans. At times, Kroth loses focus on what the characters are saying and gazes longingly at the statues. Kroth also has what appears to be a pet **giant spider** with him. This actually belongs to Vadiana, and was left with Kroth as a reminder of his *Geas*.

Under no circumstances will Kroth hand over Boddyknock to the characters, although he will let them visit him supervised by two of the stone guard. If the party keep asking for Boddyknock to be freed, Kroth becomes increasingly agitated, to the point of aggression. The third time characters bring up the subject, he commands his guards to capture them, and take them to one of the prison cells (area K17).

If characters start a fight in the courtyard, Kroth is ready for a fight as soon as the characters open the palace doors, giving him a surprise round. The four guard assist him. The sound of combat draws all other duergar in the palace to this room. If Kroth's cronies start to fall, or he drops to fewer than 80 hit points, he flees up the staircase to area K8.

K3. MUSEUM OF TWISTED PIXIES

There are two **duergar** armed with heavy crossbows in this room. They are supposed to be watching area K1, but don't notice players approaching unless combat breaks out there.

An aura of sadness envelopes this room. You suddenly feel downtrodden and morbid. As you look up, you notice why. Hanging from chains from the ceiling are dozens and dozens of jars and cages. In each one of these is a pixie; dried, pickled, stuffed or stitched together.

Kroth, like all fomorians, despises Fey, and killing pixies is one of his favourite pastimes. A successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals one **pixie** still alive, but with four levels of exhaustion. The pixies name is Twinklet. She will help the party if they set her free and heal her up.

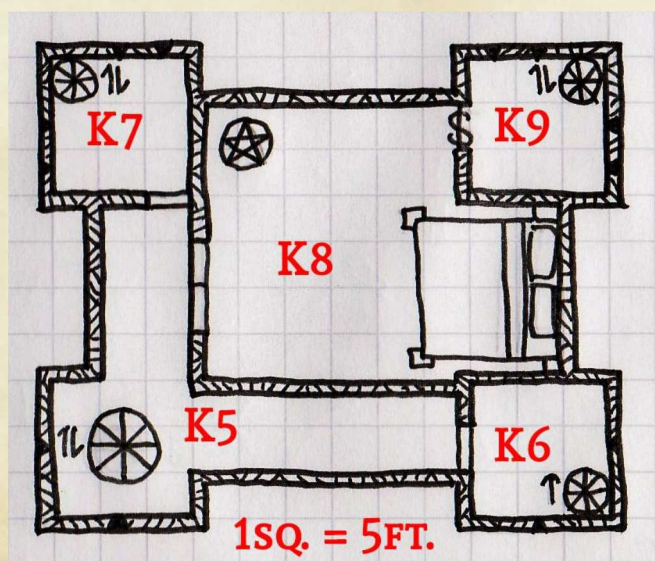
K4. PANTRY

There are two **duergar** armed with heavy crossbows in this room. They are supposed to be watching area K1, but don't notice players approaching unless combat breaks out there.

You recoil as you see the contents of this room, it appears as if rotting flesh is hanging from the walls, glistening with moisture. As you recover from the initial shock, it becomes clear that the material is not flesh, but something else. Areas of it have been cut away in strips.

A DC 16 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals the rotting flesh substance to be ripplebark; an edible fungus of the underdark. This area of the palace is used as a pantry, ripplebark being Kroth's favourite food.

MAP - PALACE FIRST FLOOR



K5. LANDING

Two corridors lead away from a large spiral staircase. Adorning the walls are stuffed trophy heads; a giant spider, a dire wolf, a giant bat... As the corridor stretches on, you notice more disturbing heads; an owlbear, an orc, kuo-toa, grimlock. Then you notice the satyr. Then the elf.

K6. SOUTH-EAST TOWER

This area is empty.

K7. NORTH-WEST TOWER

This room contains a **gray ooze** disguised against the east wall. It will move to attack characters that get within 10 feet of it. It is otherwise empty.

K8. KROTH'S BEDCHAMBER

To enter Kroth's Bedchamber, characters must get through a large pair of locked zurkhwood doors. These can be opened with a key which Kroth keeps on his person at all times. Alternatively, a DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools or a DC 20 Strength check can open the door.

Curled up underneath the bed in this room is a **displacer beast**; Kroth's beloved pet.

A smashed up four poster bed takes up a lot of the room. The wooden frame is rotten, the bedlinen covered in damp and mold. In the far corner is a strange statue, the stone statue itself is a masterpiece. A perfectly sculpted man with an incredible physique and gorgeous features. Disgracefully, the statue has a second material sculpted onto it; it appears fleshy and moist. This awful matter distorts the statue's features, turning it from a demigod-like form to a hideous, malformed mutant.

Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) or 17 or more notice the displacer beast under the bed. It glares at the players with a hungry look in its eyes. If noticed, it doesn't attack, but if it goes unseen it ambushes the players when they make a move to leave the room.

If the characters end up fighting Kroth in this room, his displacer beast joins in. Kroth can also use an action to animate the statue, which has the statistics of a **flesh golem**.

Treasure. Also hidden underneath Kroth's bed, visible with DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check, is a giant-sized wooden chest. Opening the chest requires a key which Kroth keeps on his person at all times. Alternatively, a DC 16 Dexterity check using thieves' tools or a DC 25 Strength check is enough to open the chest. Inside are handfuls of grisly trophies; sprite wings, giant owl feathers and drow ears. The chest also contains a **+1 drow shortsword**, a flask of *oil of sharpness* and five iron sculptures of duergar deities (25gp each). Also found here is Boddyknock's equipment, including his map of the underdark from the Cartographer's Guild.



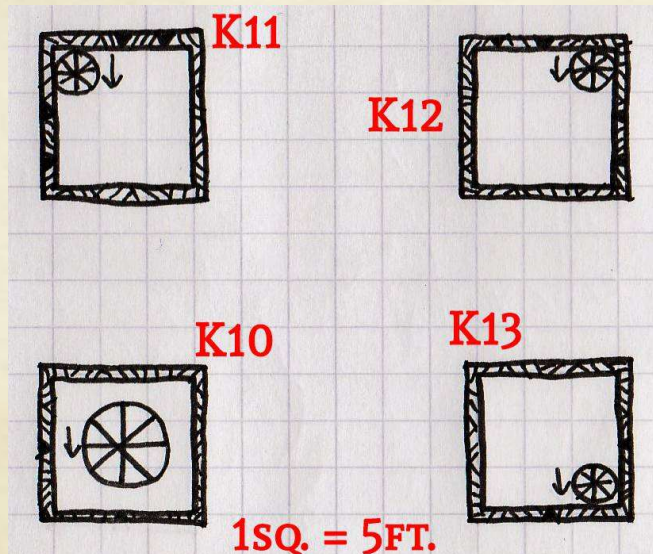
K9. NORTH-EAST TOWER

Hanging from a noose attached to a cobweb covered chandelier in this room is the fresh corpse of a female duergar. Tiny spiders scuttle through the dwarf's hair, and over her lifeless facial features.

If the body is disturbed, a **swarm of spiders** attacks the cause of the disturbance.

Treasure. As well as the normal treasure (See Grindstone Random Encounters), the duergar has a *potion of healing* in the front pocket of her leather apron.

MAP - PALACE SECOND FLOOR



K10. SOUTH-WEST TOWER TOP

This room is empty and unlit.

K11. NORTH-WEST TOWER TOP

This room is empty and unlit.

K12. NORTH-EAST TOWER TOP

This room is unlit and empty, save for a swarm of vampire roosting in the roof. They will attack if a source of light is brought into the room. Use the statistics for **swarm of bats** but with the following changes;

- The swarm has 44 hit points
- The swarm's AC is 14.
- The swarms *Bites* attacks deal an extra 7 (2d6) necrotic damage. The target's hit point maximum is reduced by that amount. The reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.
- The swarms Challenge is 1/2 (100 XP).

If this occurs, read the following;

Suddenly, a thick swarm of leathery wings begins flapping around your heads, battering and slapping you. You start feeling tiny bites cover your face and shoulders as the foul bats sink their needle fangs into your flesh.

K13. SOUTH-EAST TOWER TOP

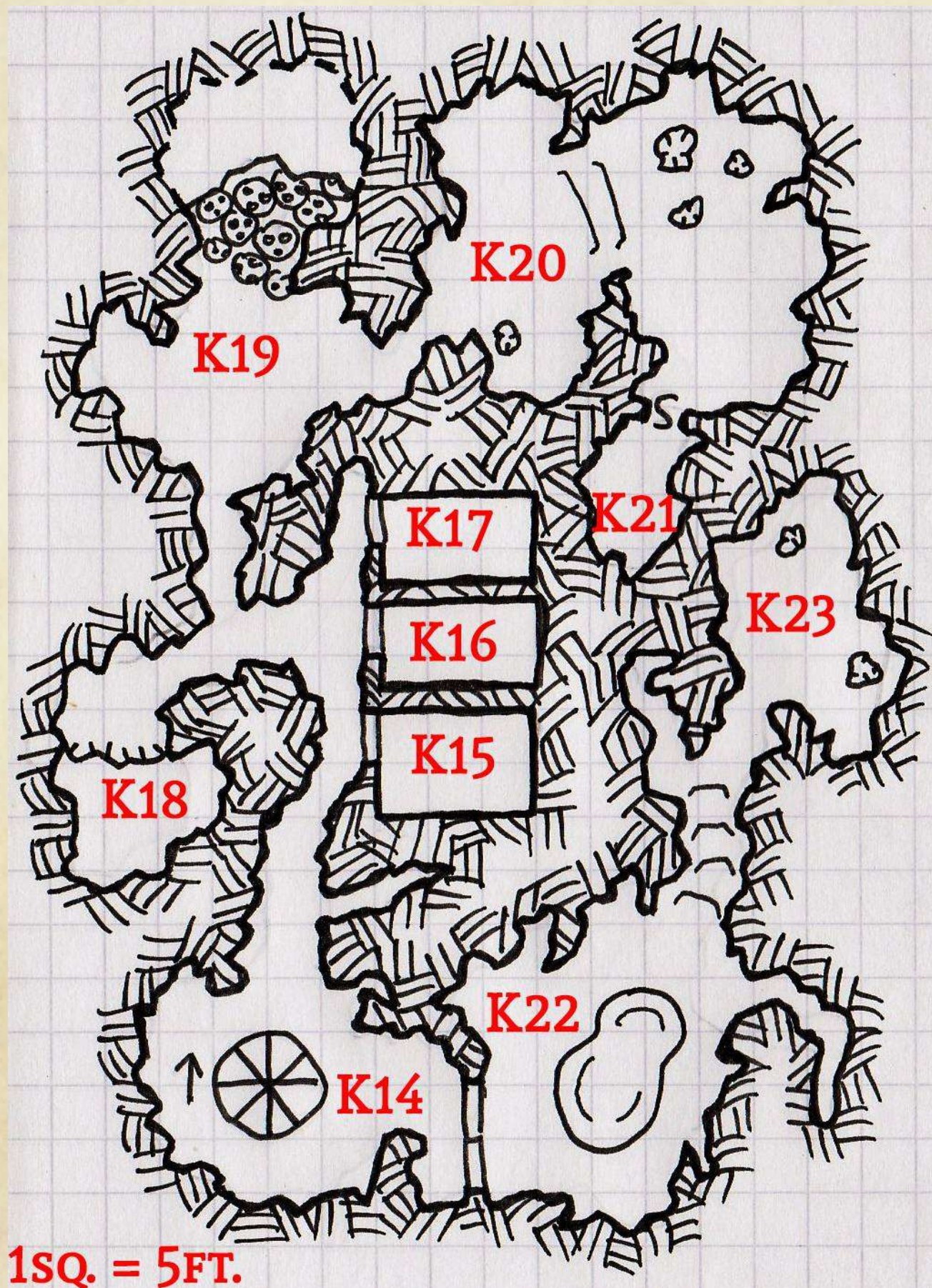
A small figure is crumpled up in the corner of this room, shivering and whimpering.

If characters make their way into the room, the figure leap up and snarls at them, revealing it to be a **goblin** affected by Kroth's *Curse of the Evil Eye*. The creature managed to escape from area K23, but couldn't find a way out of the palace without being seen.

If the party take pity on the goblin, and offer it food, the goblin introduces itself as Skrag. She can tell the characters about the layout of the palace's dungeon, warn them about the green slime in area K22 and, if asked, can verify that 'the big head pale goblin' (Boddyknock) is being held in area K51. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check makes it clear that Skrag is holding something back. A DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion) check is enough to coax a little more information out of her; the goblins are looked after by Mother Eyebright, who talks to Kroth through a magic stone.



MAP - PALACE DUNGEON



DUNGEON GENERAL FEATURES

The dungeon beneath Kroth's Palace is dank and dark, used for keeping prisoners and Kroth's hideous pets. The following features are common throughout;

Ceilings and Walls. The roofs of the caves are at least twenty feet high. The walls are rough, and can be climbed with a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check.

Light. Unless noted otherwise in the text, assume all chambers are unlit.

K14. DUNGEON ENTRANCE

As you descend the great spiral staircase, the light begins to fade. As the darkness encroaches, the air becomes cold and stale until eventually you emerge into a dimly lit natural cave.

This room is empty, but unless characters succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity (Stealth) check they are noticed by the four stone guard in area K18 who arrive in the next round whilst invisible.

K15. PRISON CELL ONE

Slumped in the back corner of this dingy cell is your dear friend; Boddyknock Murnid. He appears exhausted, and is sleeping uncomfortably on the cold, wet floor.

The iron-barred door to this cell requires a DC 15 Dexterity check with thieves' tools or a DC 20 Strength check to open. Alternatively, the cell can be opened with a key from one of the stone guard in area K18.

Boddyknock (NG male rock gnome **scout**, currently suffering from two levels of exhaustion), is ecstatic to see the characters, but tries to keep calm, and warns them that there are invisible guards always listening in on them. He tells them they need to escape quickly.

K16. PRISON CELL TWO

This prison cell contains the **skeleton** of a goblin, with a small coin purse in its hand. If disturbed, the (Small) skeleton animates and attacks. The iron-barred door to this cell requires a DC 15 Dexterity check with thieves' tools or a DC 20 Strength check to open. Alternatively, the cell can be opened with a key from one of the stone guard in area K18.

Treasure. The coin purse contains a gemstone worth 10gp and 6cp.

K17. PRISON CELL THREE

This prison cell is empty. The iron-barred door to this cell requires a DC 15 Dexterity check with thieves' tools or a DC 20 Strength check to open. Alternatively, the cell can be opened with a key from one of the stone guard in area K18.

The characters, if captured, may end up here.

K18. GUARDROOM

This room contains four **duergar stone guard**. They are currently stood in the higher level of the chamber, throwing pebbles into a cup in the lower area. Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 15 or higher can hear stones being thrown. If characters enter the dungeon and do not attempt stealth, these guard hear and turn invisible, following them until the time is right to attack.

This cavern has two layers, one several feet below the other. In this lower level is a chipped ceramic cup which contains three small stones.

K19. FUNGAL LARDER

The large cave ahead is half filled with a fungal forest, which grows beneath an overhanging shelf of rock.

There are two **violet fungi** hidden among the rest of the fungi.

K20. TORTURE CAVERN

This room contains a **yeth hound** used by Kroth to capture any prisoners who might make an escape. If the characters have somehow managed to get into the dungeon level of the Palace without alerting Kroth, the yeth hound can use its *Telepathic Bond* to make him aware.

Strange metal instruments hang from makeshift racks on stalagmites in this cavern. They look well used, stained with rust and what must be blood. The floor too is stained in places, notably beneath the numerous set of manacles hammered into the stone walls. Other than these morbid features, the cave seems empty.

Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 15 or higher notice that an area of the stone appears devoid of moss, fungi or stains. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals a simple opening mechanism; a metal ring behind a false stone.

Skaldur Blackstone (see Worm Crypt) knows of this door's location, and how to open it, but is unlikely to tell the party.



K21. BLACKSTONE'S VAULT

As you pull on the metal ring, a whole section of stone wall comes loose, and slides off to one side. Behind this secret door is small cave packed with treasure. Two stone guardians are sculpted into the stone of the cavern walls, each holds a large glaive.

This vault, undiscovered by Kroth, contains the treasure hoard of the Blackstone family; the duergar that once ruled over Grindstone. Skaldur Blackstone (see Worm Crypt) is the only living descendant of that old family line.

Characters that enter the vault may trigger the following trap;

GUARDIANS OF THE VAULT

Complex trap (level 5-10, dangerous threat)

Used to defend the treasure hoard of the Blackstone family, this trap has thwarted raiders and thieves for hundreds of years, both before and after the fall of Grindstone. The only initial evidence of the trap are the stone guardians, sculpted into the cave walls.

Trigger. This trap activates as soon as any creature enters the first five feet of the cave (area K21) without saying the password 'Blackstone' in dwarven.

Initiative. This trap acts on initiative 10 and 20.

Active Elements. The Guardians of the Vault includes a pair of scything glaives by the door, a net which falls from the ceiling to trap thieves, and a magical gem which casts the *Sunbeam* spell aimed at the doorway.

Two Scything Glaives (Initiative 20). The two glaives held by the stone guardians chop down across the doorway, each has a +8 bonus to the attack roll and deals 22 (4d10) slashing damage on a hit. This only occurs once per glaive.

Falling Net (Initiative 10). A weighted, chain net covering the first 10-foot-by-10-foot portion of the cave falls to the floor. Any creature fully within this area must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or be restrained and take 3 (1d4) bludgeoning damage. A creature can use its action to make a DC 12 Strength check to try and free itself or another creature from the net. Dealing 10 bludgeoning damage to the net (AC 18) also frees a creature, but the creature takes half of the damage. This only occurs once.

Sunbeam Gem (Initiative 10). A gemstone set into the far wall casts the *Sunbeam* spell at 6th level, aimed at the door. This spell lasts up to one minute unless the gem can be deactivated.

Countermeasures. Each of the trap's active elements offers potential countermeasures.

Scything Glaives & Falling Net. The only way to prevent these trap elements activating is to notice them before they do so. This requires a Wisdom (Perception) check of 16 or more. Provided the characters have noticed the traps, they can attempt the following checks to disarm them;

Dexterity check with thieves' tools, DC 15. Creatures can use thieves' tools in the area of the traps to foil their mechanism. Failure on this check results in the trap element activating.

Attack. A creature in the area of the traps can attempt to smash their mechanisms. The trap mechanisms have AC 15 and 15 hit points. If characters miss an attack, or fail to break the mechanism in one attack, the trap element activates.

Sunbeam Gem. The gem can be disabled with three successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) checks. Each check requires an action. A creature must be within 5 feet of the gem to attempt the check. Alternatively, the gem can be disabled with a successful casting of *Dispel Magic* (DC 16) targeting the rune.

K22. FRESHWATER POOL

To enter this area of the dungeon, characters must get through a large pair of locked zurkhwood doors. These can be opened with a key which Kroth keeps on his person at all times. Alternatively, a DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools or a DC 20 Strength check can open the door.

The sound of dripping fills this chamber, as water droplets fall down from the high ceiling into a pool of fresh water. The sound echoes around the caves. Swimming at the bottom of the pool are a dozen or so eyeless, albino fish.

Characters have disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing whilst in this area. A DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check reveals the water to be clean and drinkable. Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 15 or higher notice a huge patch of *Green Slime* covering the ceiling of this cavern above the edge of the pool, save for the five-foot-square closest to area K23. Characters that stop to take a drink or fill a waterskin anywhere other than that five-foot-square will be attacked by the slime.

K23. GOBLIN CAVERN

This cave is home to six **goblins** afflicted by Kroth's *Curse of the Evil Eye* and their 'mother' a **green hag** called Mother Eyeblight. Kroth keeps these horribly cursed goblins as playthings which he likes to torture and bully. Mother Eyeblight adores it too, but pretends to mother the goblins in a twisted family fantasy.

The tunnel ahead is strewn with fish bones and rags, clearly something has been feasting in the cavern ahead.

When characters enter this cave, they are instantly addressed by Mother Eyeblight, her disfigured goblin children cowering behind her rotting skirts.

"Please do leave my pretties, you shouldn't be down here now should you?"

Assuming the characters don't turn and leave immediately, Mother Eyeblight issues a second warning. If the characters attack, or don't leave after the second warning, she grabs a *Sending Stone* from around her neck, and screams a warning to Kroth, who has the other of the pair. If she manages this, Kroth arrives with his displacer beast in 4 rounds.

DROW ASSAULT

At any time you feel dramatic enough, the drow, led by Vadiana, assault Grindstone. Their main objective is to capture Boddyknock, but they also wish to slay Kroth and enslave any remaining duergar. The assault consists of Vadiana Kithryn (**drow priestess of lolth**), her two **drow elite warrior** bodyguards and four **drow**. They are accompanied by six **giant wolf spiders**. The giant spider in area K2 will also join them, turning against Kroth.

The drow assault starts with the giant spiders moving in, the next round the drow emerge, and finally, the next round, Vadiana and her bodyguards emerge.

Read the following when the spiders arrive;

All of a sudden you hear a scuttling noise. As you whip your heads around in search of the sound, you see half a dozen huge spiders crawling into sight. Forty-eight jet black eyes stare hungrily at you all.

Read the following when the drow arrive;

Running toward the fight come four drow. Clearly something is afoot.

Read the following when Vadiana arrives;

An elf with pitch black skin, deep purple eyes and a wicked grin arrives to join the fray. She is accompanied by two bodyguards who look more than ready for a fight.

‘What a surprise, a little group of overworlders come to join our theatricals. I look forward to clamping you in irons!’

With an elegant swish, she grabs a spider-topped staff from off her back amidst a cloud of billowing spidersilk cloak and begins to unleash a volley of spells.

If both Vadiana and Kroth are involved in the fight they single each other out for combat, whilst constantly chucking insults back and forth. If any character intervenes, the pair briefly set aside their differences to lay into the offending character.

OUT OF THE ABYSS

If you wanted this adventure to link with *Out of the Abyss*, you may have to fudge dice rolls to have the drow win. They should capture Boddyknock and take him to *Velkynveve*. To truly immerse the characters in the campaign, you might wish to capture the party as well.

DRAMATIC TIMING

Good moments to have the drow assault include; after the party release Boddyknock from his prison cell, after the party get captured, 1d4 rounds into the fight against Kroth or when the party enter the dungeon level of the palace. To make it obvious the drow have arrived, consider having a duergar guard run around the palace alerting all other guards to what’s occurring, inadvertently providing the characters with the same information.



OUTCOMES

Depending on your reason for running this adventure, the characters may have achieved the following:

- Rescued Boddyknock and returned him to the Cartographer's Guild of Mythrad.
- Gained a reward from the town militia of Mythrad akin to 250gp for the return of Boddyknock.
- Killed Kroth the fomorian slaver and any duergar loyal to him.
- Reinstated Skaldur Blackstone as the rightful ruler of Grindstone.
- Killed Vadiana and her company of drow.
- Become captives of the drow and immersed in the *Out of the Abyss* campaign.



APPENDIX A

This appendix contains additional magic items that are required to play this adventure.

CHOKER OF SILENCE

Wondrous item, uncommon A choker of silence is a silver chain, typically with an amulet embedded in it, which can be placed around the neck of creature where it automatically tightens. Creatures wearing a choker of silence are permanently under the effects of a *Silence* spell. The only way to deactivate a choker of silence is to cut it with a magical weapon or cast *Dispel Magic* upon it. Doing so destroys the item.



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