

# INTO THE DEEP DARK

BY ALEX KAMMER







# Dun Delve

20 ft



- 1) Administration Offices
- 2) Barracks
- 3) Inn - The Ceaseless Succor
- 4) Warehouse
- 5) Cistern
- 6) Storage
- 7) Armory/Smithy
- 8) Earl Runnel's Bedchamber
- 9) Urlyn T'ylan's Bedchamber
- 10) Parlor of Dreams
- 11) Guard Chamber



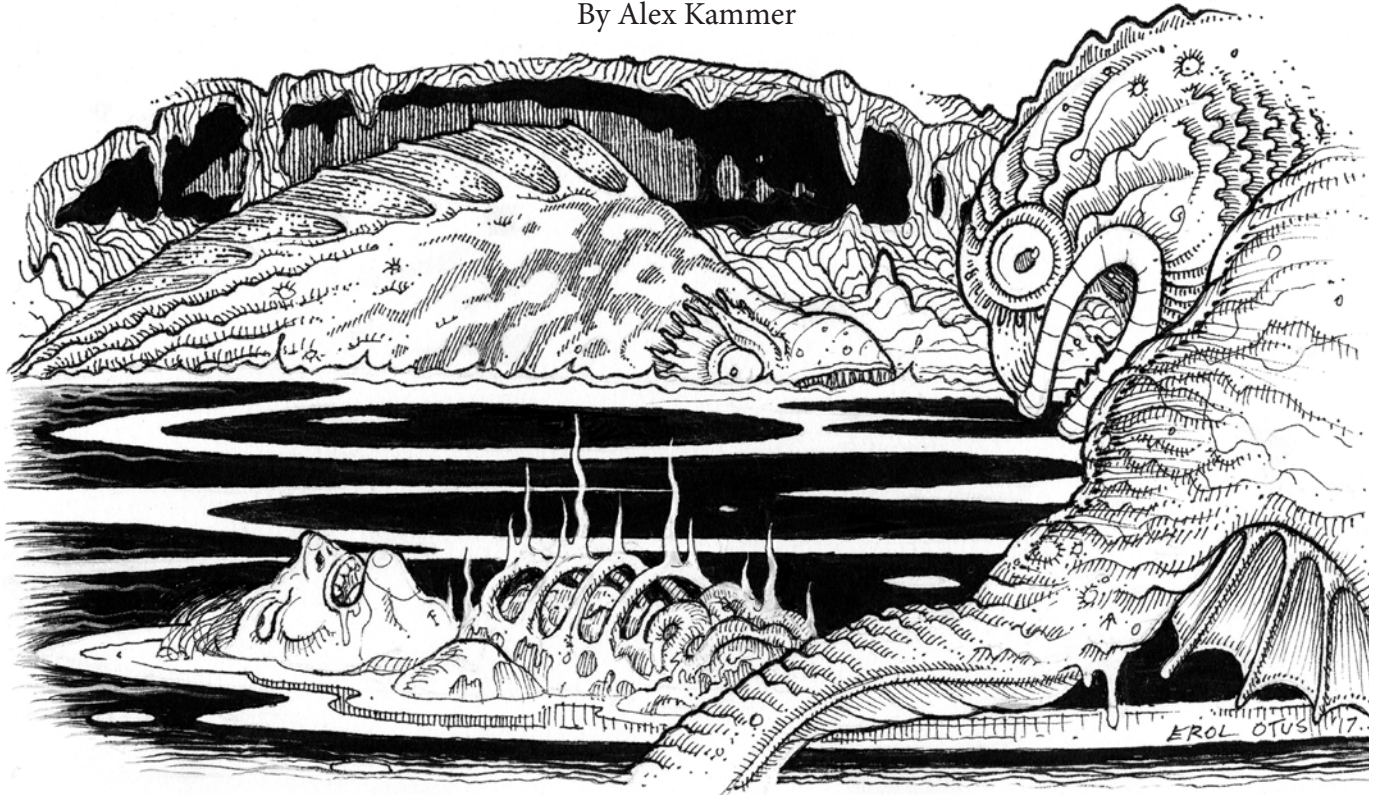


# INTO THE DEEP DARK

Gamehole Publishing Module AK2

An Adventure for 4 to 6 Characters of Levels 3 to 5

By Alex Kammer



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# The Story So Far

The town of Ockney's Hold, located on the banks of the Oriana River, has long been home to a thriving mining industry. The area's chief mineral export is copper, along with its semiprecious derivative



azurite, a deep-blue crystal produced by weathering copper ore deposits. But little did the folk of Ockney's Hold suspect that when azurite is crushed to powder, it produces an incredibly powerful euphoric effect when ingested by brain gorgers and other psychic-energy-feeding monsters of the Deep Dark.

Seeing an opportunity to exploit the area's azurite stocks, a criminal organization known as the Ceaseless installed operatives in Ockney's Hold, charging them with providing a steady supply of refined and powdered azurite for highly lucrative sale in the Deep Dark. Things started off well enough for the Ceaseless, whose operatives successfully rerouted a portion of the refined azurite out of Ockney's Hold and back to one of the mines in the Copper Hills where it had been originally dug. From there, the azurite could be shipped directly into the Deep Dark.

This scheme was overseen by a Ceaseless operative named Marlipp—a brain gorger who directed the operation from his lair deep in the mine. And everything was working smoothly until Marlipp decided to try “the Tasties” (what the brain gorgers call the powdered azurite) for himself. The effect was instantaneous and powerful. The highly addictive substance quickly took hold of Marlipp, compromising his thinking and his actions alike.

Previously cold and calculating, the brain gorger became paranoid, irrational, and delusional. He convinced himself that without more direct action, the supply of Tasties would be compromised—an outcome that he could not endure. So Marlipp hit upon the drastic action of controlling the mind of Baron Reinson, the ruler of Ockney's Hold, with his Enslave ability. He then had the baron's chamberlain, Brice, captured and replaced with a doppelganger.

The effects were felt immediately in Ockney's Hold. The baron's personality seemed to change overnight, causing him to fire most of his long-term advisors, even as he elevated his chamberlain to his second-in-command. In broader terms, the governance of the barony began a steep slide that was noticed quickly by the baron's remaining advisors and many of the folk in Ockney's Hold.

At this point, one of the only remaining old-guard members of the baron's staff, High Steward Tavaras, took the extraordinary step of hiring a group of adventurers to find out what was affecting the baron and who was behind it. Following a series of clues and surviving a number of dangerous encounters, these adventurers traced the secret plots affecting the baron all the way back to the Ceaseless operative, Marlipp, in his Copper Hills mine hideout.

The final encounter in *The Brain Gorger's Appetite*, the first module in this series, saw the adventurers clash with Marlipp and his minions deep in the mines. Despite the awesome power of the brain gorger, the characters drove Marlipp off into the Deep Dark, thereby freeing the baron from his mental enslavement.

As the last adventure concluded, the adventurers were ready to make their way back to Ockney's Hold to report to Tavaras, the rescued Chamberlain Brice, and the now-freed Baron Reinson.

## Character Advancement

This adventure is designed for four to six characters of 3rd to 5th level. Characters should be 3rd level at the beginning of the adventure, and are likely to attain 4th level after surviving the “Drow Ambush” encounter in Act 3 of the adventure. They should attain 5th level before attempting the final encounter of “Act 6: Marlipp's Revenge.”

If you prefer story-based advancement in your campaigns, use the above guidelines to tell the players when to advance their characters to 4th and 5th level.

## Adventure Summary

**(If you are a player, stop reading!**

**The rest of this adventure is for DMs only)**

After a harrowing encounter with the terrible and disturbing brain gorger Marlipp, the adventurers return to Ockney's Hold to find and report to High Steward Tavaras. When last in the town, the characters had liberated Chamberlain Brice from the clutches of Brylunt, a doppelganger minion of Marlipp's, and had subsequently set off for the Copper Hills. The characters do not know whether Baron Reinson has been able to throw off the mental dominion imposed by Marlipp, and are thus returning to a very uncertain situation.

The characters eventually gain an audience with Baron Reinson and his oldest and most trusted advisors, Tavaras and Brice. The baron is himself again, but the characters find him understandably angry about what was done to him, and clearly struggling to make sense of recent events. The one thing the baron is absolutely sure of is that what happened to him should never happen again. As such, he charges the party with the specific mission to find and destroy the brain gorger Marlipp—calling it a matter of state security and the highest priority.



## Important NPCs:

**Baron Oliver Reinson**—Hereditary ruler of Ockney's Hold.

**Chamberlain Andre Brice**—Former captive of the doppelganger Brylunt, who has since resumed his duties.

**High Steward Braxton Tavaras**—

Tavaras hired the adventurers in *The Brain Gorger's Appetite*, and remains one of Baron Reinson's chief advisors.

**Marlipp**—A brain gorger working for the Ceaseless, once in charge of delivering azurite into the Deep Dark but now fled into that underground realm.

**Janis Tandin**—Newly appointed overseer of the mines where Marlipp once made his lair.

**Zanthos**—A sentient and friendly gelatinous cube that can provide much-needed aid and direction to the characters as they explore the Deep Dark.

**Brickers Rockhewer**—Leader of a svirfneblin trading caravan heading to the surface settlement of Marabiza from the Deep Dark stronghold of Dun Delve—a stronghold controlled by the Ceaseless.

**Earl Runnel**—A half-orc wererat who is the leader of Dun Delve.

**Urlyn T'ylan**—A drow outcast from the dark elf city of Fzan'ris, and Earl Runnel's second-in-command in Dun Delve.

**Kevroar Arroway and Zangold Greenfill**—The two resident mages of Dun Delve.

**Flurr**—A brain gorger currently at Dun Delve, who might have useful information for the characters.

When the characters accept the baron's mission, they know that they are headed underground—and that seeking Marlipp will invariably lead them far into the endless network of tunnels, caverns, and underground settlements known as the Deep Dark. They are given time to pick up provisions suitable for such a mission (most of which are provided at no cost; see "Meeting with the Baron," below) before heading back to the mines in the Copper Hills.

Characters with knowledge of the Deep Dark know that many of the intelligent inhabitants of that realm speak Undercommon. Ideally, one or more of the characters will speak that language or be able to cast *comprehend languages*. If that is not the case, Tavaras can arrange for the party to be given six *potions of comprehend languages* at no cost.



## POTION OF COMPREHEND LANGUAGES

*Potion, uncommon*

When you drink this potion, you gain the effect of the *comprehend languages* spell.

After going through the secret door at the back of Marlipp's former residence in the mine, the adventurers pick up the brain gorger's trail. The characters' descent into the Deep Dark plays out as a number of distinct encounters, including an attack by a vicious chuul, an odd interaction with an awakened and whimsical gelatinous cube named Zanthos, a drow ambush, and a meeting with a svirfneblin trading caravan.

Eventually, the adventurers make their way to a Ceaseless stronghold in the Deep Dark called Dun Delve. There, they attempt to obtain information about Marlipp from Dun Delve's crooked commander—Earl Runnel, a half-orc wererat—while trying not to run afoul of him or any of the other criminal denizens of the stronghold.

After learning where Marlipp has gone, the characters' pursuit of the brain gorger takes them farther into the Deep Dark. An attack by terrible tunnel trawlers, a trek through a fungal forest, and a battle alongside a subterranean lake are among the challenges the characters face before finally catching up with Marlipp for a final showdown.

## Same Quest. Different Heroes

This adventure assumes that the characters participated in the previous module and personally took part in driving off the foul brain gorger Marlipp. If they did not, you can either fill in that backstory by assuming the characters undertook that adventure "off screen," explaining the events of *The Brain Gorger's Appetite* to the players. Alternatively, you can run this adventure with a new group of characters whose previous adventuring exploits have seen them hired to finish the job the first group started.

Whatever circumstances bring the adventurers before the baron, they should have a clear understanding of what Marlipp has done, the events of the previous module, and the fact that Marlipp has fled through the secret door in the back of his lair into the Deep Dark.



# Adventure Start

Especially if you didn't use all the random encounters in the "Copper Hills" section of *The Brain Gorgers' Appetite*, you can play out the characters' return trip to Ockney's Hold if you wish. Alternatively, you can simply narrate the trip to start the adventure as the characters return to town by way of the east gate.

## Trouble at the Gates

Read or paraphrase the following to the players as the characters return to town:

The trip back from the mines and the Copper Hills was largely uneventful, but after the fierce battle with Marlipp and his minions, a few quiet days were most welcome. As you approach Ockney's Hold from the east, you take stock of the tasks still left to you, including tracking down High Steward Tavaras and reporting what you've learned—as well as enjoying a comfortable night in a proper inn.

As you draw closer to the east gate of the town, you notice a commotion of some sort. You

spot the distinctive bright-blue tabards of the Baron's Men, as several members of that personal garrison appear to be escorting a manacled and well-armored figure out of the gate tower and along the street heading into town. As you draw closer, you recognize the arrested figure as Drast Grimbank, the half-orc captain of the Ockney's Hold town guard. Drast was one of the town officials hired on shortly after the baron began to act so strangely. Perhaps the results of your expedition to the Copper Hills are already being felt here in Ockney's Hold!

After seeing the fallen guard captain escorted toward the Central Keep, the characters are free to seek a place to rest and to get a message to Tavaras. A number of housing options are available for the party (see the Ockney's Hold gazetteer at the end of *The Brain Gorgers' Appetite*). But wherever the characters go, the town is abuzz with news from the keep. The baron is apparently cleaning house by dismissing many of his advisors and ministers. Any Charisma (Persuasion) check made while talking to any Ockney's Hold resident informs the characters that Baron Reinson is "back to his old self" and getting rid of the "bad apples and hangers on" who had been leading him





astray. The characters also notice that the overall mood of local folk has improved since they were last in town.

Any message sent to Tavaras at the keep is responded to quickly. The high steward seeks the adventurers out wherever they are staying, wanting a complete report of what happened in the Copper Hills. You can run this as a roleplaying encounter or simply summarize the meeting, but either way, Tavaras learns the full story of the characters' trip to the mines, what they found there, their confrontation with Marlipp, and the brain gorger's subsequent flight. The interview ends with Tavaras solemnly thanking the characters for their service, paying the 100 gp promised to each character for completing their mission (see *The Brain Gorger's Appetite*)—and informing them that they have an audience with the baron tomorrow afternoon at the keep.

## Meeting with the Baron

However the characters spend the rest of their first day and the next morning is up to them, but they are expected when they eventually appear at the Central Keep. Read or paraphrase the following:

After presenting yourselves at the main gates of the keep, you are quickly escorted into the main building, past the great hall and into one of the smaller council chambers. You immediately recognize the three figures seated at the far end of the council table—Baron Reinson, flanked on either side by Chamberlain Brice and High Steward Tavaras. Four members of the Baron's Men stand behind the seated trio, against the far wall.

Though the baron looks tired, he takes all of you in with a calm and level gaze. Glancing to his advisors at either side, he sighs wearily before he speaks.

"Thank you for coming, and thank you for your tremendous service to the barony—even if I was completely unaware of it at the time. I am appalled and deeply embarrassed at what has happened. However, my own feelings are not important right now. What is important is the safety of my people. I cannot view this creature Marlipp's actions as anything other than a direct attack on the barony. While I have heard tales of creatures such as brain gorgers, I never really believed they existed. And I certainly never thought for a moment that their power might be directed against me."

The baron stands as he continues, his demeanor and tone growing suddenly hard.

"You have done us all a great service, but as I understand from my high steward's report, the creature Marlipp still lives. For the sake of the barony and my sanity, he must be destroyed. I charge you with hunting down this brain gorger, for the barony will not be secure while he lives. I cannot force you to take on this task, but if you do accept it, know that you will be handsomely rewarded and the Barony of Rawn will forever be in your debt. Will you undertake this most important mission?"

If asked about the handsome reward, the baron casually mentions a figure of 5,000 gp for each character—a small fortune in a place like Ockney's Hold—to be given as some combination of cash, title, and a land grant in the barony. Additionally, he insists on supporting the expedition by providing the characters with any mundane gear that could normally be purchased in Ockney's Hold (including equipment, armor, and weapons), as well as one *potion of healing* for each character.

## ACT 1: Return to the Copper Hills

The trip back to the mine that was Marlipp's base of operations can be as eventful or as easy as you wish. The wagon camps and inns referenced in *The Brain Gorger's Appetite* remain options for characters looking for a place to stay at the end of the first day of travel.

Day two sees the characters begin the gradual ascent into the Copper Hills. As before, the surrounding terrain changes the closer the characters get to the mines, with scrub and grassland slowly replaced with broken patches of trees and full forest. Feel free to break out the encounters described in *The Brain Gorger's Appetite* for the second night of travel if they haven't been used already.

Day three takes the party through the Copper Hills, with the track they follow once more leading them to the mines. Read or paraphrase the following, adding details as appropriate if the characters did not take part in the previous adventure:

After hours of following the rough track—really nothing more than a parallel pair of wagon ruts—you sight your destination. The huge maw of the mine's entrance stands dark and empty behind the broad clearing before it, but smoke rises from the chimney of the nearby bunkhouse. Two horses are tethered to a hitching rail in front of the building. Despite recent events, the ineluctable push of commerce seems to have the mines back in operation again.





The bunkhouse is currently occupied by Silas Jones and Brin Halver, both commoners from Ockney's Hold who are at work preparing a meal for the other workers currently inside the mine. Though a bit wary, they are welcoming to the characters and are happy to answer any questions. They can relate that full operations resumed just three days ago (at around the same time the characters left Ockney's Hold), and that there have been no unusual incidents.

A dozen miners in total are currently working the mine, focusing their labor in the southeast tunnel. The new mine overseer is Janis Tandin, who has ordered the miners to steer clear of the northeast shaft,

which terminates in Marlipp's former lair. If the characters explain their purpose in coming to the mine, Silas and Brin are relieved to hear it, as the miners have all been understandably anxious about the foul brain gorger making a vengeful return.

## Kobolds Scouts

The characters head for the mine entrance, passing by the bunkhouse, a number of broken mine carts, and some scattered mining tools as they go. Any character with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 16, or who succeeds on a DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check, picks up movement in the underbrush at the south edge of the clearing in front of the mine entrance. The kobolds that Marlipp had pre-

viously coerced into sentry service scattered when they heard from the miners that Marlipp had fled. However, not yet having found a suitable place to resettle, a party of ten **kobolds** has returned in the hope of reclaiming their old lair.

## KOBOLD

*Small humanoid (kobold), lawful evil*

**Armor Class** 12

**Hit Points** 5 (2d6 - 2)

**Speed** 30 ft.

| STR    | DEX     | CON    | INT    | WIS    | CHA    |
|--------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 7 (-2) | 15 (+2) | 9 (-1) | 8 (-1) | 7 (-2) | 8 (-1) |

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

**Languages** Common, Draconic

**Challenge** 1/8 (25 XP)

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

**Pack Tactics.** The kobold has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the kobold's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

## ACTIONS

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

**Sling.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

Any careful assessment of the area reveals several sets of reptilian eyes in the underbrush, peering out at the party. The kobolds do not attack unless the characters approach them. Once conflict starts, they fight until half their number are killed, at which point they flee and continue their search for a new lair elsewhere.





## Mine Entrance

The mine entrance appears unchanged from the party's first foray.

The interior of the mine is lit by intermittent torches, creating pools of dim light and shadow across the rough stone floor. A set of mine cart tracks starts up twenty feet inside the entrance, initially heading east for a hundred feet before splitting to follow two mineshafts leading downward—one running southeast and the other running northeast. The shaft to the northeast is dark and silent. The shaft to the southeast is lit by the same intermittent torchlight seen at the mine entrance.

Any character who listens will be able to hear the sounds of active mining from far down the southeast shaft as metal tools strike rock. If they explore the southeast shaft before heading for Marlipp's lair down the northeast shaft, the characters come across a group of eight miners led by overseer Janis Tandin. The miners are relieved to see that the characters are adventurers from Ockney's Hold and not something more sinister. If the characters did not speak to Silas and Brin above, they can learn the same information from Janis.

## The Northeast Mine Shaft

Though the abandoned northeast shaft appears dark and sinister, the trip down it should be uneventful as long as the party's previous excursion cleared out the grick and the darkmantles that once lurked there (see *The Brain Gorger's Appetite*). Those dead creatures' remains are untouched at their previous locations.

If the adventurers did not previously discover the grick nest beyond area 7c-1 on the Copper Mines map—or if this is a completely new group—you can choose to let them search for and find that area. As related in *The Brain Gorger's Appetite*, the nest is a rough pile of rocks and sand that holds five soft and rubbery eggs, each an oblong shape rather like a large grain of rice, and about three inches long. These eggs are worth 50 gp each to the right buyer.

With a more careful search of the nest and a successful DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check, the characters find what at first glance appears to be a twig or small branch stuck into one side of the nest. Any examination reveals that the branch is tipped with a small crystal and is actually a *wand of magic missiles*.

## The Brain Gorger's Lair

After descending past the bodies of the grick and the darkmantles, the characters eventually reach the end of the shaft and Marlipp's former lair (area 7c-3 on the Copper Mines map). Read or paraphrase the following, making adjustments as necessary for the specific events of the previous adventure in your campaign:

The long march down the dark mine shaft finally terminates in a large subterranean chamber, the state of which appears to be exactly as you left it. Unlike the tunnel behind you, this large space is gently lit by some sort of luminescent moss clinging to the rough stone walls.

Stacks of crates bearing the insignia of Ockney's Hold still line the east wall, and all of Marlipp's furnishings remain as they were left—the unmade four-poster bed, the wardrobe, the comfortable chair, and the thoroughly ransacked writing table. You also see the corpses of Marlipp's two terrible cerebral stalker companions—their toad-like mouths agape in a frozen rictus of death that shows off their razor-sharp teeth.

The secret door at the back of the chamber is easily found again to those who know its location. The tunnel beyond is where Marlipp fled—and where you must now follow.

The previous sally into Marlipp's lair should have cleared out all his treasure and useful clues, but feel free to let the characters look around if they missed anything the first time. There is otherwise nothing else of interest in this room beyond the door, which leads into the Deep Dark.

## ACT 2: The Descent

When the characters step through Marlipp's secret door, ready to explore what lies beyond, read or paraphrase the following:

As you step across the threshold from Marlipp's chamber into the darkness beyond, you understand immediately that you are about to leave your world behind. Gone are the hewn tunnels forged by sweat and iron that led you here. Instead, the tunnel before you is a gently winding natural passage that slopes ever deeper into the earth, created by some long-gone water flow or other process of erosion.



The luminescent moss seen in Marlipp's chamber is more prevalent here, giving the passageway a soft, uniform glow. But what you notice even more starkly is the utter stillness. Not a breath of air stirs, and the silence is nearly absolute. In fact, as you strain to hear anything, all you can make out is the sound of water dripping from far off in the distance.

The surface world of sun and wind stands behind you. The Deep Dark stands before you, waiting.

### General notes concerning the Deep Dark

Unless otherwise stated, the tunnels and passageways of the Deep Dark are approximately 10 feet tall and wide. These natural tunnels are generally smooth, but not finished. Luminescent moss and fungus provides uniform dim light throughout most areas.

The characters are likely to be on high alert as they enter this new world. As the passage they are following continues downward, it starts to shift to the north—a fact that can be noted with a successful DC 17 Wisdom (Survival) check.

In the first hour, the only change is that the sound of dripping water becomes slightly louder, though it still sounds distant. But in the relentless monotony of the advance, the characters are able to recognize that the drips are quite regular, coming at three-second intervals.

After two hours of travel, the characters notice two things. First, the dripping sound has grown loud enough that they appear to be closing in on its source. And second, the direct course of the tunnel is broken for the first time by a side passage.

### Keeping time in the Deep Dark

Without the regular cycle of the visible sun, keeping time in the Deep Dark is a challenge. To assist with this, most encounters contain a reference to how much travel time has passed since the previous encounter.

## 2a. Chuul Pool

As the characters approach the tunnel intersection, read or paraphrase the following:

After the unrelenting sameness of hours of travel, you finally see a change in the tunnel ahead—an opening on the right side of the passageway. As you

draw closer, you can see that after fifteen feet or so, this side passage opens to a larger cavern. A careful glance within reveals a large pool of water that is the source of the mind-numbing dripping sound you have heard since entering the Deep Dark.

Every few seconds, a drop of water falls from the ceiling fifteen feet above the pool, striking the surface with a loud echo. The pool looks to be forty feet across, with approximately twenty feet of stone floor between it and the encircling wall.

## CHUUL

*Large aberration, chaotic evil*

**Armor Class** 16 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 93 (11d10 + 33)

**Speed** 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT    | WIS     | CHA    |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 19 (+4) | 10 (+0) | 16 (+3) | 5 (–3) | 11 (+0) | 5 (–3) |

**Skills Perception** +4

**Damage Immunities** poison

**Condition Immunities** poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 14

**Languages** understands Deep Speech but can't speak

**Challenge** 4 (1,100 XP)

**Amphibious.** The chuul can breathe air and water.

**Sense Magic.** The chuul senses magic within 120 feet of it at will. This trait otherwise works like the *detect magic* spell but isn't itself magical.

## ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The chuul makes two pincer attacks. If the chuul is grappling a creature, the chuul can also use its tentacles once.

**Pincer.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage. The target is grappled (escape DC 14) if it is a Large or smaller creature and the chuul doesn't have two other creatures grappled.

**Tentacles.** One creature grappled by the chuul must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute. Until this poison ends, the target is paralyzed. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

The 20-foot-deep pool is currently the lair of a vicious **chuul**. Marlipp used his considerable psionic abilities to cajole this creature into its present location, then ordered it to act as a sentry. The chuul eagerly accepts Marlipp's commands, as it cannot tell the difference between the psionic imperatives of the brain gorgon and the orders of





its usual masters, the aboleths. When Marlipp fled down this passage after fighting the adventurers, he ordered the chuul to attack anything coming down the passageway from the direction of the surface world

Following its programming, the chuul rises from the bottom of the pool and attacks if any character spends more than a few rounds in this area, if any character enters the water, or if the party moves past without exploring this chamber. In the latter case, the chuul's Sense Magic ability alerts it to the characters as they pass by. If the chuul moves to pursue the adventurers, any character with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 10 or higher, or who succeeds on a DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check, is alerted to something following the party. The characters then have 1 round to either prepare for the impending attack or attempt to flee. The chuul fights to the death, as it is compelled by Marlipp to do so. If the chuul is defeated after pursuing the characters, they can easily make out the water trail indicating that the creature came from the pool cavern.

## Treasure

The chuul has been stationed in this area for as long as Marlipp and the Ceaseless have been shipping azurite into the Deep Dark. It has thus had the opportunity to waylay numerous travelers at Marlipp's behest, including Ceaseless agents who ran afoul of the brain gorger's paranoia, drow and others trying to determine who is behind the shipments, and anyone else who threatened Marlipp's control of the route.

Because of its sensitivity to magic, the chuul has hoarded the magical possessions of its victims in the bottom of its pool—a *ring of mind shielding*, a *wand of enemy detection*, a +1 *shortsword*, and a *ring of x-ray vision*—along with 100 gp and 50 pp in loose coins. The treasure can be spotted with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check from outside the pool, or automatically by any character who enters the water.

Overall, the party's journey through the Deep Dark should take several days, and characters will not be able to reach the end of the adventure without resting numerous times.

## ACT 3: New Vistas

Shortly after the encounter with the chuul, the tunnel the party is following will mercifully start to vary in shape and size. Replacing the unrelenting sameness of the initial descent, the route repeatedly alternates between long, wide caverns and passageways that shrink back down again to a ten-foot diameter.

When the passage widens, the characters pass through large galleries filled with stalactites and stalagmites, all slick with moisture. The lighting varies in these areas, with some stretches of passageway brightly lit with luminescent moss glowing in a variety of hues. But in other areas, the moss light grows so dim that those in the party who cannot see in the dark will need to rely on artificial light or the guidance of cohorts with darkvision.

Over approximately three hours of travel, the characters also witness an increasing amount of fungi as they continue their gradual descent. Mushrooms of all shapes, sizes, and colors can be seen clinging to cavern walls, either growing up from the floor or hanging from the endless variety of rock formations that cover the ceilings.

### 3a. Zanthos

Approximately three hours after the encounter with the chuul, the characters approach another section of widening passageway. As they move forward, they discover that this gallery is different from those previously seen. At the far end of the area, where the passageway should continue, the characters instead find their choice of three different routes ahead. Read or paraphrase the following:

For the last few hours, you have witnessed the amazing array of fungal flora and geological variation that makes up the Deep Dark. But as you traverse yet another wide, fungus-filled gallery, you see that its far end does not taper back down to a single passageway. Rather, three passageways exit this chamber, each roughly ten feet across. Aside from their bearing off in three different directions to left, center, and right, the passageways have no unique features to distinguish them.

Just as you begin to puzzle out the choice of which way to go, you hear the approach of some creature up the center passage, moving toward you. As you reflexively prepare for whatever it might be, straining your vision to see, an odd-sounding voice calls out to you. Whatever

creature it is speaks Undercommon in a gentle, high-pitched voice, but with a sound like a whisper forced through tightly pursed lips.

“Greetings, surface dwellers. I mean you no harm. I am merely a traveler, as are you. May I approach? I assure you that I will do you no ill.”

The characters are about to meet Zanthos, an intelligent and awakened **gelatinous cube**. She makes for quite a bizarre sight where she rides on the back of a giant lizard, perched atop a platform lined with acid-resistant fungus mats. Zanthos is an extreme oddity, having come across an area of wild magic years before that granted her a measure of self-awareness and sentience unknown among her mindless scavenging kin.

#### Roleplaying Zanthos

The gelatinous cube Zanthos is one of those rare creatures that breaks away from its species’ predilections and tendencies to become something quite different. Unlike her scavenging brethren, Zanthos is insatiably curious about the world she lives in and the other creatures that share it with her. As such, she should be played like a curious and clever child.





## ZANTHOS.

### Awakened Gelatinous Cube

Large ooze, unaligned

**Armor Class** 6

**Hit Points** 84 (8d10 + 40)

**Speed** 15 ft.

| STR     | DEX    | CON     | INT     | WIS    | CHA    |
|---------|--------|---------|---------|--------|--------|
| 14 (+2) | 3 (-4) | 20 (+5) | 10 (+0) | 6 (-2) | 1 (-5) |

**Condition Immunities** blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, prone

**Senses** Blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), Passive Perception 8

**Languages** Undercommon

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Ooze Cube.** The cube takes up its entire space. Other creatures can enter the space, but a creature that does so is subjected to the cube's Engulf and has disadvantage on the saving throw. Creatures inside the cube can be seen but have total cover. A creature within 5 feet of the cube can take an action to pull a creature or object out of the cube. Doing so requires a successful DC 12 Strength check, and the creature making the attempt takes 10 (3d6) acid damage.

The cube can hold only one Large creature or up to four Medium or smaller creatures inside it at a time.

The cube is true to her word, though, and at any point while the characters are interacting with Zanthos, a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check informs them that the strange creature means them no harm. If any character makes a threatening move, Zanthos simply attempts to flee.

Zanthos has plenty of helpful information for the party, all of which should be delivered in a whimsical and almost painfully cheerful manner. Full of questions herself, she can barely contain her excitement about meeting some real live surface dwellers. Zanthos has learned to "speak" by vibrating her upper surface in a way that articulates understandable sound. This results in the odd, gentle whisper with which she speaks.

Because Zanthos speaks only Undercommon, one or more of the characters must be able to speak that tongue or communicate through magical means in order to interact with her. Being utterly bereft of limbs makes communication in any other form virtually impossible for the gelatinous cube.

Any conversation with Zanthos can go in a number of different directions. The following questions and answers cover general information, and can be used as guidelines for making up responses of your own to questions not noted here.

-What are you?

"What a silly question. I am a cube, of course!"

**Transparent.** Even when the cube is in plain sight, it takes a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to spot a cube that has neither moved nor attacked. A creature that tries to enter the cube's space while unaware of the cube is surprised by the cube.

### ACTIONS

**Pseudopod.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) acid damage.

**Engulf.** The cube moves up to its speed. While doing so, it can enter Large or smaller creatures' spaces. Whenever the cube enters a creature's space, the creature must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw.

On a successful save, the creature can choose to be pushed 5 feet back or to the side of the cube. A creature that chooses not to be pushed suffers the consequences of a failed saving throw.

On a failed save, the cube enters the creature's space, and the creature takes 10 (3d6) acid damage and is engulfed. The engulfed creature can't breathe, is restrained, and takes 21 (6d6) acid damage at the start of each of the cube's turns. When the cube moves, the engulfed creature moves with it.

An engulfed creature can try to escape by taking an action to make a DC 12 Strength check. On a success, the creature escapes and enters a space of its choice within 5 feet of the cube.

-What is the creature you ride?

"A drow riding lizard! He is magnificent, is he not?"

-How did you come to ride such a creature?

"I found Greenie wandering alone in the Deep Dark. We quickly became fast friends and have been together ever since."

-How did you make that "saddle" you ride?

"I did not. A most kind and helpful svirfneblin built this for me. Is it not nice?"

-How did you become the way you are?

"What a silly question! I have always been this way. Have you not always been you?"

## GIANT LIZARD

Large beast, unaligned

**Armor Class** 12 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 19 (3d10 + 3)

**Speed** 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT    | WIS     | CHA    |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 15 (+2) | 12 (+1) | 13 (+1) | 2 (-4) | 10 (+0) | 5 (-3) |

**Senses** darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 10

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 1/4 (50 XP)

### ACTIONS

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

-*What do you eat?*

"Well, there are lots of nasty things living down here. I stay away from them. But the good thing for me is that they often kill each other. I can then come along and clean up what is left. It is really great!"

-*What sorts of nasty things?*

"Well, there are drow and duergar, among other even nastier things like brain gorgers."

-*We are searching for a brain gorgier.*

"Really? Well, one that comes through here occasionally did so recently."

-*How long ago?*

"How long? Oh, you mean time. But time is different here than on the surface world, I think. It is either time to eat, time to sleep, time to travel, or time to think. My best guess would be five or six of your sleeps."

-*Which way did the brain gorgier go?*

"It headed toward Dun Delve, I imagine. That is where many brain gorgers head of late."

-*What is Dun Delve?*

"It is a place down here that some surface dwellers built. They are not nice like you. They drove me away when I tried to talk to them."

-*How big is Dun Delve?*

"Big? I do not understand. Big enough for them to live there."

-*How many surface dwellers live there?*

"Many. They often come down this passage, just as you are heading toward Dun Delve. I could tell that you were not like them."

-*How?*

"You were not carrying small cube-shaped things on strange surface creatures. They always carry the same-sized cubes. The small cubes are not alive like me, though."

-*What are these cubes?*

"I do not know. I have seen them opened, though, to reveal other objects stored within."

-*Which way to Dun Delve?*

"This way." (Zanthos then shakes slightly, and the lizard responds by turning toward the leftmost passage.)

-*How far away is Dun Delve from here?*

"That depends on how fast you go. Perhaps two or three of your sleeps."

-*Are there any other passageway choices like this on*

*the way to Dun Delve?*

"You will find many smaller ways, but stay in the larger passage. It will take you all the way there."

-*Will you come with us?*

"Oh, no. You are wonderful company, but I do not want to go to Dun Delve."

In addition to the answers she provides for the party, Zanthos has a number of questions of her own. As with the party's questions, use these as guidelines and expand the list as you desire.

"What does the sky look like?"

"Does it hurt to see the sun?"

"I have heard of things called flowers. What do they smell like?"

## O<sup>n</sup>to Dun Delve

If the characters either do not respond when Zanthos calls to them, or if they drive her away, they lose a significant source of information. All is not lost, though, since a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Survival) check reveals that the leftmost passage bears the most signs of recent travel. Alternatively, if the characters choose to explore the other two passageways, you can have each tunnel show signs of monstrous predators—thick spider webs, scattered bones, scratch marks in the stone created by enormous talons, and so forth—to inspire them to focus on the less threatening leftmost passage.

As the party continues along the correct path to Dun Delve, the general terrain features continue as noted above. The only significant difference is that many small side passages start to split off from the larger main tunnel. If the characters choose to explore these side passages, you might wish to make use of some of the encounters in the "Fun in the Deep Dark" section, below, to get them back on track. But either way, make sure it remains clear to the players that the main tunnel is the more frequently traveled route.



### 3b. Drow Ambush

A few hours after leaving Zanthos behind, the characters become victims of a drow ambush. The drow city of Fzan'ris lies far to the south, but the matron mothers who rule it have become displeased with the presence of surface dwellers establishing a presence in the Deep Dark at Dun Delve. As such, they have begun to send scouting parties into the area to disrupt the activities of the stronghold.

This scouting party is comprised of seven **drow** males led by a **Drow Deep Dark Scout** named Staveck. The dark elves heard the characters approaching and set up an ambush, assuming that the adventurers must be surface dwellers associated with Dun Delve. Their goal is to incapacitate the characters (killing them only if necessary), then interrogate them for information on Dun Delve and its activities.

The drow's familiarity with the Deep Dark should allow them to get the drop on the party. Only a character with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 20 or higher will notice signs of the ambush in advance.

As the party approaches the ambush point, read or paraphrase the following:

After the surreal experience with Zanthos, the journey onward quickly returns to a tense march through the Deep Dark. You move forward into yet another widened stretch of cavern, set with damp stalagmites and stalactites. But then suddenly, the glow of the luminescent moss is replaced by a deep and unrelenting gloom. From all around, you hear the faint tick of crossbows firing. You are under attack!

The ultimate goal of the drow is to subdue the characters and interrogate them. If a character falls unconscious, the dark elves concentrate their fire on those still standing. At any point, if a character makes a successful DC 15 Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check accompanied by some sort of parlay or surrender offer in Undercommon, the attack is called off by the drow leader, Staveck. If the characters opt to fight it out, the drow stand and fight, only fleeing if it appears that they have no chance of victory.

This encounter can end in a number of different ways, whether the characters are compelled to speak with the drow (either after surrendering or after waking to find themselves bound), voluntarily speak with the





## DROW DEEP DARK SCOUT

Medium humanoid (elf), neutral evil

**Armor Class** 20 (+2 studded leather, shield)

**Hit Points** 71 (11d8 + 22)

**Speed** 30 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT     | WIS     | CHA     |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 13 (+1) | 18 (+4) | 15 (+2) | 11 (+0) | 13 (+1) | 13 (+1) |

**Saving Throws** Dex +7, Con +5, Wis +4

**Skills** Perception +4, Stealth +10

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 14

**Languages** Elvish, Undercommon

**Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)

**Fey Ancestry.** The drow has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put the drow to sleep.

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

At will: *dancing lights*

1/day each: *darkness*, *faerie fire*, *levitate* (self only)

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

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The drow makes two shortsword attacks, or one hand crossbow attack and one shortsword attack.

**+2 Shortsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 6) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) poison damage.

**Hand Crossbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 hour. If the saving throw fails by 5 or more, the target is also unconscious while poisoned in this way. The target wakes up if it takes damage or if another creature takes an action to shake it awake.

### REACTIONS

**Parry.** The drow adds 3 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the drow must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

## DROW

Medium humanoid (elf), neutral evil

**Armor Class** 16 (+1 chain shirt)

**Hit Points** 13 (3d8)

**Speed** 30 ft.

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

**Skills** Perception +2, Stealth +4

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., Passive Perception 12

**Languages** Elvish, Undercommon

**Challenge** 1/4 (50 XP)

**Fey Ancestry.** The drow has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put the drow to sleep.

**Innate Spellcasting.** The drow's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 11). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *dancing lights*

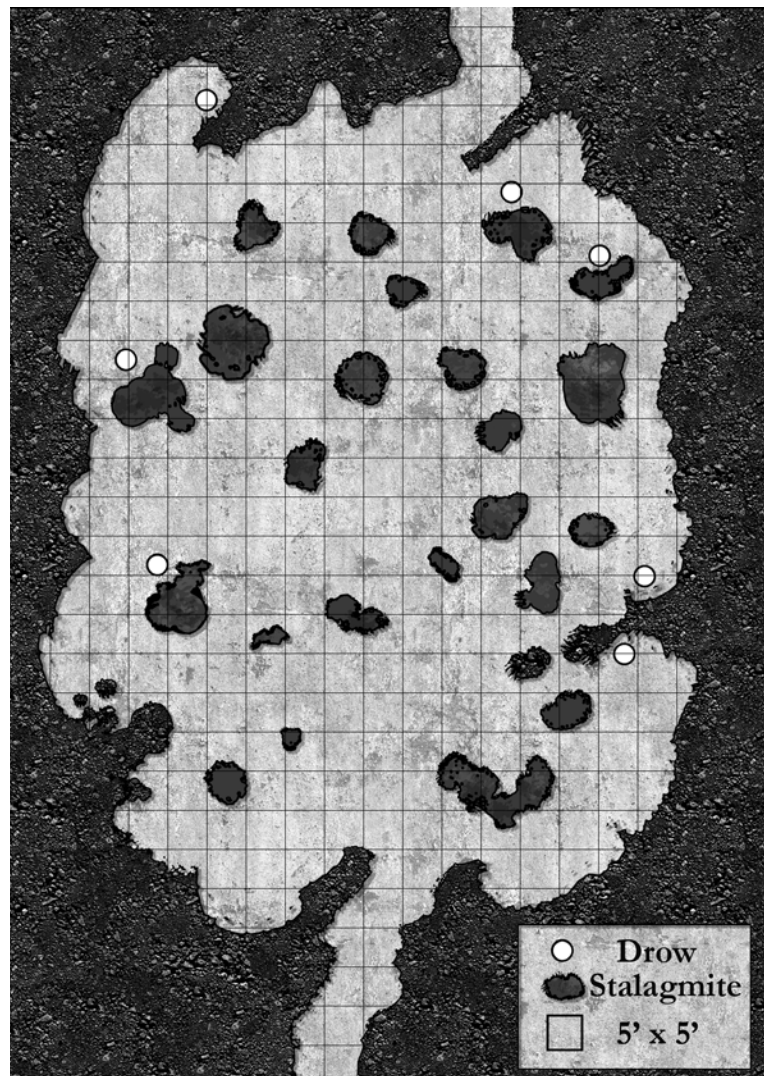
1/day each: *darkness*, *faerie fire*

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

### ACTIONS

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

**Hand Crossbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 hour. If the saving throw fails by 5 or more, the target is also unconscious while poisoned in this way. The target wakes up if it takes damage or if another creature takes an action to shake it awake.





### Drow Tactics and Positions

The ambush site depicted on the tactical map indicates the starting positions of the drow. Half the drow cast *darkness* along the walls, cutting the moss light and leaving the characters visible to darkvision. The other drow fire their hand crossbows, hoping that at least a few of the adventurers succumb to their poison. The drow attempt to keep the half cover that their positions initially afford them for as long as possible, preferring to fight at range rather than closing to melee.

drow, or kill all the dark elves. In either of the first two scenarios, Staveck talks about “the fortress controlled by the surface dwellers,” and asks about the number of inhabitants, the details of the settlement’s defenses, and the name of its leader.

The drow can be easily convinced that the characters know little to nothing about the details of Dun Delve—in response to which Staveck orders his troops to slay the hapless surface dwellers before moving on. However, the characters can easily avoid this fate and get on Staveck’s good side by giving him any sense that they are working against the Ceaseless. As long as Staveck believes that the adventurers mean to make trouble at the stronghold and disrupt its operations in some fashion, he smugly allows them to go on their way.

### Treasure

Each drow carries a +1 *shortsword* and wears a +1 *chain shirt*. Staveck carries a +2 *shortsword* and wears a +2 *chain shirt*. These drow magic items lose their enhancement bonuses permanently if they are exposed to sunlight for one hour or longer. Additionally, each drow carries 100 gp worth of gems and a *potion of healing*.

## 3c. Fun in the Deep Dark

After the drow ambush, the grinding march resumes. The characters will have been in the Deep Dark for at least twelve hours by this point, but the decision of whether to camp and rest or to press on is up to the players. If the characters do press on, they will be affected by exhaustion arising from a forced march.

The following encounters can be thrown at the characters at any point on the way to Dun Delve. You can roll a d6 to determine an encounter randomly, or simply pick encounters that appeal to you. The characters

should face at least one such encounter before they reach Dun Delve.

**1. Grimlock Hunting Party.** Thirteen **grimlocks** bearing stone axes lie in ambush within two side passages, bursting forth to attack the party on two flanks. Any character who succeeds on a DC 19 Wisdom (Perception) check gets a hint of trouble ahead and can warn the rest of the party. Otherwise, the grimlocks have surprise. The grimlocks fight until half of them are slain, at which point they retreat in search of easier quarry.

**2. Bulette.** As the characters proceed down a nondescript passageway, a hungry **bulette** suddenly burrows out of the wall directly beside them. Any character with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 14 or higher hears a faint rumbling that warns of something coming through the wall. Other characters are surprised when the bulette appears. The creature attacks mindlessly, but flees if reduced to 20 hit points or fewer.

**3. Cloaker.** A **cloaker** lurks motionless on the ceiling of the passageway through which the characters move. Have all the characters make Wisdom (Perception) checks against the cloaker’s +5 Dexterity (Stealth) check to determine which characters are surprised when the cloaker attacks. The creature uses its Phantasms ability early in combat, then makes liberal use of its Moan ability. Thankfully, the creature is not keen to fight, and it flies off if reduced to 50 hit points or fewer.

**4. Basilisk Lair.** As the characters move past a side passage, any character with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 12 or higher, or any character who succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check, hears the sounds of claws scrabbling on rock. If the characters explore this side passage, it turns to the right after twenty feet. Beyond that point, a **basilisk** sits in the middle of the passage, looking directly at any characters who come around the corner.

If the characters attack the basilisk, it defends itself fiercely. However, if they simply back away (after succeeding on Constitution saving throws, as appropriate), the basilisk does not pursue. Farther down the side passageway, the creature has a nest holding three eggs, built within a narrow alcove. A Small creature can enter the alcove freely, but a Medium creature must squeeze to do so. If attacked and reduced to 25 hit points or fewer, the basilisk attempts to flee back to its nest. There, it fights to the death to protect its eggs.

**5. Duergar Scouting Party.** Just as the establishment of Dun Delve has stirred up the drow of Fzan’ris, the

## GREATER FLAIL SNAIL

*Large monstrosity, unaligned*

**Armor Class** 16 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 57 (6d10 + 24)

**Speed** 10 ft., climb 10 ft.

| STR     | DEX    | CON     | INT    | WIS     | CHA    |
|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 16 (+3) | 8 (–1) | 18 (+4) | 5 (–3) | 12 (+1) | 4 (–3) |

**Skills** Perception +3

**Damage Immunities** fire, poison

**Condition Immunities** blinded, poisoned, prone

**Senses** Blindsight 60 ft.

**Languages** Flail Snail

**Challenge** 4 (1,100 XP)

**Mucus.** As a flail snail moves, it can leave a trail of mucus along the ground that it travels across. It has two types of mucus: slimy and sticky. Slimy mucus has the effect of a *grease* spell (affected ground is difficult terrain; creatures that enter affected ground must make a successful DC 12 Dex [Acrobatics] check or fall prone). Sticky mucus has the effect of a *web* spell (creatures entering the affected ground must make a successful DC 12 Str [Athletics] check or become restrained; the check can be repeated as an action, with success indicating the trapped creature broke free). Both types last for 10 minutes, then dry out and are no longer effective. Flail snails are immune to this mucus.

**Retraction.** Instead of moving, a flail snail can pull its fleshy parts back into its shell, increasing its armor class to 22, but it can't move or take actions while retracted. Extending itself again also takes the place of any other movement that turn.

**Slime Rope.** A flail snail can turn its mucus into a ropelike strand up to 60 ft. long. If this strand is anchored to a wall or ceiling, the flail snail and up to another 1,000 pounds can hang from it indefinitely. The flail snail can climb up this strand 10 feet per round, or lower itself down it 20 feet per round. Other creatures can climb the strand with a successful DC 20 Str (Athletics) check. Once the snail breaks contact with the strand, the slime dries out and decomposes in 1d4 rounds, after which it can't be used by anyone.

**Suction.** A snail's foot adheres to surfaces so well that its 10-foot climb speed applies even on perfectly sheer surfaces and ceilings, with no chance to fall off unless the foot is actively peeled loose by external force.

**Warp Magic.** Any spell that targets a flail snail directly has an 80% chance of producing a random effect instead of the desired affect. Only spells that directly target the flail snail are warped; area effect spells are not affected. When a spell is cast, roll percentile dice and consult the table.

## ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** A greater flail snail attacks six times with tentacle clubs.

**Tentacle Club.** *Melee Weapon Attack.* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft.; one creature. *Hit:* 1d8 + 3 bludgeoning damage.

increased presence of drow in the local area has caused the duergar colony of Grimstone, many miles to the west, to send out scouting parties of its own. Any character with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 13 or higher, or who succeeds on a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check, hears a force of seven **duergar** approaching from along a side passage.

As soon as they are aware of the characters, the duergar immediately use their Enlarge ability and attack, fighting until only three remain alive. If forced to flee, the duergar return to Grimstone with reports of roving bands of marauding surface dwellers. The duergar have no knowledge of Dun Delve to share with the party, even if they can be compelled to speak.

**6. Greater Flail Snail.** As the characters make their way through a wide passageway, they come across quite a sight—a **greater flail snail** (a 6 HD version with six tentacle club attacks and increased hit points). When first seen, the snail is fully retracted and appears to be just a large shell sitting in the middle of the passage. When any creature moves to within 10 feet of it, the flail snail reveals itself and attacks. It attempts to retreat if reduced to 25 hit points or fewer.

## 38. Svirfneblin Trading Caravan

In a long stretch of wide passageway, the adventurers hear the unmistakable sound of a large group of creatures heading toward them. Though there is nowhere to hide in the passageway, the characters have time to take whatever defensive measures they like. After they do so, read or paraphrase the following:

As you brace yourselves for whatever is coming toward you, you are astonished to see that the source of the racket appears to be some sort of caravan. More than two dozen well-armed gnomes with gray skin stride alongside three of the largest moles you've ever seen, each of which pulls a wagon laden with goods. As the lead gnomes notice you, they hold up fists in an apparent "stop" sign, and the caravan rumbles to a halt.

Quickly, one of the gnomes steps to the fore, eyeing you as she loudly calls out in Undercommon: "Identify yourselves! Be ye friend or foe?"

The caravan totals thirty **svirfneblin** and three huge blind moles (treat as Medium **Giant Rats** with blindsense out to 120 feet), each of which pulls a small wagon laden with goods. The svirfneblin show no surprise at seeing a group





of well-armed surface dwellers in the Deep Dark, though they are wary. In addition to roleplaying, a successful DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion) check helps to put the svirfneblin at ease. If the characters attack the caravan, the deep gnomes fight fiercely to defend themselves.

Once the characters have established that they are not a threat, the caravan leader, Brickers Rockhewer, introduces herself and speaks to them in Undercommon. She tells the party that the caravan is heading toward the surface to trade with the settlement of Marabiza (north of Ockney's Hold), and that they are coming from Dun Delve. At the last leg of their journey, close to the surface, the caravan is to meet with a broker who will sell the svirfneblin goods (finished stonework, jewelry, and fine metalwork) to the surface folk.

Brickers can answer any questions about Dun Delve, telling the characters that the fortress is a full settlement made up mostly of surface dwellers, and that it even has an inn and a garrison. She also mentions that the place is run by a group of humanoids calling themselves the

Ceaseless. Primarily a trading post of sorts, Dun Delve sees goods from the surface world brought into the Deep Dark to trade with the denizens of that realm, including the svirfneblin.

The deep gnomes all know that the commander of the outpost—Earl Runnel, a half-orc wererat—is a crook and not to be trusted. Brickers tells the characters that anyone seeking entrance to Dun Delve will need to pay an entrance fee, will be thoroughly questioned, and must have a good reason for being admitted—usually related to business in the outpost. However, she knows also that Earl Runnel is notoriously susceptible to bribery, and is said to be willing to sell out anyone or anything if enough coin is involved.

If asked about Marlipp, none of the svirfneblin know that name, but they have seen brain gorgers at Dun Delve. Brickers can even describe some sort of private lounge where the brain gorgers lie around “getting all gorked up on some sort of blue powder” sold by the Ceaseless. Dun Delve is about two hours from the point where the characters meet the svirfneblin caravan.

## ACT 4: Dun Delve

By now, the characters are likely to have been traveling through the Deep Dark for approximately twenty-four hours. As they finally enter the cavern that is the site of the Ceaseless stronghold Dun Delve, read or paraphrase the following:

After what seems like nearly a full day of traveling through the Deep Dark, the main passageway you've been following opens to one of the biggest galleries seen so far. As you enter, you see that the cavern widens to over one hundred feet in places, while the ceiling above soars to heights of over eighty feet. Extending hundreds of feet ahead of you, the huge gallery opens up to at least a half dozen other passages of the same size as the one through which you enter.

To the west side of the cavern, a great fortress is perched at the top of a forty-foot-high plateau, reached by a long natural ramp over twenty feet wide. The structure is roughly rectangular, and approximately one hundred feet long and fifty feet wide. Tall walls of black stone make up the perimeter of the stronghold, complete with towers located at each corner of the compound. A large sigil showing a balance scale with a stack of coins on one side and a clenched fist on the other is emblazoned on the stout wooden gates—the symbol of the Ceaseless. You have found Dun Delve.

The characters are free to explore the cavern around Dun Delve, but they find nothing of interest there beyond the omnipresent bioluminescent moss and fungus, and the passages exiting the huge chamber. All those passages show signs of travel, but provide no signs or clues as to where they lead.

The only way to approach and enter Dun Delve is up the ramp and by the front gates—an approach that cannot be made without being seen. Any character who attempts to climb or fly over the walls will be attacked by archers in the towers, and the fortress will be put on alert to repel invaders. Moreover, the guards in one tower have access to true seeing magic, meaning that any characters attempting to approach or sneak in to the stronghold while invisible will be in for a surprise.

As the characters ascend the ramp, they are hailed from one of the closer towers. First in Common and then in Undercommon, a commanding voice demands to know the characters' identity and their business. A coherent answer and a successful DC 10 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion)

## Staying Alive in Dun Delve

Dun Delve has the potential to become a deadly series of encounters for even a well-prepared, well-organized party. A base of operations for a powerful criminal organization, the stronghold is unlike any settlement of the surface world that the characters are likely to be familiar with. Dun Delve exists for one reason only—to serve the Ceaseless. If the characters are cavalier about entering the place—or if they attempt a full-on assault—the adventure will almost certainly end in a total party kill. In fact, Dun Delve sports approximately ninety armed and trained operatives. There is simply no way that the player characters can survive an open assault.

check are enough to see the characters told to approach the gates, then wait there.

To succeed at their infiltration of Dun Delve, the characters must obey the rules of the stronghold, keep a low profile, roleplay well, and—most importantly—show no sign of openly opposing the Ceaseless. With the flow of highly profitable azurite from Ockney's Hold interrupted, the members of the Ceaseless are actively searching for Marlipp themselves, as they want answers. When adventurers show up asking questions about Marlipp, the powers that be in Dun Delve become more than a little interested in learning why the characters are looking for the brain gorgon, as well as what they know about the Ceaseless's business with Marlipp, the azurite trade, and Ockney's Hold.

## Making an Entrance

After a few minutes, the gates swing open. The characters see ten sentries of various races standing in a semi-circle just inside the gates, all with crossbows trained on the party. (Use **guard** statistics for the sentries, replacing their spear attack with a light crossbow attack.) A well-armed and well-armored dwarf then steps forward to wave the party inside the gates. As the characters enter, read or paraphrase the following:

You walk past the stout gate and the fortress's thick, fifteen-foot-high walls, entering a courtyard beyond. Immediately to your right, you see posts and pickets obviously intended to tie off cart animals. Beyond that and to both sides of the courtyard, a number of large buildings rise from the bluff, including one standing two stories tall.

The dwarf that ushered you in calls out in a



gruff voice. “Name is Captain Stoneview. We have a few rules here in the Delve. Weapons are prohibited. You must obey all commands given. If you’re willing to surrender your weapons, I’ll take you in to speak with the commander. He’ll have some questions for you. And yes, you’ll get your weapons back when you leave. Any questions?”

At this point, give the players a copy of Player Handout A—Map of Dun Delve, found in the appendix. This is not a physical map given to the characters, but rather represents the general sense they can glean of the stronghold’s layout by observation and by listening in on the conversations of the guards in the Ceaseless Succor. Hearing of locations such as the warehouse or Earl Runnel’s bedchamber might inspire the urge to explore—but doing so can be risky. See “4b. Exploring Dun Delve,” below, for more information.

Captain Stoneview uses **veteran** statistics. Additionally, the stronghold is the domain of the mages Kevroar Arroway (use **mage** statistics) and Zangold Greenfill (use **archmage** statistics).

For the eighty or so rank-and-file guards and Ceaseless operatives in Dun Delve, use **guard** statistics. Most operatives are members of a race with darkvision

(commonly dwarves, half-elves, and half-orcs).

Unless otherwise stated, all areas of Dun Delve are illuminated with dim light from phosphorescent moss. This grows naturally in the rough caverns of the stronghold, and is cultivated in hanging lamp-baskets in other areas. The doors of the stronghold are hardwood, banded with iron, and locked, requiring a DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check to noisily break through or a DC 14 Dexterity check using thieves’ tools to quietly open.

For more information on Dun Delve, please see the gazetteer in the appendix.

All of the important figures in Dun Delve wear *rings of message* (see the sidebar), including commander Earl Runnel, Urlyn T’ylan, Captain Stoneview, and the mages Kevroar Arroway and Zangold Greenfill. The 120-foot range of the rings means that any of these characters can communicate with each other from virtually anywhere in Dun Delve, as long as their messages have an open route from one character to the other.

The characters can ask Captain Stoneview any questions they like, but he has little interest in telling them anything beyond the name of the commander (Earl Runnel) and that they must pay a tariff set by the commander. If asked about Marlipp or brain gorgers in general, Stoneview says only that it is against





regulations to discuss any potential clients of Dun Delve, and that the characters should take any such business up with the commander.

Once the characters agree to his terms, the captain escorts them to the administration offices (area 1 on the Dun Delve map). After leading the characters into the reception room, he asks that they turn over any weapons. Any character who has not already thought to do so can use the walk from the courtyard to conceal a light weapon with a successful DC 17 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check. In addition to the captain, four guards are present in the office. They take the characters' weapons and place them in a stout wooden locker, which Captain Stoneview then locks.

### General Notes on Dun Delve

Dun Delve is currently run by Earl Runnel, a **half-orc wererat** (see the appendix). Though greedy and mean-spirited, he is a capable administrator. His lieutenant is a drow named Urlyn T'ylan (use drow **Deep Dark Scout** statistics; see "3b. Drow Ambush"), an outcast from the city of Fzan'ris. If the party seeks to broker a deal of any sort with Dun Delve, they must either talk to Earl Runnel or Urlyn T'ylan. Only these two commanders have the authority to negotiate on behalf of the Ceaseless.

## Meeting with a Wererat

The captain then leads the party through a door into an adjacent office. Read or paraphrase the following:

Beyond the reception room, Captain Stoneview stops before another door, where he knocks and calls out. "Commander, we have visitors."

A gruff voice answers. "Enter."

Stoneview opens the door and ushers you into what is obviously a large office, where a wererat in hybrid form sits behind a large desk. Obviously hoping his appearance intimidates you, the figure speaks with a wicked grin. "Surprised, eh? Well, I guess I can't blame you. My type doesn't go around revealing what we are up on the surface. But here in the Deep Dark, I'm nothing unusual at all."

The wererat's grin fades as Stoneview steps out of the office and closes the door. "My name is Earl Runnel, and I'm the commander here. Now, state your business. What brings an armed party of surface dwellers to Dun Delve?"





Earl is as shrewd and cunning as they come. However, the wererat is also extremely greedy, and he has used his position at Dun Delve to line his own pockets at every opportunity. The characters' first order of business is to sell their cover story with roleplaying and a successful DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion) check. Any fellow party members chiming in to help with the discussion grant advantage for the character making the check. Additionally, if the characters bribe Earl, each 100 gp they offer him lowers the DC of the check by 5 and allows another check if the first is failed.

If the characters convince Earl that they have legitimate business in Dun Delve, he imposes a 100 gp tariff on each party member (over and above the value of any bribes). A second round of negotiation and another successful DC 15 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check can cut the tariff to 50 gp per party member. Earl makes it clear that if the characters refuse to pay, they will be forcibly ejected from Dun Delve.

## What Earl Knows

If asked about Marlipp, Earl immediately demands to know if the characters have anything to do with the interruption of the flow of "product" from Ockney's Hold. As before, the characters must come up with a plausible answer and a successful DC 17 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check, with advantage on the check if multiple characters work together.

On a failed check, or if Earl is pressed about Marlipp, he says he doesn't know the name. Any character who succeeds on a Wisdom (Insight) check against Earl's Charisma (Deception) check knows that the wererat is lying. If challenged, Earl simply retorts, "Maybe I am lying. So what? I get the distinct feeling that you haven't been completely honest with me."

Given the Ceaseless's interest in Marlipp, Earl has no interest in freely providing information to the characters. As he talks to them, Earl drops clear hints (idly rubbing his hands together, tapping the coin purse at his belt, and so forth) that if they want more from him, they will have to pay.

If the characters pay Earl at least 100 gp more for information on Marlipp, read or paraphrase the following:

The gleam of avarice in the commander's eyes is apparent as he quickly tucks your money into his purse. He then looks at you with a hard gaze.

"Well, maybe we can help each other. My organization is very interested in locating and having a conversation with Marlipp—and I'm just as keen for that to not happen. I don't know what

your real business with him is, and I don't really care. But I'm guessing this Marlipp was here a few days ago. I say 'guessing' because none of us knew that was his real name. He showed up at our gates as a strung-out brain gorgor in desperate need of a fix. He paid the entry tariff and then bought some of the Tasties those vile creatures are so crazy about. Then he vanished.

"It wasn't until after he was gone from Dun Delve that I got word that Marlipp had abandoned his post in the mines. But my problem now is, I'll be in more than a bit of trouble if my superiors find out I had him here and let him go. So I need the brain gorgor to disappear, and I don't have the resources to chase him through the Deep Dark. If you can run that scum down and make sure no one in my organization ever has a chance to talk to him, I'll reward you very well. What say you?"

Earl speaks truth when he talks of how Marlipp came to Dun Delve and then subsequently disappeared (using *plane shift* to slip to the Ethereal Plane, then flee the stronghold). However, the commander's talk of a reward is more nebulous, and wise characters will try to pin the wererat down on terms. After a suitable amount of dickering, he reluctantly agrees to a payment of 500 gp each. Earl pays the characters in advance—ideally using their own bribe money to do so.

Once negotiations are complete, Earl suggests that the characters speak with two brain gorgers currently in Dun Delve, to see if they have any information concerning where Marlipp might have gone. He tells the party that he has already tried to question the two, but that both are largely incoherent—and too dangerous for him to want to push them. The wererat then calls Captain Stoneview back into the office, telling him that the characters are welcome in the stronghold. See "Key to Dun Delve" and "Exploring Dun Delve," below, for more information.

## Overwhelming Adversaries

Given that they are left alone with Earl in his office, the characters might opt to simply attack the commander rather than negotiate with him. However, even by himself, Earl should be more than a match for the party (see his stat block in the appendix)—especially once he uses his *ring of message* to alert Captain Stoneview outside the office, who in turn sounds a general alarm. Even if the characters manage to kill the commander, there will be no mercy for them when reinforcements arrive.

## RING OF MESSAGE

*Ring, uncommon (requires attunement)*

This plain steel ring is imbued with the power of the *message* cantrip. While you wear the ring, you can use an action to communicate with any creature within 120 feet of you as if using that cantrip, even if the target creature is behind a barrier.

## 4a. Key to Dun Delve

**1. Administration Offices.** After gaining admission to Dun Delve, all visitors must stop and register here in the smaller main office. After stating the purpose of their visit, they are subjected to an interview by either Earl Runnel or Urlyn T'ylan in the larger private office to the north, at which point an entry tariff is assessed. This protocol applies to all visitors, regardless of whether they are transporting goods. The amount of the tariff is set at the whim of either Earl or Urlyn, but it can be reduced by some good roleplaying and a successful DC 15 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check.

Weapons taken from characters visiting Dun Delve are secured in a wooden locker in the main office. As well, a locked chest in that area holds a small supply of powdered azurite.

**2. Barracks.** The Dun Delve garrison is housed in this one-story structure, which features two rooms at the north end of the building (Captain Stoneview's bedchamber and the barracks office), and a larger communal area set up with beds and foot lockers for each of the stronghold's guards. Fifty **guards** make up the garrison of Dun Delve. Half of those are on duty at any time, with off-duty guards either here or at the Ceaseless Succor.

**3. Inn—The Ceaseless Succor.** Though it houses visitors to Dun Delve, the primary purpose of this roadhouse is to serve as a mess hall and tavern for the Ceaseless guards and operatives stationed at the stronghold. Four to eight off-duty Ceaseless guards are present in the open common area of the inn at any time of day or night, either taking a meal or just idling. (After all, their entertainment options in the stronghold are rather limited.)

The only two-story building in Dun Delve, the inn features a ground floor split into a kitchen and an open common area. The common area is filled with tables and has a short bar against one wall. The second floor contains four utilitarian rooms, one of which is the shared residence of Dun Delve's two mages. The stronghold sees few visitors, and anyone staying overnight must pay for rooms at the inflated price of 15 gp per day, plus 3 gp per day for meals.

The inn is run by a dwarf named Jormund Hardback. See the gazetteer at the end of the adventure for more information.

**4. Warehouse.** All goods that come into Dun Delve are held here for inventory and storage, including two dozen boxes of powdered azurite. Though this represents a healthy supply, the interruption of shipments from Ockney's Hold is causing the Ceaseless concern.

Between the warehouse and the main gates, picketing and tethering posts are set up for cart animals, along with a water trough.

At some point, most likely at the inn, one of the characters should feel the vague sensation of being targeted by a spell, with any Wisdom (Perception) check revealing that Zangold is present and watching. If confronted, the archmage does not reveal the full extent of her power, presenting herself merely as a minor spellcaster in the service of the Ceaseless. However, she does not deny that she attempted some sort of magical detection, "...trying to get to the bottom of who you all really are."

In truth, the archmage used magic she developed for the Ceaseless to place a special spell mark on the character or some item he or she carries, so that the party can be tracked. The mark is undetectable and otherwise harmless, but it plays an important part in the conclusion of the adventure.

### The Games Mages Play

Two Ceaseless mages—Kevroar Arroway (a male human **mage**) and Zangold Greenfill (a female half-elf **archmage**)—are stationed at Dun Delve, and they monitor the stronghold at all times. If the characters try to engage either of the mages, both come off as high-handed and dismissive, making it clear that they think the characters are beneath them. However, the characters should get the distinct impression that the mages are watching them.

## The Caves

Two separate caverns extend off the bluff on which Dun Delve is set. The southern cavern is accessed by way of the administration offices, while the northern cavern opens up between the inn and the administration offices.

**5. Cistern.** This large, damp cave contains a cistern fed by a natural spring, providing water for Dun Delve. It also contains a permanent teleportation circle created by mages serving the Ceaseless, which is used to bring supplies and replacement guards to Dun Delve from the surface.



**6. Storage.** This cave acts as the primary storage area for the fortress. It is filled with boxes, crates, and barrels holding mundane items such as tools, building supplies, and foodstuffs.

**7. Armory/Smithy.** This cave is set up to repair armor and weapons for the stronghold's guards and visitors, and is overseen by a dwarf named Rulug Redbeard. Weapon racks along the walls are filled with dozens of longswords, daggers, and other common weapons. At the rear of the cave stand a workbench, a grinding wheel, and a magical forge that burns hot despite having no chimney and creating no smoke.

The forge is powered by a small captured fire elemental, which attacks indiscriminately if the forge door is opened. For this reason, the door features a well-made locking mechanism that can be opened only with a successful DC 24 Dexterity check using thieves' tools.

**8. Earl Runnel's Bedchamber.** A stout hardwood door has been fitted to cover this cave entrance. It is always locked, and requires a successful DC 22 Dexterity check using thieves' tools to open. Inside is a well-appointed bedroom complete with a comfortable bed, a writing desk, and a wardrobe. The writing desk bears several large ledgers that detail the activities of Dun Delve, including information on goods passing through the stronghold and duties collected.

On the west side of the cave, a small alcove is concealed behind the permanent illusion of an unbroken cave wall. A successful DC 18 Intelligence saving throw is required to recognize the illusion. (You should make this save for any player asking to search the room, so that calling for an Intelligence saving throw doesn't warn clever players that an illusion might be present.) Within the alcove, a metal chest contains all the coinage and gems taken in by Dun Delve, in addition to Earl Runnel's small cache of magic items. The chest is locked but can be opened with a successful DC 21 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. However, the chest is also trapped by a *glyph of warding* spell cast inside it.

Detecting the trap requires a successful DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check. The trap can be disarmed only by opening the chest with the key (Earl carries it), or with a successful DC 18 Dexterity check using thieves' tools, which must be made before any check to open the chest. If the spell is triggered, explosive runes erupt with magical energy in a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on the chest. The sphere spreads around corners. Each creature in the aura must make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw, taking 5d8 lightning damage on a failed

saving throw, or half as much damage on a successful one.

The chest contains 6,000 gp worth of gems and jewelry, 4,000 gp in loose coins, and a large leather pouch holding 400 pp, six emeralds worth 1,000 gp each, a +1 *dagger*, a +1 *shield*, a *ring of telekinesis*, a *potion of resistance (fire)*, and a *wand of web*.

**9. Urlyn T'ylan's Bedchamber.** The entrance to this cavern is fitted with a well-built door that is always locked, but which can be opened with a successful DC 18 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. The chamber is furnished with a bed, a wardrobe, a small table, and two chairs. A locked footlocker under the bed can be opened with a successful DC 17 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. The chest holds 445 gp, four 300 gp agates in a small pouch, two *potions of healing*, a *hat of disguise*, and a *rope of climbing*.

**10. Parlor of Dreams.** Brain gorgers who come to Dun Delve with the intent of imbibing powdered azurite are brought to this cave. Its strong door is always locked, with the key carried by one of the guards in area 11 across the hall. Otherwise, opening the door requires a successful DC 17 Dexterity check using thieves' tools.

The cave is sparsely furnished with three low couches. Brain gorgers purchase their Tasties from Earl Runnel in the administration offices, then are ushered into the parlor to stay as long as they like. For a significant fee, the Ceaseless can provide a sentient humanoid for a brain gorgers to feed on as well. Two brain gorgers named Gorple and Flurr currently inhabit the parlor of dreams, both of them lost in their dreamlike hallucinations.

**11. Guard Chamber.** This open cave is always occupied by at least two guards whenever any brain gorgers are present across the hall. Even though the brain gorgers are customers of the Ceaseless, the members of the order never forget how dangerous they can be. Two of the guards here have been equipped with *wands of web* and empowered *rings of mind shielding*. In addition to their usual benefits, each of these rings grants its wearer advantage on saving throws against any effect that would sense its emotions or read its thoughts, against divination spells, and against being charmed.

## 4b. Exploring Dun Delve

Dun Delve has been quite a profitable enterprise for the Ceaseless. In addition to the punishing tariffs exacted on traders moving goods through the stronghold, the order has earned a small fortune supplying brain gorgers with Tasties. Once a month, a heavily armed escort arrives by way of the teleportation circle in the cistern cavern (area 5), checking Earl's ledgers and taking the stronghold's earnings back to the surface.

The characters are allowed to wander while on their own in Dun Delve—though the expectation is that they won't be wandering far. Captain Stoneview directs them first to the Ceaseless Succor so they can rest up and eat before continuing their investigation. He then gives them leave to seek out the parlor of dreams (area 10) when they are ready to interview the two brain gorgers who might have communicated with Marlipp.

When the characters go to the Ceaseless Succor, they find the inn as described above. The innkeeper, Jormund Hardback, is friendly enough, but has no useful information for the party. (For more details on Jormund, see the gazetteer.) Though the guards in the inn keep an eye on the characters, they are used to traders and couriers passing through, and the characters can leave the inn at any time.

Depending on their cover story, the characters might be able to check out the warehouse or the smithy (claiming to seek information on brokering goods, needing weapons or armor repaired, and so forth). From there, they might slip over to the storage area or the cistern in the northern caverns. Exploring the southern cavern (including undertaking a potentially risky break-in at Earl Runnel's bedchamber or Urlyn T'ylan's bedchamber) requires that the characters first pass through the administration offices and evade the notice of those on watch in the guard chamber—possibly after having spent time with the brain gorgers in the parlor of dreams.

To avoid detection, the characters must succeed on a group DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth) check whenever they might attract the attention of any guards on patrol. Any characters spotted somewhere they shouldn't be are quickly challenged by guards led by Urlyn T'ylan, who assesses them a fine of 200 gp each and warns them to stay away from restricted areas.

Characters who get into serious trouble—for example, getting caught breaking in to any secure area of the stronghold—will be overpowered, threatened with execution, and brought before Earl Runnel. If the adventurers have previously done a deal with Earl to take

Marlipp out, he gives them the benefit of the doubt but angrily orders them to return any stolen property, talk to the brain gorgers immediately, and be on their way. If they have not previously completed a deal with Runnel, facing imminent execution is a great time to do so.

## 4c. In the Parlor of Dreams

The characters' best sources of useful information are the brain gorgers currently in the parlor of dreams. When they are ready to talk to those creatures, they can seek out the parlor by way of the administration offices. Once they enter the southern cavern, read or paraphrase the following:

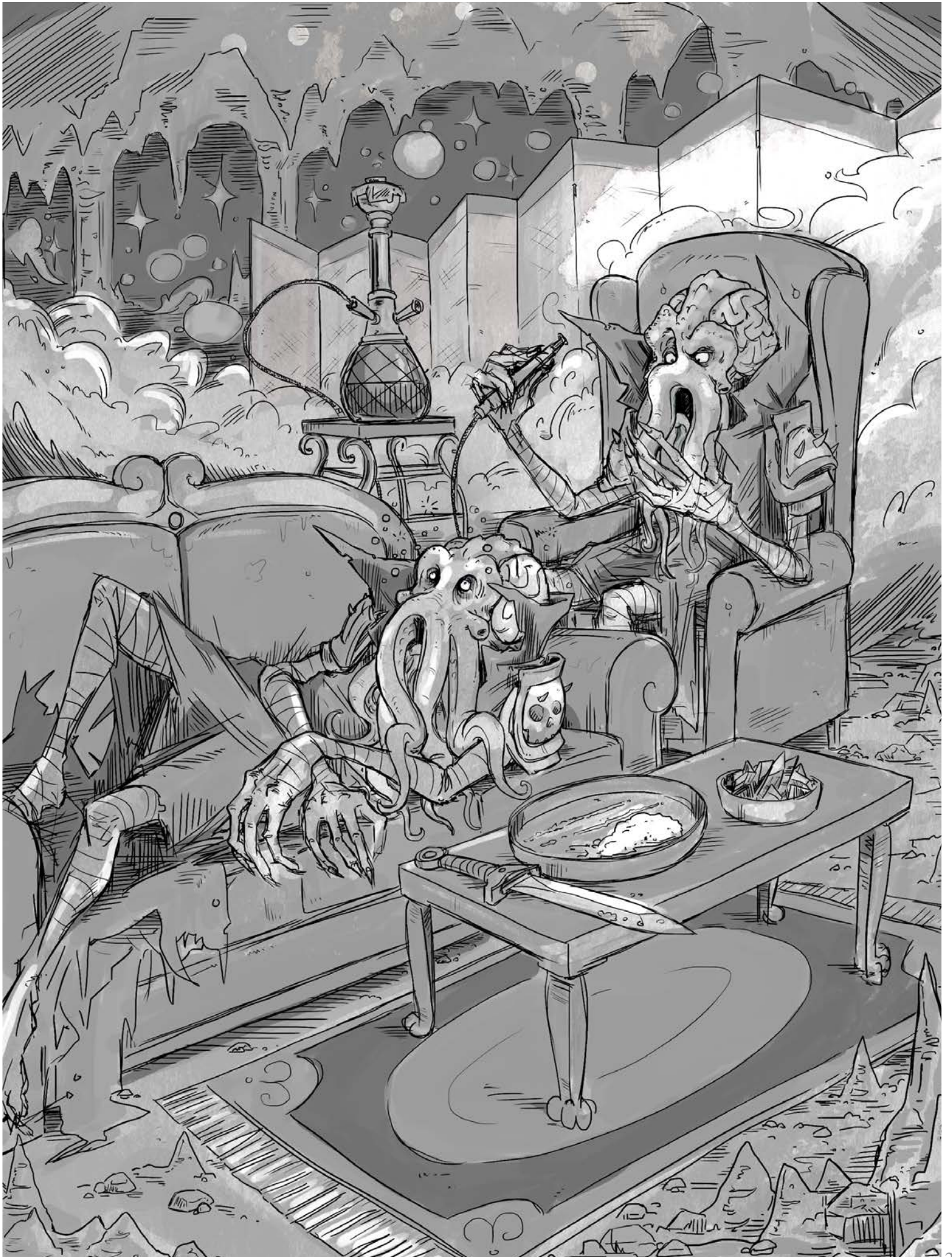
Beyond the administration offices, you see the natural stone walls of a cavern leading off into the distance. The glow of artificial light fills a chamber to your left, where four armed guards shift their attention to you from the wooden door set into the opposite side of the passageway.

The guards are initially suspicious as they ask the party's business. However, they are accepting of any statement that the characters have been sent by Earl Runnel to talk to the brain gorgers, if only because their fear of those creatures makes them respect anyone willing to spend time alone with them.

One of the guards nods toward the wooden door. "That's the parlor of dreams, as we call it. Where we let those disgusting brain gorgers use their drugs. The two of them in there now call themselves Gorple and Flurr. We don't know if they know each other or not. One of them has been here about a week, and the other a few days longer. Not that we can tell which is which. They've been consuming a lot of product, though, so be careful with them. Just knock on the door when you want to come out."

One of the guards from area 11 then unlocks the door, pulling it open and gesturing for the party to enter.







The chamber beyond the door is completely dark, the air cold and damp. Light spilling in from the corridor reveals an oddly decorated natural cavern, with several pieces of mismatched furniture scattered around. The elaborately gilded and tasseled couches and chairs might have been considered fine years ago, but the odd collection has clearly seen better days.

One low fainting couch is filled by a supine brain gorger, whose disgusting visage turns slowly from staring at the ceiling to watch as you enter. A second brain gorger is seated on a chair, staring fixedly straight ahead as if taking in some vision only it can see. With a jarring slam, the door behind you is closed and locked from the outside. You are now alone with these vile creatures.

Beyond their minimal movement as the party enters, the two **brain gorgers** otherwise show no reaction to the characters. Neither standing and watching them nor moving around the room provokes any sort of reaction.

### Roleplaying the Brain Gorgers

These two brain gorgers are so intoxicated as to be little threat to the party. Neither can remember their spells, nor can they use their Stunning Pulse or Enslave abilities without sobering up significantly.

If the characters try to engage the seated and staring brain gorger (Gorple), it is unresponsive to anything other than a direct physical attack, such is the depth of its azurite-induced stupor. If attacked, it defends itself to the best of its abilities (see the “Roleplaying the Brain Gorgers” sidebar).

The brain gorger lying on the couch (Flurr) responds in Undercommon if spoken to. It speaks with the same creepy and sibilant tones that the characters are likely to recall from their interactions with Marlipp in the previous adventure.

“Ah, you smell delicious,” Flurr first says. “Have you come to feed me?” When the characters respond with the predictable negative, he states, “That is a pity. While my hunger is much abated by the Tasties, I still do hunger. I may have to pay these fools for another snack. But in any event, why do you sun worshipers interrupt my reverie?”

Gorple remains completely unresponsive, such are the depths of his hallucinations. Flurr communicates with the party, but his voice comes out as a sibilant sigh. His speech should be slow and deliberate due to his intoxication, and he should come off as spacey and distracted. Feel free to throw in stream-of-consciousness babble and non sequiturs as he attempts to answer the characters’ questions.

Flurr, as is common with his kind, is highly intelligent and should be roleplayed as such. He will verbally fence with the characters, but has no interest in lying to them. With some good roleplaying and successful DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion) checks, Flurr can tell the party the following:

- “Yes, I know who Marlipp is.”
- “Yes, he was here recently.”
- “Marlipp is a lost fool. I am a lost fool. You are lost fools. We are all lost fools.”
- “Marlipp bought a supply of Tasties and then left. He seeks the Great Brain.”
- “You don’t know the Great Brain? Of course you don’t. You are fools.”
- “The Great Brain is the sum of all knowledge, and is our consciousness.”
- “When we imbibe Tasties, we voluntarily disconnect ourselves from the Great Brain. It is... disconcerting.”
- “Marlipp believes the Great Brain will save him. Marlipp believes the Great Brain will cleanse him. Marlipp believes the Great Brain will make him whole again. The Great Brain will do none of these things.”
- “The Great Brain will destroy him for his folly. The Great Brain will destroy me for my folly. The Great Brain will destroy all of us.”
- “Where is the Great Brain? Why, in Quinthrall, of course.”
- “What is Quinthrall? It is our home, and where the Great Brain lives and rules.”
- “Where is Quinthrall? It is deep and many days from here. If you seek Marlipp, you must reach him before he reaches the city.”

Flurr can give the party specific directions to Quinthrall, which is reached by the passage heading northwest out of the main chamber of Dun Delve. The brain gorger then concludes the interview with a dismissive wave of his hand, saying, “Enough. Leave me to my dreams, and I will leave you to your folly.” With that, he shifts back to staring at the ceiling and does not respond to any other questions.



## ACT 5: On the Road Again

Whenever the characters finish their business at Dun Delve, they can head out on the next stage of their journey. Any basic supplies they need can be purchased from the Ceaseless through Earl Runnel—at three times normal cost. Following Flurr's directions and heading northwest takes the party farther into the reaches of the Deep Dark.

The northwest passageway indicated by Flurr has the same general appearance as the route the party followed to reach Dun Delve, with a large central thoroughfare interrupted by smaller branching side passages from time to time. Any checks made to look for tracks or signs of other creatures show that most traffic in the area sticks to the central passageway.

As they continue along the passage, the characters spot specific signs of Marlipp having come through ahead of them—including places where a Medium humanoid has sprawled in large patches of fungus showing traces of blue azurite. A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Survival) check made after the characters have spotted a second such resting place informs them that Marlipp has been lingering at each such site for a considerable time, taking

his Tasties and lying in a stupor for long hours. The effect of this is that by moving quickly, the adventurers are catching up to him.

If the characters stray from this main route for any reason, you can make use of any of the random encounters in the “Fun in the Deep Dark” section (see Act 3), or add additional encounters of your own to get the party back on track.

### 5a. Tunnel Trawlers

Sometime in the first eight hours out of Dun Delve, the noise of the characters' passage catches the attention of a mated pair of **tunnel trawlers**. These intelligent and feral creatures have extremely sensitive scent and hearing, so that even characters taking precautions against excessive noise will likely be detected. The only way the characters can avoid the trawlers' attention is to succeed on five consecutive group Dexterity (Stealth) checks against the tunnel trawlers' +3 Wisdom (Perception) check, which is made with advantage.

In the likely event that the tunnel trawlers note the party's approach, each character can attempt a Wisdom (Perception) check against a Dexterity (Stealth) check



from the tunnel trawlers, so as to avoid being surprised. Read or paraphrase the following:

Though the Deep Dark is remarkable for its variety of passageways, fungal life, and hazards, toiling through the unrelenting darkness again quickly drains you of any fascination you might have once had for this realm. But as you push forward against the monotonous backdrop of yet another cavern, a flurry of sudden movement erupts above you. Two bipedal creatures out of nightmare drop down from the ceiling, each bearing a snarling bat-like face, and a massive pair of hooked claws where its hands should be.

The tunnel trawlers are ravenous, and do not break off their attack until one of them is slain.

## TUNNEL TRAWLER

*Large monstrosity, neutral*

**Armor Class** 16 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 75 (10d10 + 20)

**Speed** 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT    | WIS     | CHA    |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 18 (+4) | 11 (+0) | 15 (+2) | 8 (–1) | 13 (+1) | 6 (–2) |

**Skills** Perception +3

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

**Languages** Undercommon

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Keen Hearing and Smell.** The tunnel trawler has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The tunnel trawler makes one bite attack and two claw attacks.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

**Claw.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage.

## 5b. Fungal Forest

At approximately the ten-hour point from Dun Delve, the passageway is transformed into a larger cavern filled with mushrooms, toadstools, and other fungi. As the characters enter into this fungal forest, read or paraphrase the following:

As you continue along the route leading to Quinthrall, it begins to noticeably widen, becoming a gallery cavern between forty and sixty feet side to side, and rising from thirty to fifty feet in height. Small clusters of mushrooms and toadstools come into view, sporadic to start, but then increasing in density and size.

The previously uniform earthy smell of the Deep Dark has been replaced with the acrid scent of mold and rot, even as isolated clusters of multihued fungus evolve into a continuous carpet of mushrooms spreading to both sides of the wide cavern. After a few more minutes of moving forward, the density and height of the mushrooms increases even further, revealing the spectacular sight of a fungal forest whose largest specimens rise to over ten feet tall. A five-foot-wide meandering path continues through the cavern, free of mushroom growth and still running roughly northwest.

The fungal forest takes approximately 30 minutes to cross, but as the characters proceed, they notice that they are not alone. Any character with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 14 or higher, or who succeeds on a DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check, can alert the rest of the characters to subtle movement within the mushrooms to either side of the path as they move forward.

Eleven **moss lurkers** shadow the characters—five on the right side of the path and six on the left. These small, strange humanoids make their home in the fungal forest, and normally hide when any unknown creatures pass through their realm. However, a party of surface dwellers is too much of a curiosity to resist, causing the moss lurkers to keep pace with the characters for as long as they remain in the fungal forest.

Unless provoked, the moss lurkers do not menace the party in any way, being content to simply follow and observe. If any character hails them in either Undercommon or one of their native languages, a lone moss lurker cautiously peeks out from between the largest mushroom stems, making a strange sight with its long teeth and claws, large nose, and shabby clothing.

Though it is willing to speak with the party, the moss lurker's responses to any questions will be short and simple. It offers up that its people live in the fungal forest and have always done so; that their ancestors lived on the surface long ago but came to the Deep Dark in search of a sacred mushroom grove; that they are stewards of the mushroom forest; and that creatures often pass through





## MOSS LURKER

*Small humanoid, chaotic neutral*

**Armor Class** 15 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 45 (10d6 + 10)

**Speed** 30 ft.

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

**Saving Throws** Str +4, Dex +4

**Skills** Perception +2, Stealth +4

**Damage Immunities** fire, poison

**Condition Immunities** blind, poisoned

**Senses** blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 12

**Languages** Giant, Sylvan, Trollkin

**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

**Camouflage.** A moss lurker has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks to hide in forested or swampy terrain.

**Love of Heavy Weapons.** While moss lurkers can use heavy weapons, they have disadvantage while wielding them.

**Keen Hearing and Smell.** The moss lurker has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

**Poisoned Gifts.** A moss lurker can contaminate liquids or food with poison. Someone who consumes the contaminated substance must make a successful DC 11 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for 1 hour.

When the poison is introduced, the moss lurker can choose a poison that also causes the victim to fall unconscious, or to become paralyzed while poisoned in this way. An unconscious creature wakes if it takes damage, or if a creature uses an action to shake it awake.

### ACTIONS

**Claw.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage.

**Great Sword or Maul.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) slashing or bludgeoning damage.

**Mushroom-Poisoned Javelin.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 30 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage plus 6 (1d12) poison damage and the target is poisoned until the start of the moss lurker's next turn. A successful DC 11 Constitution save halves the poison damage and prevents poisoning.

**Dropped Boulder.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 100 ft. (vertically), one target. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage.

their forest bound for destinations unknown. The moss lurkers do not know who Marlipp is, but can confirm that a brain gorger passed through their forest just a few days ago.

Though their kind might normally prove dangerous to a party of adventurers, this clan of moss lurkers has been in the Deep Dark for only a few generations, and they have not forgotten their surface heritage. As such, the presence of a group of surface dwellers is more intriguing than threatening, and will give the moss lurkers something to talk about for weeks. If they are attacked, however, the moss lurkers fight to the death to defend their sacred mushroom grove.

After traveling for another twenty to thirty minutes, the characters reach the far side of the cavern and emerge from the fungal forest. From that point, the main passageway continues as it did before, varying in height and width, and with numerous side passages branching off at all angles.

## 5c. Beach Party

If the characters do not rest after the fungal forest encounter, another six hours of steady travel brings them to the shores of a vast underground lake. Read or paraphrase the following:

After several hours of unrelenting subterranean sameness, the passage you have been following once more widens to a broad cavern ahead of you. As you move forward, you feel a slight breeze—the first you have felt since coming underground. Then you hear what sounds like the rhythmic lapping of water against an unseen shore.

As you continue to move forward, the astonishing sight of a massive underground lake opens up before you. Gentle waves spread across the inky black water to lightly splash the rocky shoreline, but the lake is so wide that you cannot see its far shore. To the right, cliffs rise above the water, but would first require a swim and then a sheer climb to access. To the left, a path runs along the shoreline, varying in from ten to twenty feet in width, and seemingly the only way forward.

Movement in the distance reveals a cluster of humanoids lurking in the gloom along the shoreline. A few more of them are in the water, and appear to be beckoning or gesturing away from shore and toward the middle of the lake.

The characters have come across a group of seven **deep ones** led by a **deep one hybrid priest**—members of a race of fishlike humanoids that long ago made their way from the surface world to the Deep Dark. Part of a larger colony dwelling in the shallows on the far side of the lake, the group has travelled to this side of the lake because the steep drop-off beyond its shoreline allows them to more easily pay homage to a creature they worship, which lives in the deepest parts of the lake.

### DEEP ONE HYBRID PRIEST

*Medium humanoid, chaotic evil*

**Armor Class** 14 (natural armor)  
**Hit Points** 120 (16d8 + 48)  
**Speed** 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT     | WIS     | CHA     |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 18 (+4) | 14 (+2) | 16 (+3) | 12 (+1) | 12 (+1) | 15 (+2) |

**Saving Throws** Con +5, Wis +3, Cha +4  
**Skills** Athletics +6, Deception +4, Perception +3  
**Damage Vulnerabilities** fire  
**Damage Resistances** cold  
**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 13  
**Languages** Common, Void Speech  
**Challenge** 4 (1,100 XP)

**Amphibious.** A deep one priest can breathe air or water with equal ease. **Frenzied Rage.** On its next turn after a deep one hybrid priest takes 10 or more damage from a single attack, it has advantage on its melee attacks and adds +4 to spell and claws damage.

**Innate Spellcasting.** The deep one priest's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:  
At will: *sacred flame, shocking grasp*  
3/day each: *inflict wounds, sanctuary, sleep*  
1/day each: *ice storm, shatter*

**Lightless Depths.** A deep one hybrid priest is immune to the pressure effects of the deep ocean.

**Ocean Change.** A deep one born to a human family resembles a human child, but transforms into an adult deep one between the ages of 16 and 30.

**Voice of the Deep.** A deep one priest may sway an audience of listeners with its rolling, droning speech, fascinating them for 5 minutes and making them dismiss or forget what they've seen recently unless they make a successful DC 13 Wisdom saving throw at the end of that period. If the saving throw succeeds, they remember whatever events the deep one sought to erase.

### ACTIONS

**Claws.** *Melee Weapon Attack.* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.



## DEEP ONE

*Medium humanoid, chaotic evil*

**Armor Class 13 (natural armor)**

**Hit Points 91 (14d8 + 28)**

**Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.**

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT     | WIS    | CHA     |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|
| 16 (+3) | 12 (+1) | 14 (+2) | 10 (+0) | 8 (–1) | 12 (+1) |

**Saving Throws** Str +5, Con +4, Cha +3

**Damage Vulnerabilities** fire

**Damage Resistances** cold

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 9

**Languages** Common, Void Speech

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Amphibious.** A deep one can breathe air or water with equal ease.

**Frenzied Rage.** On its next turn after a deep one takes 10 or more damage from a single attack, it has advantage on its claws attack and adds +2 to damage.

**Lightless Depths.** A deep one is immune to the pressure effects of the deep ocean.

**Ocean Change.** A deep one born to a human family resembles a human child, but transforms into an adult deep one between the ages of 16 and 30.

### ACTIONS

**Claws.** *Melee Weapon Attack.* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d8 + 3) slashing damage.

Any character who scans the surface of the water and succeeds on a DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check notes the presence of some large creature moving just under the surface. This is a **dragon eel**, an intelligent creature that has lived in the lake for so long that it does not remember how it came to be here in the first place. Nonetheless, it is reasonably happy with its lot in life, and is amused by the worship and sacrifices offered by the deep ones.

The characters have stumbled across a religious ritual of sorts, as can be noted with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Religion) check. As they watch, the adventurers see the deep ones and their priest shove two humanoid bodies out from shore toward the serpentine form swimming beneath the surface. With a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check, a character recognizes the bodies as svirfneblin or adventurers slain by the deep ones.

If the characters decide quickly to advance against the deep ones and interrupt their dark ritual, they have a chance to attack with surprise. If they linger, a deep one worshiper spots them as the ritual unfolds. The deep ones then break off the ceremony to viciously attack the heathen intruders, fighting to the death in their zeal.

As combat unfolds, the dragon eel simply observes, amused by the conflict, and does not menace the party unless attacked. However, if hailed in Common or Draconic, it responds to ask why the characters have attacked its servants—and whether they now plan to serve in the deep ones' stead. It will be dismissive if the answer is no.

## DRAGON EEL

*Huge dragon, neutral*

**Armor Class 18 (natural armor)**

**Hit Points 230 (20d12 + 100)**

**Speed 20 ft., swim 60 ft.**

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT     | WIS     | CHA     |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 26 (+8) | 12 (+1) | 20 (+5) | 14 (+2) | 13 (+1) | 14 (+2) |

**Saving Throws** Str +12, Dex +5, Int +6, Wis +5, Cha +6

**Skills** Acrobatics +5, Athletics +12, Insight +5, Perception +6

**Damage Immunities** lightning

**Condition Immunities** paralyzed, prone

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

**Languages** Common, Draconic, Primordial

**Challenge** 12 (8,400 XP)

**Limited Amphibiousness.** The dragon eel can breathe air and water, but it needs to be submerged at least once every six hours to avoid suffocation.

**Shocking Touch.** A dragon eel's body generates a potent charge of lightning. A creature that touches or makes a successful melee attack against a dragon eel takes 5 (1d10) lightning damage.

**Storm Glide.** During storms, the dragon eel can travel through the air as if under the effects of a *fly* spell, except using its swim speed.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The dragon eel makes one bite attack and one tail slap attack.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 26 (4d8 + 8) piercing damage plus 5 (1d10) lightning damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or become paralyzed for 1d4 rounds.

**Tail Slap.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 30 (5d8 + 8) bludgeoning damage plus 5 (1d10) lightning damage and push the target up to 10 feet away.

**Lightning Breath (Recharge 6).** The dragon eel exhales lightning in a 60-foot line that is 5 feet wide. Each target in that line takes 55 (10d10) lightning damage, or half damage with a successful DC 18 Dexterity saving throw.

The dragon eel has no useful information for the characters, but it can tell them that the rest of the deep ones live at the distant end of the lake, too far for the characters to reach using any means available to them.

## 58. End of the Road

At this point, the party will have spent at least a couple of days in the Deep Dark in pursuit of Marlipp since leaving Dun Delve. Just a few hours after the encounter with the deep ones, the characters finally begin picking up signs that they are closing in on their quarry.

Their first such clue is the appearance of an odd constellation of sparkling blue powder in the passageway they are following. A successful DC 12 Intelligence check reveals that the pattern of powder against the stone of the passage creates the outline of the head, torso, and upper arms of a humanoid. Seemingly made by that humanoid lying on its back and throwing Tasties into the air, the

result is an azurite snow angel of sorts.

An hour or so later, the party encounters a section of passageway that features a twenty-foot stretch of fine sediment on the floor—and shows an obvious set of tracks. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check informs the party that these tracks were made by a brain gorger. A check result of 17 or better informs the characters that the tracks are only a few hours old, and that they have caught up to Marlipp at last.

## Act 6: Marlipp's Revenge

As he lingered during his most recent stop, Marlipp took notice of the disturbance behind him when the characters fought the deep ones. Fearing pursuit in his paranoia, the **brain gorger** now waits in ambush for whoever follows him. That said, he does not know that those who follow him are the same characters who expelled him from his lair not so long ago.

### MARLIPP (BRAIN GORGER)

**Armor Class** 16 (breastplate)

**Hit Points** 84 (13d8 + 26)

**Speed** 30 ft.

**STR** 12 (+1) **DEX** 17 (+3) **CON** 15 (+2) **INT** 20 (+5) **WIS** 18 (+4) **CHA** 16 (+3)

**Saving Throws** Int +9, Wis +8, Cha +7

**Skills** Arcana +9, Deception +7, Insight +8, Perception +8,

Persuasion +7, Stealth +7, Survival +8

**Senses** darkvision 180 ft., passive Perception 18

**Languages** Deep Speech, Undercommon, telepathy 120 ft.

**Challenge** 10 (5,900 XP)

**Magic Resistance.** The brain gorger has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

**Innate Spellcasting (Psionics).** The brain gorger's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 17). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

At will: *detect thoughts*, *levitate*, *hypnotic pattern*

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

**Spellcasting.** The brain gorger is a 10th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). The brain gorger has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *blade ward*, *dancing lights*, *mage hand*, *shocking grasp*

1st level (4 slots): *detect magic*, *disguise self*, *shield*, *sleep*

2nd level (3 slots): *blur*, *invisibility*, *ray of enfeeblement*

3rd level (3 slots): *clairvoyance*, *lightning bolt*, *sending*

4th level (3 slots): *confusion*, *dimension door*

5th level (2 slots): *telekinesis*, *wall of force*

### ACTIONS

**Tentacles. Melee Weapon Attack:** +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. **Hit:** 16 (2d10 + 5) psychic damage. If the target is Medium or smaller, it is grappled (escape DC 17) and must succeed on a DC 17 Intelligence saving throw or be stunned until this grapple ends.

**Brain Gorge. Melee Weapon Attack:** +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one incapacitated humanoid grappled by the brain gorger. **Hit:** 60 (10d10 + 5) piercing damage. If this damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the brain gorger kills the target by opening up its skull and feasting on the target's brain.

**Stunning Pulse.** The brain gorger emits a wave of mind-rending magical power in a 60-foot cone. Each creature in the area must succeed on a DC 17 Intelligence saving throw or take 23 (4d8 + 5) 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.

**Enslave (1/Day).** The brain gorger targets one creature it can see within 30 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or be magically charmed by the brain gorger until the brain gorger dies, it voluntarily releases the target, or until it is on a different plane of existence from the target. The charmed target is under the brain gorger's control and cannot take reactions. The brain gorger and the target can communicate telepathically 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. No more than once every 24 hours, the target can also repeat the saving throw when it is at least 1 mile away from the brain gorger.



Though his power is still somewhat limited by the ongoing effect of the Tasties, Marlipp is nonetheless confident in his ability to deal with whatever threat is behind him, making him content to sit and wait for the party to catch him. As the characters round a bend in the passage, the brain gorger will be seen waiting for them. Read or paraphrase the following:

After long days of pursuit and a string of bizarre encounters in the Deep Dark, you round a bend in the passage—and suddenly see the object of your chase before you. Marlipp stands as if calmly waiting for an appointment, with his hands clasped behind his back. His creepy face tentacles quiver and lash the air as his eyes take you in. Before you can react, he speaks in a lisping and unnerving tone.

“So, it is you. I should have known. It was not enough for you to drive me from my home. You now pursue me as I seek my penance. Fine. It has been hours since my last snack, so your arrival is timely.”

Marlipp is 30 feet away from the party at the beginning of this encounter. He targets the stoutest-looking warrior characters first, and does not attempt to feed until all the characters have been rendered defenseless. But even though he does his best to destroy the characters, the lingering haze caused by the Tasties means that he does not have access to his Enslave ability, and his Stunning pulse ability does not recharge after its first use. Further, because he has not been able to rest adequately while in the throes of his Tasties-induced stupor, Marlipp has no 5th-level spells prepared.

This should still be a tough fight for the party. But if things go badly, the characters might discover that they have unexpected allies in their battle against the brain gorger.

## Saved by the Mages

If luck and tactics allow the characters to maintain the upper hand against Marlipp, the moment when he is dropped to unconsciousness triggers the appearance of Kevroar Arrowway and Zangold Greenfill—along with another mage that the characters will formally meet only in the next installment of this adventure series.

These Ceaseless mages show up to save the brain gorger from the characters’ full wrath, leaving him unconscious and preventing them from killing him. (In the event that

Marlipp is killed, the Ceaseless have ample resources to raise him, or simply to question him using *speak with dead*.) Alternatively, if the characters fare poorly against the brain gorger, the mages appear when only one character is left standing, saving the party from Marlipp’s revenge.

When the three Ceaseless mages appear, read or paraphrase the following, adjusting for the circumstances that have inspired their appearance:

You feel a sudden lurch of disorientation as three figures suddenly appear before you, surrounding Marlipp as magic swirls around you, preventing you from moving forward. Two of the three are Kevroar Arrowway and Zangold Greenfill, the high-handed mages from Dun Delve. The third is someone you have never seen before, silver haired and older than the other two, and radiating an air of firm command. As with the other mages, his fine robes bear the familiar Ceaseless sigil.

With a laugh that doesn’t reach his eyes, the older man speaks. “Well, I guess we should thank you. We have been looking for this one for a while, and will soon have our answers. You can assure your baron, the petty bureaucrat that he is, that Marlipp will not be a bother to him or his people ever again. So, if I understand the mission you were charged with, you can report it as a success. As such, I would recommend you return to the surface. However far ahead the brain gorger colony lies, I am quite certain that only death awaits you there, as it awaited Marlipp.

“I am sorry that I do not have time for a proper conversation, but the Ceaseless nonetheless respect their debts. I will leave you with a letter of introduction bearing my seal. If presented in the right places in Trillium, it will gain you an audience with me, or with any of those who report to me. The Ceaseless are always looking for resourceful agents, and you undoubtedly have questions of your own. So, until then...”

The spellcaster addressing the characters then vanishes, along with the two other Ceaseless operatives and Marlipp. Left behind is a large paper envelope containing the promised letter (see Player Handout B in the appendix at the end of the adventure), which identifies the mysterious mage as Rothan Westhill, a name not yet known to any of the characters.

In addition to the letter, the envelope holds a *token of return*. Taking the form of the Ceaseless insignia, this

single-use magic item imparts the knowledge of its power with a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) check. The token allows any character to cast the *teleport* spell, so as to quickly return the characters to Ockney's Hold or any other known location.

The envelope also contains a promissory note that can be redeemed at the temple of the Sun in Trillium—in the staggering amount of 10,000 gp. In the event that the characters managed to loot the wealth of Dun Delve in Earl Runnel's Bedchamber (see “4a. Key to Dun Delve,” above), the promissory note can instead be a note indicating that the theft was discovered—but that rather than facing reprisals from the Ceaseless, the characters will be allowed to keep the loot “in exchange for services rendered.”

### Trillium: Ancient and Vast



Trillium is a sprawling city hundreds of miles to the south of Ockney's Hold, located on the banks of the Azure Sea. With a population in the hundreds of thousands, Trillium is a commercial hub that exerts tremendous influence over the regions around it. It is also the home of the Ceaseless, but that group is far from the only criminal organization operating in the city. In fact, this is part of the reason why the Ceaseless has taken an interest in the smaller settlements of the north. Places like Ockney's Hold represent untapped markets ripe for control.

The characters are, in fact, only a few hours from the brain gorger colony, Quinthrall. However, as the Ceaseless mage warned them, investigating that site is far beyond the abilities of the characters or the scope of this adventure.

With their mission completed, the characters can return to Ockney's Hold and report what they have done and learned. If the characters choose to not make use of the token to teleport back, that return trip can be as eventful or as uneventful as you wish.

Whenever the characters return to Ockney's Hold to report to Baron Reinson, he is furious at the news that Marlipp was taken by the Ceaseless. The baron is paranoid to the point of distraction about the possible return of the brain gorger, and is enraged by the thought of a “mere band of thugs” interfering with state business. The baron grudgingly pays the characters 1,000 gp each of the promised reward, but insists that the balance will be held until they return from the city of Trillium after confronting the Ceaseless.

The baron seeks to have the adventurers do as much damage as they can to this criminal band that seeks to interfere with the affairs of the barony, and to kill Marlipp or confirm that the brain gorger is destroyed. The details of this exchange and the additional inducements offered by the baron will be taken up in the next module in this series—*Trillium: City of Enchantment*. But even if the characters balk at taking the baron's orders once more, the promissory note and letter of introduction provide plenty of incentive to travel to that legendary city.

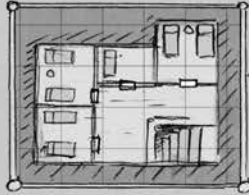
*So ends Into the Deep Dark.*

## Resolution

With a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check, a character can conclude that the Ceaseless mages employed powerful spells, including *scrying*, *teleport*, and *forcecage* (as well as *hold monster* if Marlipp was vanquished before he could kill the party) to intervene in the fight and capture Marlipp. It takes no check to reveal the special spell mark that the archmage Zangold placed on one of the characters, or on an item carried by a character. Now that it has been activated to allow the mages to home in on the characters' location, the mark becomes visible, radiates magic, and fades away after a few minutes.



20 ft

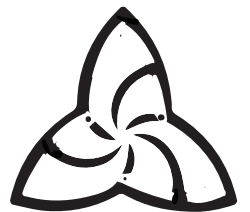
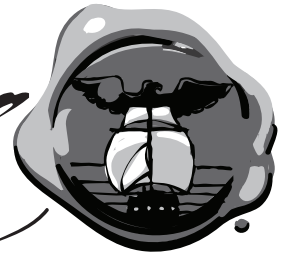


To any and all who may bear witness:

Be advised that the conveyor of this document is known to me, *Rothan Westhill*, of the noble *Westhill* house of *Trillium*. Kindly accord the bearer of this document, under my seal, with all due courtesies and respects as if the conveyor were being introduced by me personally.

Under seal.

*Rothan Westhill.*





# Monsters and NPCs

## EARL RUNNEL

### Half-Orc Wererat

*Medium humanoid (orc, shapechanger), lawful evil*

**Armor Class** 15 (leather)

**Hit Points** 84 (13d8 + 26)

**Speed** 30 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT    | WIS     | CHA    |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 11 (+0) | 18 (+4) | 14 (+2) | 11(+0) | 11 (+0) | 8 (–1) |

**Saving Throws** Dex +7, Int +3

**Skills** Acrobatics +7, Athletics +3, Perception +3, Sleight of Hand +7, Stealth +7

**Damage Immunities** bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks not made with silvered weapons

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

**Languages** Common, Thieves' Cant (can't speak in rat form)

**Challenge** 8 (3,900 XP)

**Cunning Action.** On each of his turns, Earl can use a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

**Evasion.** If Earl is subjected to an effect that allows him to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, he instead takes no damage if he succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if he fails.

**Sneak Attack.** Once per turn, Earl deals an extra 14 (4d6) damage when he hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of Earl that isn't incapacitated and Earl doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

**Shapechanger.** Earl can use his action to polymorph into a rat-humanoid hybrid or into a giant rat, or back into his true form, which is a half-orc. His statistics, other than his size, are the same in each form. Any equipment he is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. He reverts to his true form if he dies.

**Keen Smell.** Earl has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

## ACTIONS

**Multiattack** (Half-Orc or Hybrid Form Only). Earl makes three attacks with his shortsword; or he makes two attacks while in hybrid form, only one of which can be a bite.

**+1 Shortsword** (Half-Orc or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d6 +5) piercing damage.

**Light Crossbow** (Half-Orc or Hybrid Form Only). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage.

**Bite** (Rat or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage. If the target is a humanoid, it must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with wererat lycanthropy.

## REACTIONS

**Uncanny Dodge.** When an attacker that Earl can see hits him with an attack, Earl can use his reaction to halve the attack's damage against him.

## MARLIPP

### Brain Gorger

**Armor Class** 16 (breastplate)

**Hit Points** 84 (13d8 + 26)

**Speed** 30 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT     | WIS     | CHA     |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 12 (+1) | 17 (+3) | 15 (+2) | 20 (+5) | 18 (+4) | 16 (+3) |

**Saving Throws** Int +9, Wis +8, Cha +7

**Skills** Arcana +9, Deception +7, Insight +8, Perception +8, Persuasion +7, Stealth +7, Survival +8

**Senses** darkvision 180 ft., passive Perception 18

**Languages** Deep Speech, Undercommon, telepathy 120 ft.

**Challenge** 10 (5,900 XP)

**Magic Resistance.** The brain gorger has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

**Innate Spellcasting (Psionics).** The brain gorger's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 17). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

At will: *detect thoughts, levitate, hypnotic pattern*

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

**Spellcasting.** The brain gorger is a 10th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). The brain gorger has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *blade ward, dancing lights, mage hand, shocking grasp*

1st level (4 slots): *detect magic, disguise self, shield, sleep*

2nd level (3 slots): *blur, invisibility, ray of enfeeblement*

3rd level (3 slots): *clairvoyance, lightning bolt, sending*

4th level (3 slots): *confusion, dimension door*

5th level (2 slots): *telekinesis, wall of force*

## ACTIONS

**Tentacles.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 16 (2d10 + 5) psychic damage. If the target is Medium or smaller, it is grappled (escape DC 17) and must succeed on a DC 17 Intelligence saving throw or be stunned until this grapple ends.

**Brain Gorge.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one incapacitated humanoid grappled by the brain gorger. *Hit:* 60 (10d10 + 5) piercing damage. If this damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the brain gorger kills the target by opening up its skull and feasting on the target's brain.

**Stunning Pulse.** The brain gorger emits a wave of mind-rending magical power in a 60-foot cone. Each creature in the area must succeed on a DC 17 Intelligence saving throw or take 23 (4d8 + 5) 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.

**Enslave (1/Day).** The brain gorger targets one creature it can see within 30 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or be magically charmed by the brain gorger until the brain gorger dies, it voluntarily releases the target, or until it is on a different plane of existence from the target. The charmed target is under the brain gorger's control and cannot take reactions. The brain gorger and the target can communicate telepathically 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. No more than once every 24 hours, the target can also repeat the saving throw when it is at least 1 mile away from the brain gorger.

## Deep Ones

(From *Tome of Beasts* by Kobold Press)

*With enormous eyes, a wide mouth, and almost no chin, the deep ones are hideous, fishlike folk, often hunched and scaled when encountered in coastal villages.*

**Elder Gods.** In their fully grown form, the deep ones are an ocean-dwelling race that worships elder gods such as Father Dagon and Mother Hydra, and they dwell in deep water darkness. They've intermarried with coastal humans to create human-deep one hybrids.

**Coastal Raiders.** The deep ones keep to themselves in isolated coastal villages and settlements in the ocean for long periods, and then turn suddenly, at the command of their patron gods, into strong, relentless raiders, seizing territory, slaves, and wealth all along the coasts. Some deep ones have even founded small kingdoms lasting generations in backwater reaches or distant chilled seas.

**Demand Sacrifices.** They demand tolls from mariners frequently; those who do not leave tribute to them at certain islands or along certain straits find the fish escape their nets, or the storms shatter their hulls and drown their sailors. Over time, some seafaring nations have found it more profitable to ally themselves with the deep ones; this is the first step in their patient plans to dominate and rule.

## DEEP ONE

*Medium humanoid, chaotic evil*

**Armor Class** 13 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 91 (14d8 + 28)

**Speed** 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT     | WIS    | CHA     |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|
| 16 (+3) | 12 (+1) | 14 (+2) | 10 (+0) | 8 (–1) | 12 (+1) |

**Saving Throws** Str +5, Con +4, Cha +3

**Damage Vulnerabilities** fire

**Damage Resistances** cold

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 9

**Languages** Common, Void Speech

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Amphibious.** A deep one can breathe air or water with equal ease.

**Frenzied Rage.** On its next turn after a deep one takes 10 or more damage from a single attack, it has advantage on its claws attack and adds +2 to damage.

**Lightless Depths.** A deep one is immune to the pressure effects of the deep ocean.

**Ocean Change.** A deep one born to a human family resembles a human child, but transforms into an adult deep one between the ages of 16 and 30.

### ACTIONS

**Claws.** *Melee Weapon Attack.* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d8 + 3) slashing damage.

## DEEP ONE HYBRID PRIEST

*Medium humanoid, chaotic evil*

**Armor Class** 14 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 120 (16d8 + 48)

**Speed** 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT     | WIS     | CHA     |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 18 (+4) | 14 (+2) | 16 (+3) | 12 (+1) | 12 (+1) | 15 (+2) |

**Saving Throws** Con +5, Wis +3, Cha +4

**Skills** Athletics +6, Deception +4, Perception +3

**Damage Vulnerabilities** fire

**Damage Resistances** cold

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 13

**Languages** Common, Void Speech

**Challenge** 4 (1,100 XP)

**Amphibious.** A deep one priest can breathe air or water with equal ease. **Frenzied Rage.** On its next turn after a deep one hybrid priest takes 10 or more damage from a single attack, it has advantage on its melee attacks and adds +4 to spell and claws damage.

**Innate Spellcasting.** The deep one priest's innate spellcasting



ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *sacred flame*, *shocking grasp*

3/day each: *inflict wounds*, *sanctuary*, *sleep*

1/day each: *ice storm*, *shatter*

**Lightless Depths.** A deep one hybrid priest is immune to the pressure effects of the deep ocean.

**Ocean Change.** A deep one born to a human family resembles a human child, but transforms into an adult deep one between the ages of 16 and 30.

**Voice of the Deep.** A deep one priest may sway an audience of listeners with its rolling, droning speech, fascinating them for 5 minutes and making them dismiss or forget what they've seen recently unless they make a successful DC 13 Wisdom saving throw at the end of that period. If the saving throw succeeds, they remember whatever events the deep one sought to erase.

## ACTIONS

**Claws.** *Melee Weapon Attack.* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.

# Dragon Eel

(From *Tome of Beasts* by Kobold Press)

The dragon eel's unmistakable slender form sports a powerful single finned tail and wicked jaws like a matched pair of serrated blades. Dragon eels vary widely in color from browns and blacks to brilliant iridescent hues in mottled patterns.

**Fond of Servants.** While most dragon eels are solitary and irascible, on rare instances some form pairs or small bands—and some gather humanoid servants.

**Magnetic and Lightning.** Dragon eels make their natural homes in twisting underwater cave systems and prefer magnetically aligned, metallic cavern formations navigable with their refined electric-sight. Some dragon eels use their constant electric auras combined with acquired alchemical reagents to electroplate portions of their golden hoard onto the walls of their dwellings.

**Pirate Fleets and Dominions.** Dragon eels claim large swaths of shoreline as their demesne. Although neither particularly cruel nor righteous, a dragon eel often lords over awed tribes, allowing locals to revere it as a mighty spirit. Some dragon eels use such tribes as the core of a

pirate fleet or raiding parties carried on their backs. Their ability to swim through air during storms adds to their reputation as terrible thunder spirits.

**Briable.** Their deceptive moniker sometimes lulls foolish sailors into a false confidence when they expect to face a simple if dangerous eel beast, but instead find themselves dealing with intelligent draconic kings of the coastal shallows. Wise sailors traveling through known dragon eel territory bring tithes and offerings to placate them.

## DRAGON EEL

*Huge dragon, neutral*

**Armor Class** 18 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 230 (20d12 + 100)

**Speed** 20 ft., swim 60 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT     | WIS     | CHA     |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 26 (+8) | 12 (+1) | 20 (+5) | 14 (+2) | 13 (+1) | 14 (+2) |

**Saving Throws** Str +12, Dex +5, Int +6, Wis +5, Cha +6

**Skills** Acrobatics +5, Athletics +12, Insight +5, Perception +6

**Damage Immunities** lightning

**Condition Immunities** paralyzed, prone

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

**Languages** Common, Draconic, Primordial

**Challenge** 12 (8,400 XP)

**Limited Amphibiousness.** The dragon eel can breathe air and water, but it needs to be submerged at least once every six hours to avoid suffocation.

**Shocking Touch.** A dragon eel's body generates a potent charge of lightning. A creature that touches or makes a successful melee attack against a dragon eel takes 5 (1d10) lightning damage. Storm Glide. During storms, the dragon eel can travel through the air as if under the effects of a *fly* spell, except using its swim speed.

## ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The dragon eel makes one bite attack and one tail slap attack.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 26 (4d8 + 8) piercing damage plus 5 (1d10) lightning damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or become paralyzed for 1d4 rounds.

**Tail Slap.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 30 (5d8 + 8) bludgeoning damage plus 5 (1d10) lightning damage and push the target up to 10 feet away.

**Lightning Breath** (Recharge 6). The dragon eel exhales lightning in a 60-foot line that is 5 feet wide. Each target in that line takes 55 (10d10) lightning damage, or half damage with a successful DC 18 Dexterity saving throw.

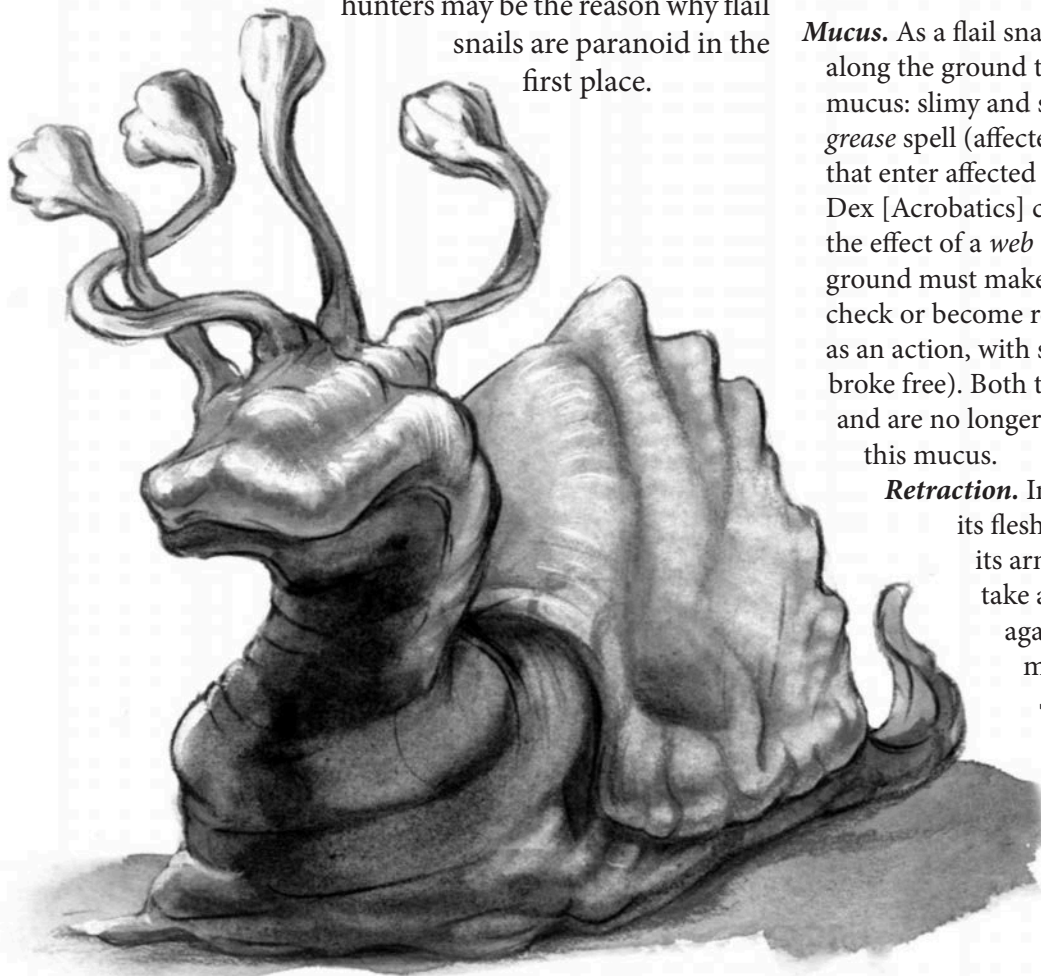
# Flail Snail

(From *Fifth Edition Foes* by Necromancer Games)

*This creature looks like a massive version of a normal snail whose head has been replaced with four tentacles as thick as a man's arm, each ending in a club-like ball. Its shell is striped in bright hues of red, blue, yellow, and green, and its flesh is gray-blue.*

Flail snails are solitary omnivores that live in the deepest recesses of caverns, caves, and dungeons, or occasionally aboveground in the ruins of ancient, abandoned cities. They sustain themselves on a diet of fungus, mold, and rodents. Although one would hardly suspect it on seeing a flail snail, they are intelligent creatures. They have no sound-producing organs, so their language is built around patterns created with their multipurpose mucus. Like most creatures, they are inoffensive when left alone, but they are tremendously paranoid about strangers; when someone intrudes into their normally abandoned territory, flail snails are prone to attack first and think up questions later.

They do not collect treasure, but the multi-hued shell of a flail snail can be sold to craftsmen, carvers, and collectors of strange and exotic curios for 80–120 gp, or possibly more for a particularly large or fine specimen. Shell hunters may be the reason why flail snails are paranoid in the first place.



## Greater Flail Snail

A typical adult flail snail has 4 hit dice, but there is tremendous variety among their population. In fact, flail snails can be found with 1 to 12 hit dice, and they have one club-like tentacle per hit die. Thus, a 6 HD flail snail has six tentacles; an 8 HD flail snail has eight tentacles; a 12 HD flail snail has twelve tentacles; and so on. A flail snail can attack with all of its tentacles. Flail snails have 9.5 hit points per hit die, and the creature's CR increases by 1 for every two additional tentacles beyond the basic four. All other statistics remain the same.

## FLAIL SNAIL

*Large monstrosity, unaligned*

**Armor Class** 16 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 38 (4d10 + 16)

**Speed** 10 ft., climb 10 ft.

| STR     | DEX    | CON     | INT    | WIS     | CHA    |
|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 16 (+3) | 8 (–1) | 18 (+4) | 5 (–3) | 12 (+1) | 4 (–3) |

**Skills** Perception +3

**Damage Immunities** fire, poison

**Condition Immunities** blinded, poisoned, prone

**Senses** Blindsight 60 ft.

**Languages** Flail Snail

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Mucus.** As a flail snail moves, it can leave a trail of mucus along the ground that it travels across. It has two types of mucus: slimy and sticky. Slimy mucus has the effect of a *grease* spell (affected ground is difficult terrain; creatures that enter affected ground must make a successful DC 12 Dex [Acrobatics] check or fall prone). Sticky mucus has the effect of a *web* spell (creatures entering the affected ground must make a successful DC 12 Str [Athletics] check or become restrained; the check can be repeated as an action, with success indicating the trapped creature broke free). Both types last for 10 minutes, then dry out and are no longer effective. Flail snails are immune to this mucus.

**Retraction.** Instead of moving, a flail snail can pull its fleshy parts back into its shell, increasing its armor class to 22, but it can't move or take actions while retracted. Extending itself again also takes the place of any other movement that turn.

**Slime Rope.** A flail snail can turn its mucus into a ropelike strand up to 60 ft. long. If this strand is anchored to a wall or ceiling, the flail snail and up to another 1,000 pounds can hang from it



indefinitely. The flail snail can climb up this strand 10 feet per round, or lower itself down it 20 feet per round. Other creatures can climb the strand with a successful DC 20 Str (Athletics) check. Once the snail breaks contact with the strand, the slime dries out and decomposes in 1d4 rounds, after which it can't be used by anyone.

**Suction.** A snail's foot adheres to surfaces so well that its 10-foot climb speed applies even on perfectly sheer surfaces and ceilings, with no chance to fall off unless the foot is actively peeled loose by external force.

**Warp Magic.** Any spell that targets a flail snail directly has an 80% chance of producing a random effect instead of the desired affect. Only spells that directly target the flail snail are warped; area effect spells are not affected. When a spell is cast, roll percentile dice and consult the table.

## ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** A flail snail attacks four times with tentacle clubs.

**Tentacle Club.** *Melee Weapon Attack.* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft.; one creature. *Hit:* 1d8 + 3 bludgeoning damage.

# Moss Lurker

(From *Tome of Beasts* by Kobold Press)

*Somewhat like the cruel crossbreed of troll and gnome, the moss lurkers are a primitive race of forest and cavern dwellers with long, greenish beards and hair. Their hides are mossy green or peaty amber, and a vaguely fungal scent surrounds them at all times.*

Like their trollish relatives, moss lurkers have large and often grotesque noses. Their claws are bright red when unsheathed, and their teeth tend toward the long and snaggly. They wear simple clothes of homespun wool or leather, or go naked in the summer. Their hats are sometimes festooned with toadstools or ferns as primitive camouflage.

**Rocks and Large Weapons.** Moss lurkers have a fondness for throwing stones onto enemies from a great height, and they often employ enormous axes, warhammers, and two-handed swords that seem much larger than such a small creature should be able to lift.

# MOSS LURKER

*Small humanoid, chaotic neutral*

**Armor Class** 15 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 45 (10d6 + 10)

**Speed** 30 ft.

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

**Saving Throws** Str +4, Dex +4

**Skills** Perception +2, Stealth +4

**Damage Immunities** fire, poison

**Condition Immunities** blind, poisoned

**Senses** blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 12

**Languages** Giant, Sylvan, Trollkin

**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

**Camouflage.** A moss lurker has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks to hide in forested or swampy terrain.

**Love of Heavy Weapons.** While moss lurkers can use heavy weapons, they have disadvantage while wielding them.

**Keen Hearing and Smell.** The moss lurker has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

**Poisoned Gifts.** A moss lurker can contaminate liquids or food with poison. Someone who consumes the contaminated substance must make a successful DC 11 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for 1 hour. When the poison is introduced, the moss lurker can choose a poison that also causes the victim to fall unconscious, or to become paralyzed while poisoned in this way. An unconscious creature wakes if it takes damage, or if a creature uses an action to shake it awake.

## ACTIONS

**Claw.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage.

**Great Sword or Maul.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) slashing or bludgeoning damage.

**Mushroom-Poisoned Javelin.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 30 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage plus 6 (1d12) poison damage and the target is poisoned until the start of the moss lurker's next turn. A successful DC 11 Constitution save halves the poison damage and prevents poisoning.

**Dropped Boulder.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 100 ft. (vertically), one target. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage.

# Tunnel Trawler

*An aggressive predator of the Deep Dark, the tunnel trawler endlessly combs the depths of the earth in search of prey. Vicious and savage, it ravenously attacks anything it perceives as a possible food source. Its formidable front claws make it a strong climber, and the scraping sound of those claws digging into subterranean walls is often the first sign that a tunnel trawler is nearby.*

**Unnatural Form.** The dreadful tunnel trawler looks like a bizarre crossbreed of bat, crab, and lizard. It is protected by an exoskeleton lined with sharp ridges and prominent spines. Its long, powerful arms each terminate in a single wickedly sharp claw.

**Cunning Hunters.** The insatiable tunnel trawler often hunts with its mate or others of its kind, using a coordinated pack strategy. Using their sharp claws and prodigious strength, tunnel trawlers climb along cavern ceilings and high ledges to drop down on unsuspecting prey.

## TUNNEL TRAWLER

*Large monstrosity, neutral*

**Armor Class** 16 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 75 (10d10 + 20)

**Speed** 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT    | WIS     | CHA    |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 18 (+4) | 11 (+0) | 15 (+2) | 8 (–1) | 13 (+1) | 6 (–2) |

**Skills** Perception +3

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

**Languages** Undercommon

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Keen Hearing and Smell.** The tunnel trawler has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

## ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The tunnel trawler makes one bite attack and two claw attacks.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

**Claw.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage.



## Dun Delve

**Population:** Varies; approximately 90 full-time residents

**Alignment:** Lawful evil

Dun Delve is an ambitious project undertaken by the criminal syndicate known as the Ceaseless. Members of the organization try to maintain a low profile in the world, where they are involved in illicit activities in most major cities. However, they do not have the same secrecy concerns when it comes to the Deep Dark. The Ceaseless founded the stronghold of Dun Delve in an attempt to establish a presence in that underground realm, gaining access to the markets, products, and potential profits to be found there.

Because darkvision is so useful in the Deep Dark, most of the guards and Ceaseless operatives in Dun Delve are nonhumans, selected from among the organization's general membership. The stronghold is built within a massive gallery cavern, which stretches over one hundred feet across at its widest, has a ceiling that soars to nearly ninety feet above, and runs generally in a north-south direction. The fortress is built on the west side of the cavern, where a broad natural ramp leads up to a series of caves that were the former home of a clan of troglodytes. The Ceaseless forcibly evicted the troglodytes, then used the plateau at the top of the ramp and the caves beyond as the site of their fortress.

The Deep Dark is a dangerous place, so Dun Delve was built to be easily defended. The plateau stands approximately forty feet above the cavern floor, and is the base for an outer stone wall fifty feet wide and one hundred feet long, with that long side of the fortress running north to south. At the south end of the fortress, the top of the natural ramp ends at two thick, wooden gates that can be securely barred from within. The gates are emblazoned with the logo of the Ceaseless.

Constructed by hired *svirfneblin* and *duergar* labor, the well-fitted stone walls of the stronghold rise fifteen feet high and stand three feet thick. A gangway positioned ten feet above the ground runs along the inside of the walls, letting defenders respond to attacks against any part of the stronghold. The gangway is accessible from any of the fortress's four towers, as well as by way of stairs spaced along the inside of the walls. Additionally, the walls and gates of the stronghold are magically warded to alert the resident mages of anyone entering or leaving Dun Delve by *teleport*, *dimension door*, or similar magic.

At each corner of the stronghold, a small tower rises

an additional ten feet above the top of the wall. Each of these watch towers is occupied at all times by at least three guards, and features a swivel-mounted ballista that is capable of firing in any direction.

***The Ceaseless Succor (Inn).*** Dun Delve's inn and tavern is run by a dwarf named Jormund Hardback, who hails from a dwarf hold near the small human settlement of Port Vanka, far to the north. Because it doubles as the mess hall for the guards of Dun Delve, business is always brisk. Rooms at the Ceaseless Succor are expensive for all but Ceaseless operatives, costing 15 gp a day. Meals are likewise expensive at 3 gp per day, but that price includes ale or wine. Meals at the inn are surprisingly good given its location, and often include roast fowl, potatoes, and other root vegetables.

The inn features a large common room and kitchen on the first floor. Four large rooms on the second floor are ostensibly designed for double occupancy, but can easily sleep four. Jormund is a loyal Ceaseless operative, and he takes his responsibilities at the Ceaseless Succor very seriously.

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AN ADVENTURE FOR 4 TO 6 CHARACTERS LEVELS 3 TO 5.

THE NORMALLY QUIET TOWN OF OCKNEY'S HOLD FINDS ITSELF IN DISARRAY AS A RESULT OF A VAST CRIMINAL CONSPIRACY. WHEN BARON REINSON, THE HEAD OF STATE, BEGAN TO ACT ERRATICALLY AND DESTRUCTIVELY, A GROUP OF BRAVE ADVENTURERS WAS HIRED TO GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THE TROUBLE. AFTER A HARROWING INVESTIGATION, THE ADVENTURERS CONFRONTED THE TERRIBLE BRAIN GORGER, MARLIPP, AND WERE SUCCESSFUL IN FORCING HIM TO FLEE FROM HIS LAIR IN A COPPER HILLS MINE AND INTO THE DEEP DARK. BUT THOUGH THE CHARACTERS WERE VICTORIOUS, MARLIPP'S THREAT DID NOT END. NOW, THE ADVENTURERS ARE CHARGED WITH PURSUING THE BRAIN GORGER INTO THE DEEP DARK AND DESTROYING HIM UTTERLY—BUT WHAT THEY DON'T KNOW IS THAT THERE ARE OTHER EVEN MORE POWERFUL FORCES AT PLAY. WILL THESE BRAVE HEROES BE ABLE TO HUNT DOWN THE FOUL MARLIPP WHILE NAVIGATING THE PERILS OF THE DEEP DARK? AND HOW WILL THEY FARE IN NEGOTIATING WITH THE OTHER UNKNOWN AND EXTREMELY DANGEROUS FORCES AT WORK IN THE UNDERWORLD, MANY OF WHICH SEEK THEIR DOOM?

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