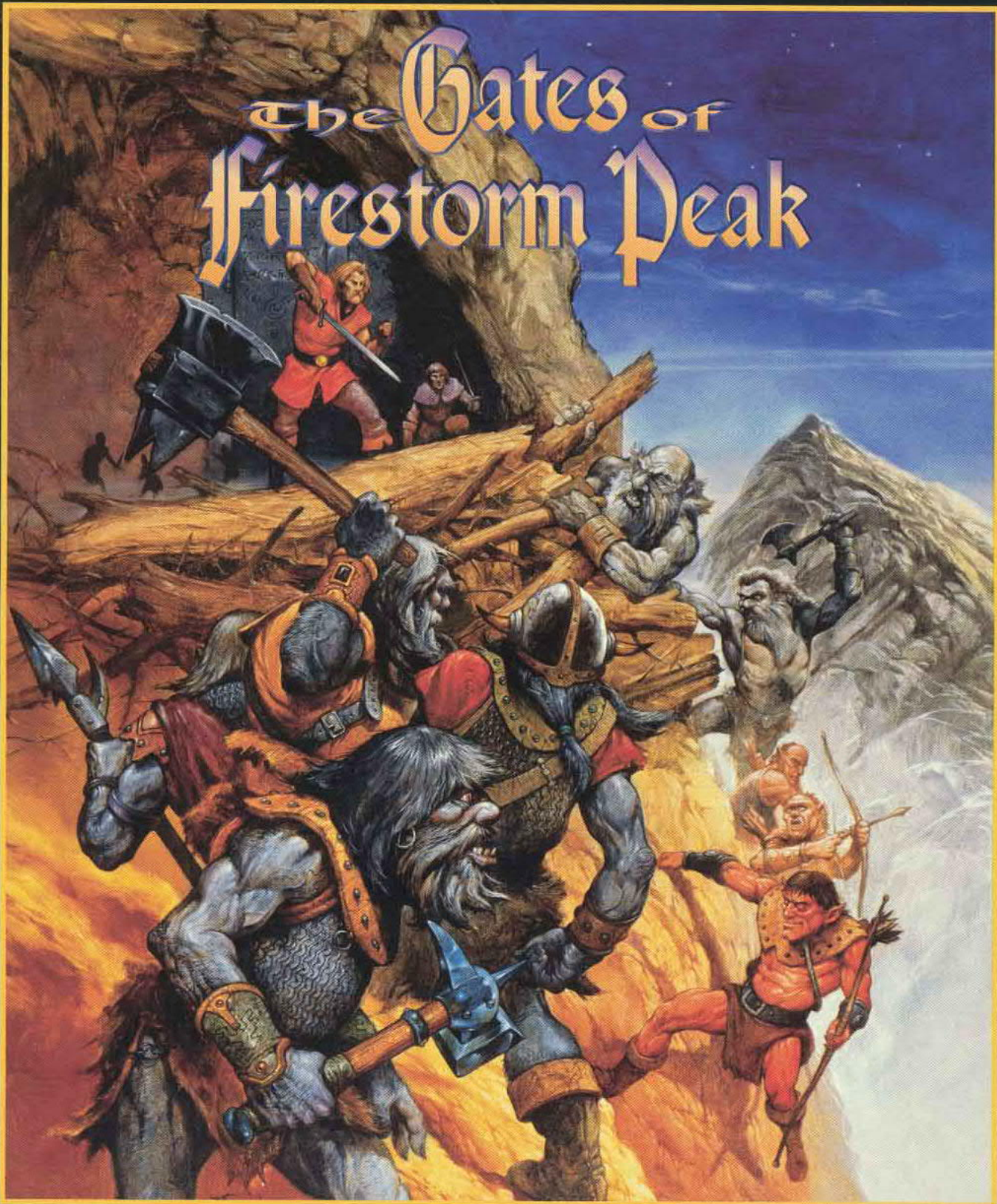




Advanced
Dungeons & Dragons
A PLAYER'S OPTION™ Adventure

The Gates of Firestorm Peak



by Bruce Cordell

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®

A PLAYER'S OPTION™ Adventure

for four to six characters of 5th to 8th level.

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Preface

The *Gates of Firestorm Peak* is an adventure which incorporates the **PLAYER'S OPTION** rules into the fabric of the scenario, especially *PLAYER'S OPTION: Combat & Tactics* and *PLAYER'S OPTION: Spells & Magic*; to a lesser extent, it also takes into account *PLAYER'S OPTION: Skills & Powers*. When applicable, an additional section has been provided under each room description noting combat and tactical considerations in terms of the **PLAYER'S OPTION** rules. Poster maps with 1-inch grids specifically designed for combat have been provided in this product for three important encounter areas. Additionally, counters representing various creatures encountered in those areas have also been included in this product. TSR grants permission for the DM to photocopy these counters (for personal use only) to make multiple copies of the monsters where necessary. This will allow the DM to set up these encounters with relative ease.

Many of the rooms described herein have detailed and complex entries describing the options and tactics of the mountain's inhabitants. The DM should be sure to take the time to carefully peruse this product in order to implement all this information in a smooth, flowing manner. The DM especially needs to take extra time if he or she is new to **PLAYER'S OPTION** rules.

This point is doubly important if the DM requires players to roll up characters using *PLAYER'S OPTION: Skills & Powers*. The flexible nature of *Skills & Powers* allows players to "min/max" to a great extent, and characters can become extremely good at a few select things. Clever players can devise seemingly innocuous combinations of race and class abilities that magnify a character's power tremendously. While the DM could simply disallow such combinations by not allowing traits or race and class abilities that duplicate each other (weapon specialization and racial damage bonus, for example), it is better to examine all the character sheets carefully with an eye toward weaknesses. A PC who stacks all his or her eggs in one basket is bound to leave other baskets empty, so to speak, and the villains of Firestorm Peak should be quick to exploit those defects. The DM should depart from an encounter's recommended tactics if another course of action is clearly better for the monsters or foes.

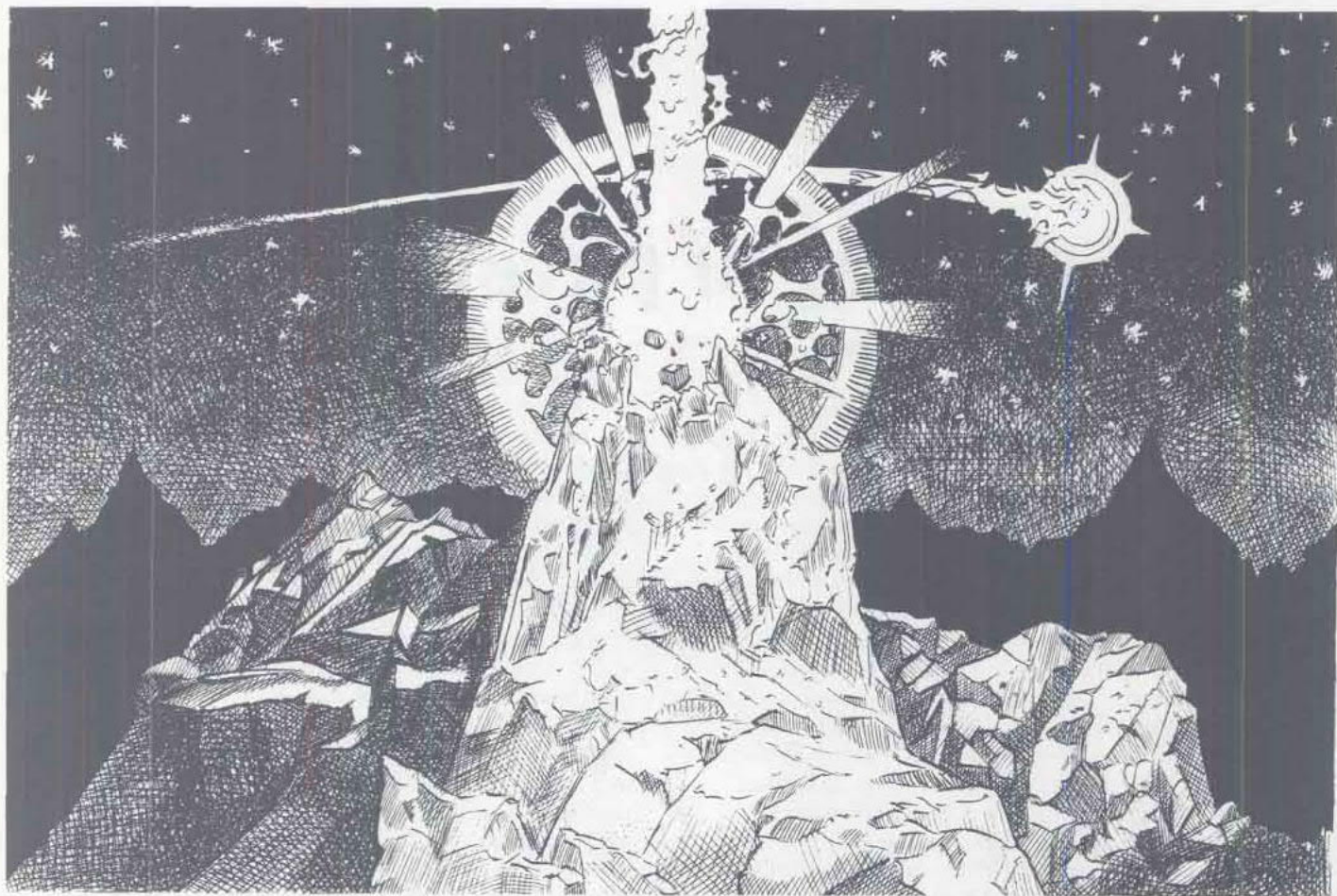
This adventure is perfectly playable under the standard AD&D rules systems as described in the *Player's Handbook* and *DUNGEON MASTER Guide*. The DM is entirely free to ignore some or all of the **PLAYER'S OPTION** references found within these pages under the bulleted heading • **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations**. Addition-

ally, DMs should feel free to substitute standard ability scores whenever a sub-ability check is called for if the player characters have not generated sub-scores. Thus, when a Strength/Muscle check is called for, characters using sub-ability scores should attempt to roll below their Muscle scores on a d20, while those not incorporating sub-abilities into their campaigns should simply make a Strength check. While *The Gates of Firestorm Peak* is intended to showcase the **PLAYER'S OPTION** rule systems, combat and military considerations have not supplanted the plot of the adventure; instead, it supplements the role-playing and story-telling opportunities within these pages.

Using This Adventure

During the course of the adventure, the PCs will run up against some very difficult martial challenges. Even if the PCs take the time to rest and recuperate between particularly difficult encounters, it is still entirely possible that an encounter could fatally weaken the party so that their next encounter could end their quest permanently. One of the problems is that the PCs are operating under a time limit (as described below); they may not be able to take the necessary time to recuperate if they face every challenge head on. Therefore, it may behoove the DM to allow the PCs to bargain with some of the creatures that they come upon, so that a conflict can be avoided. At the very least, they might be able to gain temporary sanctuary while passing through dangerous subterranean territories. If the PCs play their cards right, they might even be able to garner some aid from one or two of these races, at the DM's discretion. The two groups of creatures within the text to which this most applies are the troll mutants and the myconids (found within the Twisted Caverns section); both groups are more interested in defense than in genocidal warfare against the PCs. The circumstances and alignment of most other creatures and individuals within the complex remain perfectly inimicable as far as the PCs are concerned—you can't argue with a gibberslug.

Even within the Duergar population, however, there are possibilities the PCs may exploit. Some Duergar are so engrossed in their normal tasks that they ignore PCs unless the intruders draw undue attention upon themselves (examples include the brewmaster in room 53 and the crafts duergar in room 55). There is also the lawful orientation of the Duergar to consider: the dark dwarves



will abide by any agreement they make with the PCs. Hence, player characters might be able to bargain with a prisoner, for example, so long as the DM remembers that any such captive will refuse to answer some questions or undertake certain activities (essentially any that might compromise the safety of the dwarven settlement or that contradict any previous order he or she might be under). As prisoners of war, Duergar refuse to acknowledge any statement made to them in a non-dwarvish language and stoically expect death; they will not betray their fellows by revealing the presence of traps, guard posts, and defense plans and consider merciful treatment a sign that their captors are "soft." Nevertheless, they value their lives and will act to preserve them, if they can do so with honor. Ironically, the Duergar's xenophobia towards all other races can be turned to the PCs' advantage; they hate and fear their leader, an upperworld dwarf who took control by slaying their own native leaders, and may betray him if they can do so without endangering their colony as a whole. While he lives, however, he is still their leader and the Duergar under his command dare not disobey a direct order from him.

The placement of NPCs in this adventure is not static;

it changes and shifts according to circumstances just as it would in real life. This is doubly true for areas within Firestorm Peak which have been specifically designed to guard against invaders. If the PCs make multiple runs through defended areas, they find that enemy losses incurred from previous conflicts have been made up since they last passed that way. For every hour following the time the PC party cleared out an encounter area that had acted as a guard post, reinforcements arrive, equal to 20% of the number of defenders originally found there. For example, if the PCs cleaned out a chamber that contained ten guards, an hour later two new guards will have arrived to take up the dispatched guards' places. After 5 hours, the guard post will once again be fully manned. Naturally, this means that guard posts will make very poor choices of places for PCs to hole up in to rest and regain spells and hit points.

Finally, the DM should keep careful track of the number of days which pass during the course of the adventure. Each day that passes brings the evil conjurer Madreus closer to his foul goal. If the PCs have not somehow stopped Madreus by the 28th day after the inception of the scenario, dire consequences result.



The History of Firestorm Peak

The village of Longbridge is a small community located at the southern foothills of the uncharted Mountains of Frost, within the northern reaches of the Shirelands. Local stories recall the rare but recurring storms of flame which ignite the highest reaches of the overshadowing and aptly named Firestorm Peak every twenty-seven years. This awe-inspiring phenomena seems to be somehow linked with the celestial phenomena known as the Dragon's Tear, a red scar in the sky which only appears during the times of the firestorm. Although very interesting and quite unique, the marvel has not been deemed particularly significant by local villagers (mostly due to its infrequent nature), other than as an excuse to throw a month-long festival. Fondly known as the Firefestival, this occurs annually, regardless of the presence of a firestorm. Since the last firestorm, however, there has been a subtle yet noticeable change in the lands surrounding Firestorm Peak. Stillbirths among livestock and people alike, locust infestation, disease, and drought have slowly increased to the point that a once-prosperous area is now struggling year by year just to provide sustenance for all. And recently things have taken a severe turn for the worse.

In the last five years, attacks by natural creatures of the woodlands and fields has increased markedly. During this same time, there have been reports of the appearance of lethal creatures never before seen by mortal eyes, which have begun to make their abodes on or near Firestorm Peak. Most disturbing of all is the increase in random acts of cruelty and violence within the populace of Longbridge. The murder rate has doubled each year for the past five years, not to mention unreported beatings and fistfights. Although no concrete evidence supports this conclusion, many blame the influence of Firestorm Peak for the disruptions, calling the preceding five years the Cursed Season—which unfortunately has not yet drawn to an end.

The Real Story

The peoples currently inhabiting the area surrounding Firestorm Peak are correct; the mountain is indeed the center for the manifestations of warped behavior in both nature and society which have recently become evident. The beginnings of this story stretch far, far back into prehistory, back to the time of the Elder Elves, the now-legendary ancestors of the nomadic high elves.

Legend tells of the mighty tasks and accomplishments of the Elder Elves, and of the elvish civilization which thrived during a previous Age of the world. For the most part, all that remains of that civilization are the stories themselves. However, unknown to most, a complex of deep warrens under Firestorm Peak has survived the gulfs of time. In ancient times, a small group of Elder Elves delved into the mountain, carving a magical research facility at its heart, protecting their labors from unfriendly eyes in the depths of the earth past great valves of enchanted metal. Here, the ancients applied their theories, disciplines, and the protocols of high magic, forging portals and gates which spanned all the lengths of the world. Not satisfied with such mundane distances, the Elders created new techniques and spells which allowed them to Bridge the far distances between worlds.

The opening of gates to nearby worlds was a fabulous accomplishment for the Elder Elves. But in the flush of their success, they dreamed greater dreams. They soon became dissatisfied with the subjectively limited range of worlds accessible by the World Gates (only a few hundred of the uncounted millions of worlds they believed existed). With a new fire of determination, they set to work on their greatest gate of all: The Vast Gate. It was the Elder Elves' goal to power a gate which could Bridge any distance, to the outermost Crystal Spheres of existence, in both space and time.

In the Inner Sanctum of the research facility, they constructed their masterpiece. In a world-shaking feat of sorcery, they empowered the Vast Gate through associative magic with a periodic celestial event known in present times as the Dragon's Tear comet. Every twenty-seven years, the Dragon's Tear appeared in the skies, providing an enormous store of potential magical energy built up in the lengthy years of its travel through the deep places of the night. Once tapped, it supercharged the Vast Gate deep within the mountain, while at the same time a superficial firestorm raged upon the peak.

Only during the time of the comet's discharge (lasting twenty-eight days) was the Vast Gate empowered to Bridge the far distances between the most unreachable Spheres. Three times in eighty-one years did the Elder Elves find worlds of strange delight and fresh beauty. However, on their fourth Bridging they found disaster. They opened the Vast Gate to a world so distant in space, and possibly even *time*, that it may not even have been a part of the cosmology of worlds and

The History of Firestorm Peak

planes as it is presently understood. Instead, the Gate opened into a realm with its own closed geometry, *a multiverse utterly unlike our own.*

There were inhabitants abiding beyond the gate, but only by the slimmest margin could these monstrosities be defined as "alive." Herculean minds absorbed in alien contemplations of madness—this is how the Elder Elves perceived the new vista before them. The lunatic might of these incomprehensible beings warped reality in horrid, unaccountable ways by their very *presence*. Lethal contradictions and bizarre physical laws came into existence at the very whim of these beings, only to dissolve like vapor to make way for newer, more insane imaginings. This world was a danger even to a madman, and to the rational ancients the implications of such potent power unchecked rocked the very foundations of their theological faith. When beings of such vast power began to show a vague interest in the opening, the Elder Elves knew that they had made a mistake of possibly catastrophic magnitude.

Desperate to shut, or Close, the portal, the Elder Elves began the necessary ritual. Before they could finish it, however, an entity of malign power entered our realm through the Gate. Its very presence killed all but a handful of the Elder Elves before it lost interest and drifted back through the Gate to its own world.

Those who remained fled their secret research facility, but not before attempting to Close the Outer Gates on the mountainside for all time, sealing away the foul fruits of their researches to fester in the dark. These massive doors were a triumph of Elder engineering, able to withstand the harshest abuse. The Elder Elves performed the ritual of Closing upon the outer entrance gates, believing that there could be no greater enchantment of sealing. To strengthen their spell of Closing, they linked the Outer Gates with the Dragon's Tear comet, believing that this might divert power from the Vast Gate and cause it to Close prematurely.

Alas, in their haste the Elder Elves made a fatal mistake. When the Dragon's Tear comet vanished from the sky, the Vast Gate did indeed close, for such was the design of the Closing magics. But when the comet next returned, both the Vast Gate—still keyed to the Far Realm of alien entities—and the Outer Gates to the deserted complex, now linked to the comet and hence to the magic of the Vast Gate, opened again.

Thus it has been for time unremembered that the periodic firestorms above have heralded the opening of both the Outer Gates of the mountain and also the Vast

Gate hidden deep within. Over the millennia, the recurring openings of the Vast Gate have allowed a significant influence to bleed over and spill out into the deserted Inner Sanctum of the Elder Elves. Alien symmetries have developed in the subterranean passages near the Gate, and lesser entities of the Far Realm have slowly begun to make permanent homes deep within Firestorm Peak. The zone of influence (referred to in the text as a field of corruption) has only advanced a few feet with every Bridging, luckily for modern civilization.

Thus things progressed slowly, until in recent times events began to accelerate. Three hundred years ago a colony of dark dwarves, or Duergar, tunneled up from caverns far below, following a vein of nephelium, which they prize highly. Nephelium is a rare ore which can be worked into a transparent glasslike substance as hard as iron. This particular colony of Duergar have come to use this ore almost exclusively in place of iron. Unless noted otherwise, all Duergar in the text can be assumed to be wearing nephelium chainmail and wielding nephelium axes, ranseurs, and footman's picks. Items forged of nephelium conform to iron in every way except for their unique quality of transparency.

The dark dwarves did not breach the surface in their quest for nephelium, but they did establish a large complex just within the Outer Gates of Firestorm Peak. As the colony grew, it eventually came into contact with the spreading field of corruption which was seeping into our reality in small increments from the Inner Sanctum. Unwilling to abandon such a rich vein of nephelium, the Duergar merely set a continual watch on the edges of their complex, guarding themselves from occasional excursions by the alien creatures of the inner caverns and sanctum.

Even more recently (the Bridging before last, or just shy of eighty-one years ago), Madreus, "the Butcher of Havenburg," found his way to the Gates of Firestorm Peak (Madreus is an Alienist Conjuror and uses spell points as per *PLAYER'S OPTION: Spells & Magic*). He passed within as the Outer Gates opened at the commencement of the firestorm upon the summit above him. Bypassing the Duergar with his subtle magics, he came into the corrupted inner complex, where he gained mastery over the lesser minions and mutations of the Far Realm which abided there.

Since that time, he has been spending his time studying and learning more with each Bridging to the world

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of crazed imaginings, working towards ultimate power. In the last five years, Madreus has made significant strides in his understanding of deranged and alien philosophies, and has begun to accelerate the spread of the corruption. His power is such that even creatures and humanoids outside Firestorm Peak have begun to be affected during the many “experiments” which Madreus has initiated. He has also gained control over the Duergar at the Outer Gates, commanding them to guard the entry at all costs. If Madreus is not stopped, the next opening of the Vast Gate could very well provide him with the energies and allies he needs to bring his madness to the world at large.

Player Character Hooks

- **Hook 1:** In order to fit this adventure into an ongoing campaign more seamlessly, the DM might want to consider introducing rumors of the Cursed Season around Firestorm Peak while the characters are already engaged in another scenario. In this way, it might be a year or more from the time the PCs first hear of the troubles at Firestorm Peak before they arrive upon the scene (just in time for the Outer Gates to swing wide, of course), motivated by pure altruism to deal with the slowly spreading evil.
- **Hook 2:** Nigel, the father of one of the PCs, disappeared almost twenty-seven years ago under mysterious circumstances. Nigel had been a Conjuror specialist wizard of great repute, with a bent towards research and classification. The PC has never been able to discover any of the specifics concerning the disappearance. Recently a page torn from a diary turned up between the pages of an old book which once belonged to Nigel. The diary fragment is unquestionably written in the hand of the missing man:

... tracked the energies all the way to the northern Shirelands, according to the map I procured from the cartographer's guild. Not much detail is apparent from studying the map, except for a small village named Longbridge. The village is situated at the base of a mountain named Firestorm Peak, which itself is the first of a series of peaks and mountainous features extending towards the north.

My studies indicate that the flux of magical and particle radiations emanate from within the ominously named mountain; this is definitely the place described in the scrolls I recently unearthed. What's troubling is that the cyclical nature of the radiations indicate that the Vast Gate was still focused when it was abandoned by the Elders so long ago. What gives me more cause to worry are the localized contradictions in reality itself which arise whenever this cycle reaches its apex . . . although I have spent the last twenty years of my life researching this location, it is possible that I have misled myself about the true dangers of the forces which I have sought to understand. I fear that I may be forced to use the three Crystal Components I have so laboriously gathered from Elder Elven ruins to end a threat which none are yet aware of, save myself. My friends of old shall be my companions on this journey of discovery and danger. Derek Warcaller, Wellfast Brightblade, and Quaren Ael Drim will be ecstatic to learn . . .

The date of this diary page predates Nigel's disappearance by two weeks. The names of Nigel's adventuring companions are all familiar to the PC, who often met them when he or she was a child. The PC discovering this legacy of his or her father should need little encouragement to follow up this lead, but if need be the DM should provide other details which might make the PC more willing to investigate Nigel's fate—perhaps Nigel carried a valuable heirloom of their family. PCs who read the journal fragment should find it obvious that Nigel possessed more knowledge concerning the true nature of Firestorm Peak than is commonly, or even uncommonly, known.

- **Hook 3:** Like Nigel, a player character interested in exploring ancient places of power could happen upon a reference or two concerning a place of the Elder Elves called the Gate of Worlds. The reference is vague but does indicate that tremendous magical power was utilized by the Elder Elves to create this stronghold in the far north, hidden within the heart of a mountain. For some reason unexplained, the Elders fled this stronghold and sealed it up after them with gates of glass. Later, the characters hear tell of a celebration called the Firefestival, centered around a mountain notable for its unassailable gates of an extremely hard transparent substance . . .

Longbridge

The player characters should easily be able to reach the Shirelands. The roads connecting the area to neighboring lands are in good repair, so a journey from the civilized inner kingdoms to the northern mountains only takes a week or so on horseback. Longbridge is the most readily accessible village within the region by virtue of being the place where the road finally gives out.

The village is located on the frontier at the edge of the Quickstep River; a small bridge crossing the stream here gives the town its name. The locals do some farming during the short summer growing season, but hunting is their chief means of livelihood. The only building of note is the Greenbriar Inn, where visiting hunters lodge when they travel up from the south. The Greenbriar not only hosts hunters but also acts as the main area of congregation for the locals. PCs new to town will be referred to the Inn as "a place to settle in and meet folks."

Spending even a little time in town will be enough to reveal the general feeling of fear and despair which permeates the air. The newly constructed gallows situated in the town square (by default, in front of the Greenbriar) with its contingent of 1d4 executed criminals swaying in the breeze does nothing to lighten the mood. Questions concerning the gallows to random passers-by will be answered with a muttered "*cursed, we are surely cursed!*"

Questions within the Greenbriar during evening gatherings meet with more success. Even though the mood is noticeably subdued by most standards, the quaffing of mead, ale, and wine continues as the patrons attempt to forget their troubles for the evening. The overall impression should be that the locals are neither friendly nor unfriendly so much as numb. With the proper questions, the PCs should be able to elicit the information presented in the "History of Firestorm Peak" section on page 4 (but not any from the "The Real Story" section). The following responses may also be forthcoming:

- Local legend holds that the gates cover the eyes of the Earth Mother. It is said that even the Earth Mother sometimes shows an interest in the upper airs and can't help but uncover her eyes and look up at the magnificent Dragon's Tear, a seldom-seen gift from her consort Father Sky (this story has no basis in fact, but it's evocative).
- The Firefestival will be called off this year, as the surrounding communities and farmers are not eager to travel to Longbridge.
- Longbridge is in the fifth year of the Cursed Season, which has generally been characterized by nervous anticipation and fear, leading finally to violence and despair.
- Farm animals and pets have become dangerous, forcing many people to dispose of once-loved creatures and stock animals necessary for livelihood.
- Game animals have become aggressive and stalk their erstwhile hunters with deadly intent, sometimes with success.
- Strange creatures of terrifying aspect have been seen near Firestorm Peak. Those sighting these creatures often barely escape with their lives, and there have been an increasing number of disappearances of late . . .
- In the last couple of months, various citizens of Longbridge have started experiencing episodes of manic criminal behavior so horrible that public execution is the only option for punishment. There are now, on average, 1d3 rampages leading to 1d4 executions a month.
- The ornate gates built into the side of Firestorm Peak are ancient and impassable. They only open during the firestorm every twenty-seven years, and those foolhardy enough to venture within at those times have never been heard from again.
- Once the gates open, they remain open for twenty-eight days, the same length of time that the Dragon's Tear is visible in the night sky. No force can prevent the gates from closing after the twenty-eight days have elapsed.
- No one really knows what lies past the glass gates on the mountain because no one who's entered has ever come out again!

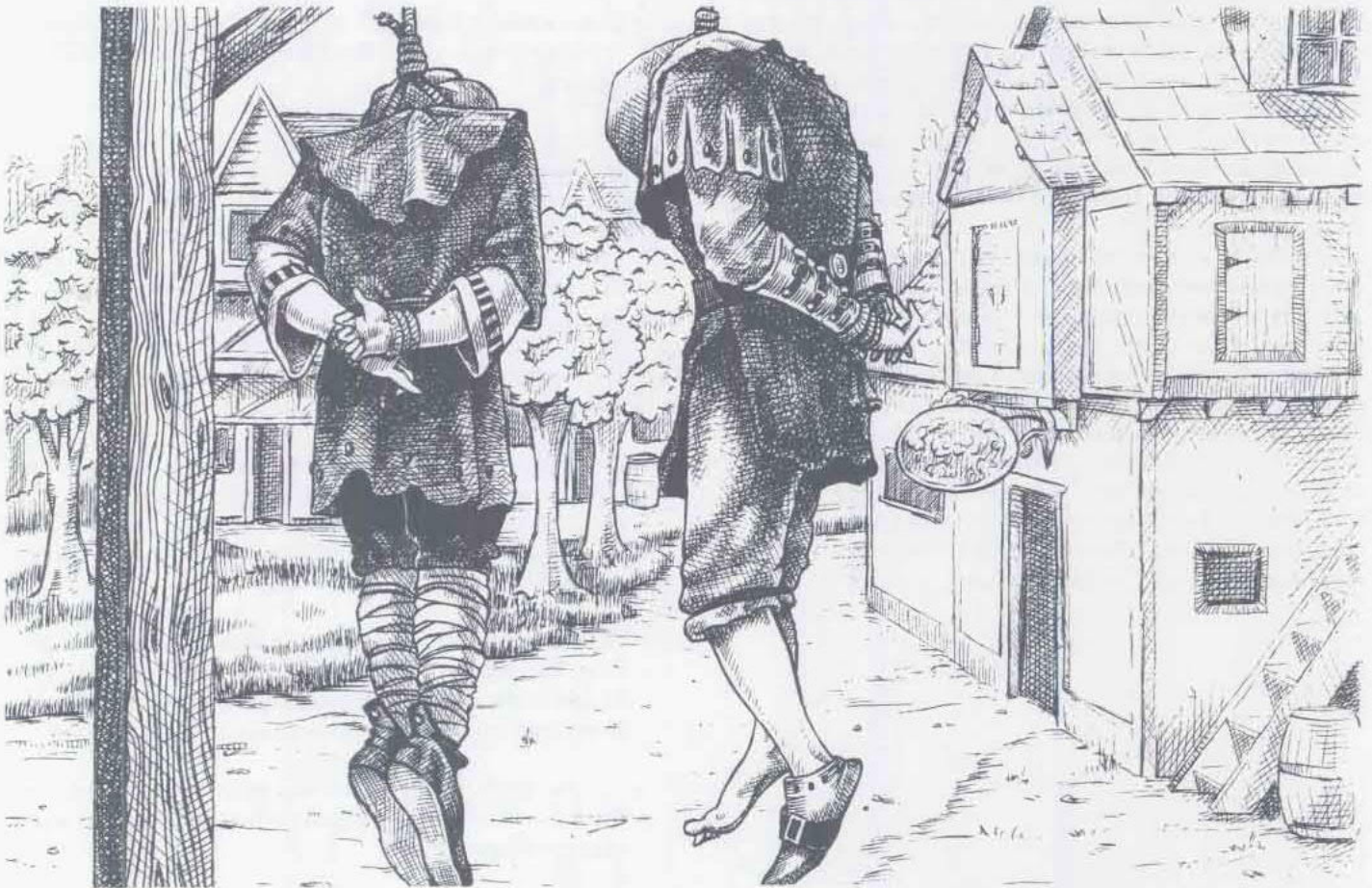
Longbridge

If the player characters are searching for Nigel, Elek Gotts the barkeep is able to confirm the fact that four adventurers entered the mountain's gates when last they gaped open, twenty-seven years ago. The leader of the group did indeed call himself Nigel. Elek also specifically remembers Quaren, as he had been struck dumb by her beauty and poise as an adolescent boy and remembers it vividly to this day. The barkeep knows nothing else, except that the band never returned from the Gates before the firestorm abated and the valves closed, sealing Nigel, Quaren, and the others into the mountain. *"So much beauty, lost in the stony darkness. Ye'd best steer clear, if ye don't wish the same for ye selves!"*

During the time that the Outer Gates remain open, the PCs may wish to enter and exit the gates on the mountain repeatedly in order to rest and regain spells and hit points. However, the Duergar will certainly lay in wait, preparing all manner of traps and ambushes for any characters who dare to run their gauntlet, trying to keep intruders from escaping. Furthermore, there are no good resting places outside the gates nearer than Longbridge itself. For their part, the good folk of Longbridge will treat with derision any claim by PCs to have been within the mountain and returned alive.

Characters camping on or near Firestorm Peak experience other difficulties as well. The comet's discharge makes the local weather very unpredictable and given to sudden, violent shifts. The PCs will also feel edgy from emanations in the atmosphere: the hair on their arms and legs will tend to stand on end and the skin to break out in goosebumps. If the sudden downpours, thunderstorms, and interims of muggy heat weren't enough to make sleep and restoration of spells and hit points difficult, the heroes will also find themselves under attack at random intervals by small, normally inoffensive creatures of the forest—birds, rabbits, and the like.

What's worse, the Duergar will set up an ambush by night *outside* the gates once the PCs have grown complacent about spending time immediately outside the entrance (note that the Duergar dislike daylight, suffering -2 penalties to their attack rolls in bright light, and are thus most likely to emerge at night or on a particularly cloudy day). Eventually player characters should weary of bludgeoning their way through the same passages time after time and give up trying to enter and leave the complex between each major battle, preferring to find some defensible spot within the complex to rest between marches.



Firestorm Peak

The DM should use his or her discretion for plot-building purposes as to when he or she wishes to have the Dragon's Tear comet appear in the nighttime sky, triggering the firestorm. The approach to the peak is a relatively simple affair, as it is prominently visible from the edge of Longbridge (the Outer Gates, however, are not). To heighten dramatic tension, a rabid cave bear (affected by the alien corruption) attacks the party during the journey to the mountain's base. PCs can make an Animal Lore or similar proficiency check to realize that the bear was rabid. Characters bitten by the bear have a flat 50% chance of contracting rabies. Any character so infected develops headaches and a swollen throat over the next day or so. He or she is soon unable to swallow at all and becomes crazed with thirst (hence the disease's other name, *hydrophobia*), eventually lapsing into convulsions and then unconsciousness; death occurs a day or two later. *Cure disease* will negate the disease; any lesser healing magic can only palliate the symptoms.

Cave Bear: AC 6; MV 12; HD 6+6; hp 47; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 1d8/1d8/1d12 (claw/claw/bite); SA a roll of 18 or better on a claw attack results in a Hug for 2d8 points of additional damage; SD bear continues to fight for 1d4 rounds after reaching zero hp but is killed immediately if reduced to -9 or below; SZ H (12-foot tall); ML special (fights to death due to rabid condition); AL N; XP 850.

The trek up to the base of the peak is about ten miles through brush and scattered pine. After cresting a low rise, the characters can see the gates inset in a broad cliff face. When the characters arrive at the Outer Gates, they discover the remains of three hunters lying slain and half-eaten in front of the glassy valves. The giant bite marks, the raw flesh showing tentacle suckers, and the strange purple-green slime covering the corpses all indicate a type of creature completely unfamiliar to the PCs. No tracks or trace of the creature responsible is anywhere evident. The frozen expressions of horror upon the dead should serve to slightly unsettle the characters. If the party makes a special effort to bury the bodies in dignity, award the entire party 200 XP (total, not apiece). If the party further makes an effort to gather the belongings of the men (a few knives, claw necklaces, and some coinage—23 sp and 46 gp in all) and return them to Longbridge for distribution to the men's families, award the party another 200 XP to be split amongst the group.

The Outer Gates themselves are bivalve, composed of

enchanted nephelium deeply enruined with mystical glyphs of locking and slightly opaqued so as to appear clouded. The gates stand 20-feet tall and 10-feet wide (each valve is 5-feet wide) and gleam as if new even though they have stood in their present location for thousands of years. The Closing performed on these gates makes it impossible for the PCs to force the gates by any means, including magical spells of opening and the like—although the DM may amuse himself or herself by letting them try. Furthermore, the ritual sealed the entire upper surface of the mountain against entry by magical tunneling, *passwall*, *stone melding*, *stone walking*, *teleportation*, *disintegration*, or ethereal travel. Only the firestorm can trigger these gates to open. During the 28 days of the firestorm, all the restrictions listed above are negated. Note that the Closing does not affect entry into the mountain by normal tunneling through the earth *while the Outer Gates are open*, as is evidenced by the Duergar's recent colony.

Those outside on the eve of the appearance of the Dragon's Tear comet will be able to observe the commencement of the firestorm:

Looking up into the serene, star-sprinkled sky, your gaze is drawn to the heights above Firestorm Peak, where something odd is happening. Amidst the darkness between stars, a dim glow appears. It slowly, ever so slowly, brightens until it rivals its companion stars in luminosity. A bright claw of light it seems, or perhaps a celestial tear from some weeping god. Not a heartbeat elapses before a pillar of roaring fire hurtles down from on high with a thunderous noise. The cylinder of flame touches upon the summit of Firestorm Peak, igniting the massive conflagration from which the mountain draws its dramatic name. The twisting pillar of flame dissipates immediately but the firestorm rages on, a red halo of supernatural flame living on the mountain's top.

Characters near the Outer Gates witness the quiet, unhurried way in which the valves swing wide. Only darkness beckons from the tunnel revealed beyond.

An investigation of the peak of the mountain itself requires a long, arduous climb to the summit where the firestorm rages. The entire upper half of the mountain has had its vegetation burned away, leaving only black, sooty vegetative skeletons. Any PC so foolish as to enter the conflagration takes 10d6 points of damage per round with no save. Nothing of interest can be found within the conflagration in any event, so any search is fruitless.

The Outer Complex

The Outer Gates open onto a corridor which leads to the Duergar-controlled Outer Complex. All the Duergar are alert for the possibility of intrusion from the area of the Outer Gates, as Madreus has revealed the exact time of the firestorm. Additionally, Madreus has commanded (through his dwarven puppet Wellfast) that the Duergar be particularly sure to not allow any intruders into the Inner Sanctum. The Duergar expect invaders, because it never fails that upper-world upstarts enter when the Outer Gates open. Because they expect an intrusion, they are on guard, and Wellfast has developed various combat plans and tactical contingencies to quickly deal with troublesome outsiders.

If the PCs manage to capture and question any of the Duergar (the language barrier must first be broken), the characters discover that the leader of the Duergar colony is an upperworlder dwarf named Wellfast who only took control in the last quarter-century. Alert PCs may recognize the name as that of one of Nigel's companions. Every Duergar questioned about Wellfast shows obvious terror when the upperworld dwarf's name is mentioned. The Duergar say only that "nightmares slide beneath his skin" and that he "serves the Master beyond the Twisted Caverns"—a thought Nigel's son or daughter may find hard to reconcile with memories of bouncing on the dwarf's knee when a toddler. Persistent PCs can discover that the Twisted Caverns lie through the Duergar-controlled areas and are filled with horrors beyond telling.

The DM should check for random encounters every 3 hours the party remains in areas 1 to 67, unless he or she decides to forgo the encounter (e.g., after a particularly brutal battle when the heroes badly need rest). To use the Duergar Random Encounter Table given below, roll a d20 every 18 turns. A result of 1 to 6 indicates that an encounter occurs; any result higher than 6 indicates no encounter. Select the appropriate column (1, 2, or 3) based on the party's location, then look to the right of the number rolled on the d20 to determine the actual encounter. Use column 1 for map areas 1 to 16, column 2 for areas 17 to 30, and column 3 for areas 31 to 67. To conserve space, the stats for each of the creatures encountered have not been reprinted here, but an entry number has been provided for each monster type, indicating where similar creature stats can be found elsewhere in the text.

Duergar Random Encounter Table

1	2	3	Encounters:
1			giant skeletons (1d4), area 6.
2			giant scorpions (1d6), area 11.
3			carion crawlers (1d6), area 15.
4			Duergar hunting party (1d10), area 17.
5			Duergar steeder patrol (1d6+6), area 31.
6			goblin mining detail (1d10+5), area 23.
	4		Duergar steeder patrol (1d6), area 31.
	5		Duergar miners (1d6), area 26.
	6		Duergar garrison (1d10), area 31.
		4	merchant band (1d4), area 31.
		5	common Duergar (1d4), area 31.
		6	Duergar steeder patrol (1d4), area 31.

• **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** Within the confines of Firestorm Peak, the DM may substitute some of the following keyed results for a critical event (in the event of a tied initiative roll) rather than using every randomly generated Critical Event Table in *PLAYER'S OPTION: Combat & Tactics*:

Cavern Collapse (anywhere). A wild blow impacting a nearby cavern wall causes a rockfall. 1d4 random combatants are partially covered and must spend 1d3 rounds freeing themselves. All attacks against trapped combatants ignore Dexterity and shield bonuses.

Sink (anywhere). Soft earth or brittle stone beneath a random combatant collapses, trapping his or her feet for 1d3 rounds in that spot. Dexterity bonuses to AC are negated while the combatant struggles free.

Light Dropped (anywhere). A stray blow knocks a light source from the hands of the light bearer. The light source is either extinguished, shattered, or rolls into a crevice. Blind characters suffer a +2 AC penalty and a -4 penalty to attacks. It takes 1d4 combat rounds to retrieve the light or prepare another light source.

Creature Flushed (Twisted Caverns & Inner Sanctum). A random combatant flushes a small alienoid out of a concealed hold, tripping the combatant, who spends the round prone. This creature is not a combatant; it is merely a distraction.

Waking Dream (Twisted Caverns & Inner Sanctum). A random combatant moves into a small concentration of corruption and suffers a lunatic daydream for 1d2 combat rounds, standing dumbstruck while the dream lasts or until struck by a foe.

The Outer Complex

Warp I (Inner Sanctum). *A sudden wave of corruption warps time so that 1d4 random combatants are engulfed in a drifting pocket of slowtime. The effected combatants operate as if slowed for 1d4 rounds.*

Warp II (Inner Sanctum). *A sudden wave of corruption warps time so that 1 random combatant is suddenly pushed 1d4 combat rounds into the future. The effect of this is that the combatant seems to disappear for 1d4 rounds, reappearing in the same position, with no knowledge of any time having passed (for him or her, it hasn't!).*

1. Entry Corridor

A corridor 20-feet wide leads to the east, into the depths of the mountain. The walls and floor are perfectly smooth, masterfully carved from native rock. The ceiling is 20 feet above your heads, of cut and carved stone as well. Neither scent, sound, nor light gives away any clue as to what lies in the unrelieved darkness before you.

This corridor is part of the original construction by the Elder Elves, and thus was carved by magical means. The corridor extends 20 feet before opening into the first large chamber, room 2a. Unless noted otherwise, all ceilings within the Duergar-controlled areas are 20 feet high, allowing enlarged Duergar unhindered movement.

In preparation for the opening of the gates, the Duergar have scattered a fair number of nephelium caltrops (four spikes arranged so that when three are on the ground, the fourth always points upwards) in the corridor, each liberally coated with poison (the Duergar distill this poison from a local cave scorpion: Method—*injection*; Onset—*immediate*; Strength—*2d10 hp/save for 1d2 hp*). Stepping on these caltrops also inflicts 1d3 points of damage regardless of the effects of the poison. What makes these caltrops particularly insidious is that they have all been rendered invisible by the Duergar (1-in-50 Duergar of this colony have the innate ability to make items invisible even when not held by a living being). Unsuspecting characters have a 50% chance to step on a caltrop for every 5 feet they travel down the corridor.

Once characters realize the situation, there is nothing to prevent them from sweeping the path ahead of them with a staff held at floor level or some similar method. Award 20 XP to the PC who comes up with the idea of sweeping the invisible caltrops out of the path. If the PCs

do sweep a path clear, keep a mental record of the cleared zone; a fight at the base of the wall blocking entry into area 2a could cause overexcited characters to step into uncleared areas (if the PCs have some method of *detecting invisible* objects, simply place some jacks on the tactical map to mark their location). Note also that it is a favorite tactic of the Duergar, once the fight has begun, to throw a few invisible caltrops into the cleared areas to help cut off the intruders' retreat.

One important fact for the DM to note is that both *light* and *continual light* spells lack their customary brilliance within Firestorm Peak, dimming to roughly half their normal brightness (this applies to previously dweomered items brought into the mountain as well). This effect is a holdover from the days of the Elder Elves, who preferred starlight to sunlight. The practical effect of this is that Duergar within the mountain do not suffer the usual penalties to attack rolls in the presence of *continual light*. The sole exception to this rule is the Vast Gate itself (room 123), which like the eye of a hurricane or vortex of a tornado both intensifies and is exempt from some of the very effects it generates.

2a. They Might Be Giants

The corridor emerges into a very large chamber, but you cannot make out its dimensions due to the 10-foot-tall stone barrier which blocks easy access to the hall. The wall looks to be of a different style of construction than the preceding corridor, of large blocks of roughly cut granite. The top of the wall is embedded with spikes and barbs which point down at an angle, making climbing the wall difficult. There is no light beyond the wall, and silence pervades all.

The room beyond the wall is not as empty as it may seem (a DM using the tactical map should cover the full extent of the prepared battle map with books, pieces of paper, or other appropriate coverings until the PCs have actually seen over the wall and explored the extent of the room). Aware of the exact time of the Outer Gates' opening, elite Duergar forces have been stationed in this room to drive back any attempted entry by outsiders. The wall itself is climbable by PCs with the *Climb Walls* ability, but to navigate the spikes and barbs at the top of the wall will require 1d3+1 rounds. Those who climb up the wall as quickly as they can with no regard to the spikes take 1d6 points of damage with no save.

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Directly behind the wall stand four *invisible* and *enlarged* (16 feet tall, on average) Duergar armed with ranseur polearms (also *enlarged*). These Duergar remain quiet and unmoving, awaiting the first character who may attempt the climb. The Duergar wait until the climber is picking through the spikes and then attack the mostly defenseless character (climbers must forgo Dexterity or shield bonuses vs. attacks). At this same instant, the remaining Duergar stab down with their ranseurs at the other characters waiting below, necessitating a surprise check at a -1 penalty by party and climber alike.

- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** Use **Tactical Map #1** for this encounter. The Duergar here are size H when *enlarged*; thus they are 2 combat squares wide, and their attacks come off in the slow phase of each combat round. The *enlarged* ranseurs are also Huge but this does not change the weapon speeds in the hands of the equally large dark dwarves. The *enlarged* polearms have a melee reach of 4 squares (the two size increases jump a reach of 2 up to 4), plus the reach of the *enlarged* Duergar, bringing the total range to 5 squares (25 feet). Therefore, all player characters within 5 squares of the wall are threatened. A mass retreat triggers multiple attacks of opportunity by the Duergar. Additionally, the *enlarged* weapons use a d12 for knockdown (two size increases equal two jumps of the die from a d8 up to a d12), a roll of 7 or higher indicating a knockdown vs. human-sized (M) creatures. Due to their precarious positions, climbers on the wall suffer knockdown on a roll of only 4, regardless of size, if the targets fail their saving throws vs. death. Climbers at or near the top of the 10-foot wall who fall take 1d6 points of falling damage, possibly landing on caltrops as well. The 10-foot-tall wall gives the *enlarged* Duergar 75% cover vs. missile weapons (consider missile attacks against them to be at a -7 penalty) and a +4 bonus to saving throws vs. area-of-effect spells such as *fireball*, unless of course the *fireball* is targeted above and beyond the wall. Finally, unless a character has a range 2 weapon (a polearm) or is size L, he or she will not be able to effectively return melee attacks from the ground!

The following calculations were used to determine the Duergar's size increase. The Duergar of Firestorm Peak can increase their height and mass by 10% per hit point they possess. Therefore, a 4-foot-tall Duergar with 30 hp could increase his or her height in 30 increments of 0.4 feet (10% of 4 feet is 0.4 foot) equaling an additional 12

feet (30 x 0.4 foot = 12 feet). The additional 12 feet added to the Duergar's original height of 4 feet results in an overall size of H, for a 16-foot-tall Duergar. This Duergar is 300% bigger than at normal size; his or her added mass imparts a hefty x3 damage to the base weapon damage of any melee weapon he or she wields. Later in the text, the heroes will encounter Duergar with an average of 20 hp whose damage multiplier is x2.

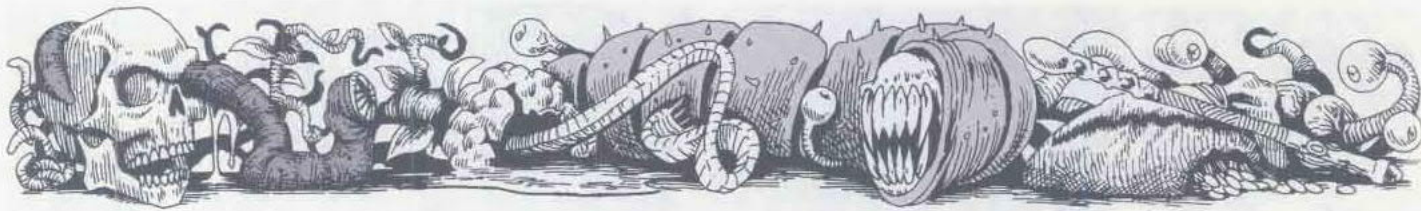
Duergar (4): AC 4; MV 6 (12 when *enlarged*); HD 3+6; hp 29, 30, 29, 30; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2d4 (ranseur), x3 when *enlarged*; SA *invisibility*, *enlargement*, *stealth* (-2 penalty to opponent's surprise rolls); SD +4 bonus to saving throws vs. spell, immune to paralysis, illusion/phantasm spells, and poison, rarely surprised (1-in-10 chance); SZ S (4-foot tall) or H (15-foot to 16-foot tall); ML elite (13); Int very (11-12); AL LE; XP 975 each.

If the player characters make it past the defensive wall or use spells to fly over it, they come under polearm attack from the second rank of four more *enlarged* and *invisible* Duergar stationed within an enclosing 10-foot wall with the same type of spike defense as the first wall, located 20 feet back from the first. The Duergar within this polearm emplacement harry any outsiders that make it into the first portion of the chamber, concentrating their attacks on any who attempt to get around their defensive wall on either side.

- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** All the points brought out about the previous wall apply to the Duergar in the polearm emplacement. Area-of-effect spells which can be effectively targeted *into* the emplacement have full effect. Due to the placement of the wall, the protected Duergar can threaten almost every available square in the chamber, *including* characters attempting to fly up next to the 20-foot ceiling. PCs who attempt to rush past towards the opening on the eastern side of the chamber are subject to attacks of opportunity.

Duergar (4): AC 4; MV 6 (12 when *enlarged*); HD 3+6; hp 29, 30, 28, 29; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2d4 (ranseur), x3 when *enlarged*; SA *invisibility*, *enlargement*, *stealth* (-2 penalty to opponent's surprise rolls); SD +4 bonus to saving throws vs. spell, immune to paralysis, illusion/phantasm spells, and poison, rarely surprised (1-in-10 chance); SZ S (4-foot tall) or H (13-foot to 15-foot tall); ML elite (13); Int high (13-14); AL LE; XP 975 each.





The Outer Complex

2b. Between A Rock . . .

A wall has been built with large blocks of crudely quarried stone, bisecting what appears to have once been a much larger chamber. It is apparent from the contrasting stonework that the wall was not part of the original construction. The only visible break in the wall is a 20-foot-high by 20-foot-wide arched opening leading to the east.

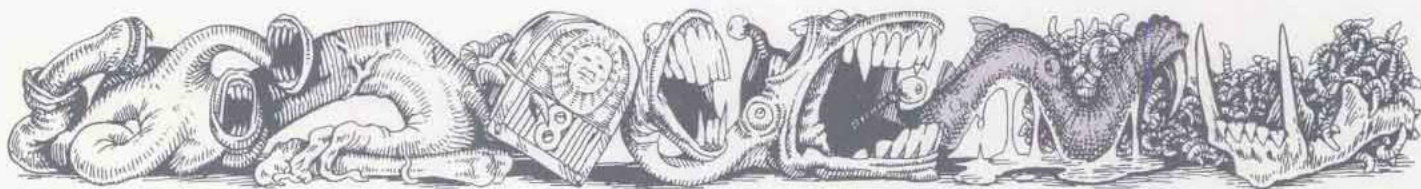
A force of eight *enlarged* Duergar of 1+2 HD stand *invisibly* directly beneath the arch, ready to take on any invaders who have made it past the first two lines of defense (because of their low hit-point totals, these combatants do not gain a damage bonus when *enlarged*). The Duergar attempt to keep the battle from spilling into the room behind; if they can keep the attacking force with their backs to room 2a, surviving pikeduergar in that room may still be able to get rear attacks upon the PCs. And if they do get driven back, by then reinforcements will have scurried out of the small bolt-holes leading from the guard barracks (rooms 2c and 2d; each barracks holds five additional 3+6 HD Duergar). Upon leaving the bolt-holes, these reinforcements *enlarge* to their maximum heights and man the third and final spiked wall, concentrating their attacks upon anyone meleeing with the pikeduergar within. If any intruders do break through, the Duergar attempt to funnel them into the trapped and creature-stocked caverns to the north.

As soon as it is apparent that a battle has begun with invaders, 2 additional Duergar scouts go directly from barracks 2c to their commander, Wellfast, informing him of the attack. If things go badly for the Duergar in this chamber, morale checks are appropriate. Those failing morale first shrink to 1-foot size, then flee down the bolt-holes leading to the barracks (chambers 2c and 2d).

The original corridor that once led from the Outer Gates straight eastward into the heart of the mountain has now been blocked by a stone wall. This is *not* obvious, however; only characters who spend a turn searching the wall and then make a successful Wisdom/Intuition check or a dwarven stonework check can tell that this wall is not part of the original construction. The wall is far too massive to be affected by anything less than weeks of serious mining.

- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** The initial *enlarged* and *invisible* force of Duergar assembled in this area have formed a pike hedge, as described in Chapter Two of *PLAYER'S OPTION: Combat & Tactics*, to block up the 20-foot-wide aperture in the wall providing access from room 2a. The pike hedge is four Duergar across (north to south) and two deep (west to east). The Duergar are all Large size, but as they are in close order with overlapping shields they take up one combat square apiece. The Duergar in the pike hedge are all guarding, but because they are *invisible*, it is possible that these Duergar may be able to attack first with surprise in any event. The pike hedge threatens the 3 squares directly in front of it, and should be very effective in blocking access through the 20-foot arch into this room. The Duergar in the front range of the hedge are armed with *enlarged* footman's picks, but the rear line of Duergar hold *enlarged* ranseurs. All the Duergar in the pike hedge have a -1 AC bonus (due to overlapping shields of the front line), and the row behind the initial row has 50% cover (-4 AC bonus against missiles attacks). Additionally, the Duergar in this hedge attack on the slow phase just like the Duergar in the previous emplacements, even though these Duergar are only Large, not Huge (base initiative for Large creatures occurs in the average phase), because their ranseurs' weapon speeds are slow (i.e., the initiative of a creature is always dependent on the slowest determinant). Technically, the Duergar wielding footman's picks in the first line of the hedge could attack in the average phase, but they hold their attacks to the slow phase in order to attack in unison with the other row of the hedge. However, those reinforcing Duergar from the barracks who wield footman's picks will definitely attack on the average phase. Finally, the *enlarged* footman's picks and ranseurs in the hands the Large Duergar both use a d10 knockdown die.

Duergar (8): AC 4; MV 6 (12 when *enlarged*); HD 1+2; hp 9 (average); THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+1 (footman's pick) or 2d4 (ranseur), no damage bonus when *enlarged*; SA *invisibility*, *enlargement*, *stealth* (-2 penalty to opponent's surprise rolls); SD +4 bonus to saving throws vs. spell, immune to paralysis, illusion/phantasm spells, and poison, rarely surprised (1-in-10 chance); SZ S (4-foot tall) or L (7-foot tall); ML elite (13); Int average (8-10); AL LE; XP 420 each.



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Duergar (10): AC 4; MV 6 (12 when *enlarged*); HD 3+6; hp 20 (average); THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+1 (pickaxe) or 2d4 (ranseur), x2 when *enlarged*; SA as above; SD as above; SZ S (4-foot tall) or L (12-foot tall); ML elite (13); Int exceptional (15–16); AL LE; XP 650 each.

2c and 2d. Barracks

These chambers are accessible only by 1-foot-tall by 1-foot-wide passages which the Duergar refer to in their dialect as bolt-holes. Normal PCs should find it impossible to travel down these restricted tunnels. Those who find the means discover that each leads to a 20-foot by 30-foot room with an 8-foot ceiling. Each barracks room has 10 cots, each 4-foot long; apparently the Duergar prefer to sleep at their normal sizes. There are no valuables to be found with these cots. All Duergar carry their accumulated loot with them—unless noted otherwise, each Duergar in Firestorm Peak carries 4d10 sp, 1d10 gp, and up to 3 (1d4–1) gems of 10 gp value each. In addition to the bolt-holes leading to these areas from room 2b, each barracks room has an additional bolt-hole connecting to the larger complex. These additional bolt holes are hidden by secret doors.

3. The Gauntlet

A carved and paved tunnel provides a passage to the north. The corridor is empty and silent.

This long, 10-foot-wide by 10-foot-tall corridor runs 120 feet due north. The Duergar never use this corridor because it is trapped. There are 4 traps set for trespassers spread out along the length of the corridor. The traps are circular pit traps, each 10 feet across. Weight in excess of 40 pounds causes the pie-shaped sections of the trap's lid to separate and swing down, plunging characters who fail a Dexterity/Balance check (at a +3 penalty) into a 20-foot-deep circular pit. The walls of the pit are lined with nephelium blades honed to razor sharpness, so in addition to 2d6 points of falling damage, trapped characters are also subject to 3d4 points of cutting damage as they slide down the razor-lined shoot. Within each pit can be found bones and rotted cloth, much aged and decayed. The Duergar periodically clean out and reset these traps, so there is nothing of value to be found here. The location of each trap is marked on the poster map.

4a. Crossroads

Beyond the stone door, the hand-worked passages you have seen previously give way to mostly unworked caverns and tunnels. This 40-foot by 30-foot cavern is rough and filled with many rocky protrusions, as well as stalagmites and stalactites. Three rough tunnels lead off into darkness, two leading west and one leading north. To the east is another stone door. Near the northern wall is a large boulder which apparently crashed down from the ceiling long ago. What looks to be a skeletal hand protrudes from beneath it.

This cavern no longer contains any traps, as the Duergar sometimes travel through this room. However, it did contain a deadfall trap that was sprung twenty-seven years ago when Nigel and his companions entered here. Unfortunately for Derek, one of Nigel's companions, he was the one caught under it as a ton of falling rock robbed him of life. Derek's remains are still visible beneath the rock, as the Duergar never bothered to clean up the mess. Player characters who search the rubble around the rock will discover a leather pouch with the initials DW. The PC who is Nigel's child can make a Wisdom/Intuition check to realize it belonged to Derek the Warcaller, a member of his or her father's adventuring group. Within the pouch is a tattered scroll tied with leather. The scroll is almost decayed past legibility, but the following can be read in what is recognizably Nigel's graceful script:

... the Alienist has reached the font of his power under Firestorm. When next the Vast Gate opens, Madreus may command unclean powers the like of which could drive men mad. This Vast Gate is the source of his power, reaching as it does into a realm so incomprehensibly far from our own that the entities there may not abide by the laws of reality as we understand them. The only way to end this threat is to kill Madreus and refocus the Gate to another location, using the three Crystal Components which we've so arduously gathered from across the face of the world. To reach his inner complex, many obstacles must first be overcome, the first of which is the Duergar complex. However, research has revealed that far more insidious creatures lie deeper...

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Two mortal-strength characters using a sturdy lever (such as a two-handed sword) must both make successful checks against their Strength/Muscle statistics to shift the boulder. Beneath the boulder lie the remains of Derek, crushed and broken. The PCs can recover 235 sp, 346 gp, and 3 gems each worth 100 gp. There is a still-intact ring upon the crushed skeletal hand that was hidden beneath the boulder, Derek's Ring of Missed Meals (a ring of sustenance). Grasped in the crushed hand is a sword enruled as "Thalkainen," a broadsword +2, +3 vs. goblinoids, orcs, and regenerating creatures.

4b. Trapped

A simple 10-foot by 10-foot corridor of smoothed stone leads 30 feet south to another door.

Characters who traverse the corridor and attempt to access the far door will trigger the trap. Any attempt to open the false door causes a stone slab to come crashing down in front of the entry door, blocking escape. Worse, tanks full of murky water above the room begin to drain their contents into the room through thousands of small holes in the ceiling, extinguishing all torches and lanterns and muting even the effect of magical swords and lightstones. The darkened room fills with water at a rate of 2 feet per round; thus the characters have 5 rounds to attempt escape before the room is completely filled with water. To escape, three characters need to pull up on the slab (characters may attempt this from both sides if some of the PCs remain untrapped outside). If all three make successful Strength/Muscle checks simultaneously, they can lift the slab just enough so that the water begins to flow out of the room beneath the crack, spilling out into the cavern beyond. Alternatively, a single character with exceptional Strength who succeeds on a *bend bars/lift gates* attempt can achieve the same result. The slab can be forced up no further than a few inches in this manner, but this will be enough to save the lives of those trapped within, because after 1 turn the water drains from the chamber and the trap automatically resets.

If prepared for a dunking, a trapped character can hold his or her breath for a number of minutes equal to 1/3 of his or her Constitution/Fitness score (undue exertion, or failure to get a good breath, shortens that duration by half). After that, a Constitution check is required each round for each submerged character, with a cumulative penalty of -2 for each check after the first; failure of any check means that the character drowns.

5. Empty Cavern

A rough cavern approximately 25-foot by 25-foot looks absolutely empty, save for scattered rock debris upon the floor. There is a small hole in the lower portion of the southern wall.

In the southern wall of the chamber, a Duergar bolt-hole (1-foot by 1-foot) connects to room 2d (the barracks). Duergar fleeing from confrontations in the entry hall through this hole make their way through the caverns via the safe paths to the first check station in the mines (room 17), warning Duergar there of invaders.

6. Not The Least Of Them

The tunnel empties into a 30-foot-high rough cavern. The floor is littered with bones of various creatures, some of them humanoid and some monstrous. Some of the bones are charred and scorched, and the unmistakable charnel smell of decay wafts through this area. The chamber curves out of sight to the southeast, but a flickering light washes across the floor from around that corner, reminiscent of fire-light.

This chamber is home to undead creatures created by Duergar priestly enchantments in combination with their powers of *enlargement*. Three giant skeletons (of Duergar warriors slain in combat) lurk in this chamber with orders to kill any who venture within. The fire effect is the light of their rib-cage flames, burning with an evil light. All three skeletons are armed with huge two-handed swords. Giant skeletons are turned as mummies. Since these creatures were placed here as guardians, they possess no treasures of their own.

- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** The first act of these guardians will be to use their power to draw forth a flaming *fireball* (8d6 damage) from their chest cavities in the very fast phase, and then hurl it in the fast phase (as a spell). Being immune to fire, the undead use this power even in close quarters. Fireballs have a d8 knockdown die, but the DM may wish to use a d12 for those characters who fail their initial saves for half damage. The giant skeletons preferentially attack any creatures knocked prone by the blast in the slow phase of the same round in which the *fireballs* were hurled. Two-handed swords deliver a d12 knockdown die. The giant skeletons attacking with huge



two-handed swords act in the slow phase of a round. These large creatures threaten 2 squares with their reach.

Giant skeletons (3): AC 4; MV 12; HD 4+4; hp 34, 30, 33; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d12+3 (two-handed sword); SA *fireball* once per turn (for 8d6 damage); SD immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, and similar spells, immune to fire, cold inflicts half damage, edged and piercing weapons inflict half damage, arrows and similar missiles inflict 1 hp per die; SW can be turned (as mummy), holy water inflicts 2d4 points per vial, blunt weapons inflict full damage; SZ L (12-foot tall); ML fearless (20); Int non- (0); AL N; XP 975 each.

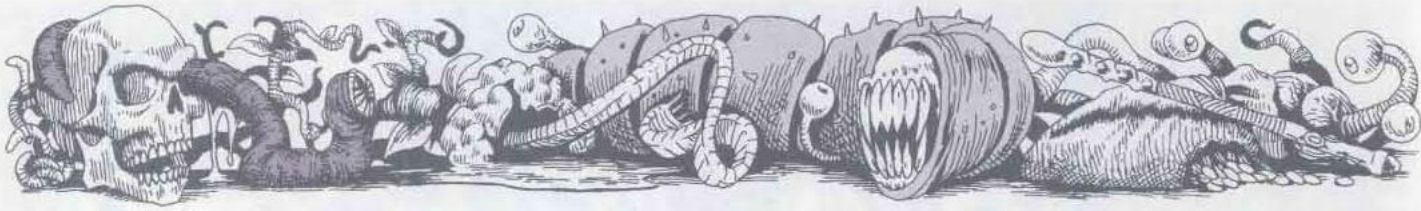
7. None Shall Pass

Standing in a shadowed crevice (treat as a concealed door) in the southwestern bend of the tunnel is a crypt thing. This undead has been created by Grymange, the Duergar high priest of old, and is commanded to attack any living creature which passes its post; from its concealed location, it has a clear view of the corridor. The crypt thing will use its power of *group teleportation* to attempt to send the entire party to a predetermined

location (do not use the randomly generated table presented in the *MONSTROUS MANUAL*™ tome. Adventurers failing their saving throws vs. spell suddenly find themselves suspended 20 feet above the floor of Room 8b. Characters falling to the floor take 2d6 points of damage, right before they are attacked by the wraiths who inhabit the room (surprise checks for the party are appropriate). Fallen characters must spend a half-round regaining their feet. Back in Room 7, the crypt thing will physically attack any unaffected party members. Crypt things cannot be turned. Finally, this crypt thing carries no treasure.

- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** Unless the characters somehow perceive the crypt thing hiding in the crevice, a check for surprise with a -1 penalty to the die roll is in order. Both the spell-like power of the crypt thing and its claw attacks are resolved in the fast phase of each combat round. Its claws act like bone daggers striking in unison, delivering a d6 knockdown die.

Crypt thing (1): AC 3; MV 12; HD 6; hp 47; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (claws); SA *teleport group*; SD immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, and similar spells,



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unturnable, immune to normal weapons; SW holy water; SZ M (6-foot tall); ML fanatic (18); Int very (12); AL N; XP 975.

8a. The Deadly Retreat

Another cavern scattered with rocky debris and not much else lies at the end of the tunnel. The ceiling of the cavern is at least 25 feet above, and filled with stalactites. A heavy stone door is set in the northern wall.

The 10-foot by 10-foot area immediately in front of the door is trapped, but the trap has a double trigger. The trap's mechanism is primed when any weight in excess of 40 pounds is applied to the 10-foot by 10-foot floor section immediately inside room 8b. The trap is then triggered by any weight in excess of 10 pounds on the 10-foot by 10-foot square in front of the door of 8a, causing that whole section of floor to fall away, dropping characters who fail a Dexterity/Balance check (at a +3 penalty) onto spikes 10 feet below for 2d6 damage (1d6 damage from the spikes and an additional 1d6 for the fall itself). The wraiths in room 8b pursue characters fleeing their room down into the pit to feast upon the life force of the trapped PCs. The pit is filled with bones and rotting equipment. Since the Duergar do not get too close to the dangerous wraiths, a serious search of the pit turns up 346 cp, 1,235 sp, and 788 gp. Also strewn among the debris is a dagger enruned as "Assaulter" (a dagger +2, +4 vs. trolls), 12 Missiles of Abdimnas (arrows +2), and 2 Draughts of Diesengel (potions of extra healing).

8b. A Chilly Embrace

The air in this 20-foot by 20-foot room is quite cold; condensation beads on the stone walls. The ceiling rises 25 feet, etched with designs of skeletal beings standing in a queue before a flaming furnace. Four stone sarcophagi lie scattered and broken in the room, as if they were dropped from above.

The Duergar long ago plundered a forgotten Drow tomb on a hunting foray in the underdeeps. The haunted sarcophagi were deposited here, and wrathful wraiths followed. Any living being who enters the room is subject to immediate attack by the wraiths, which seep out of their individual coffins as black noxious clouds emanating the

chill of the grave. The wraiths pursue fleeing characters out into area 8a but do not go beyond that chamber.

- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** The wraiths attack in the fast phase of the combat round. Additionally, one wraith attacks from above each PC if possible, attempting to gain the advantage of a flank attack, or at minimum a +1 attack bonus. Wraiths can not deliver a knockdown due to their immaterial nature.

Wraiths (4): AC 4; MV 12, fly 24 (B); HD 5+3; hp 33, 40, 35, 28; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (touch); SA touch drains 1 level of experience; SD immune to sleep, charm, hold, cold, poison, paralyzation, and death magic, immune to normal weapons; SW can be turned, holy water causes 2d4 points of damage per vial, silver weapons cause full damage, utterly destroyed by *raise dead* (on a failed saving throw); SZ M (5-foot tall); ML champion (15); Int very (11–12); AL LE; XP 2,000 each.

9. Empty

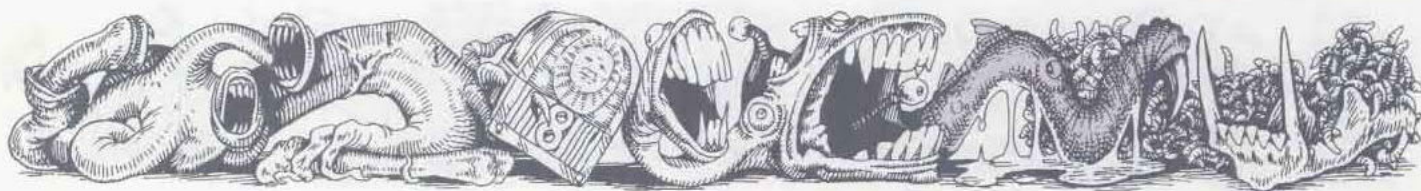
The rough tunnel widens into a larger cavern to the east. The tunnel continues uninterrupted on the opposite side of the chamber.

From time to time, the Duergar attempt to restock this cavern with a living monster gathered from the underdeeps; however, at this time no beast currently makes its lair here. A thorough search of the area uncovers old bones and dried leavings, but not much else.

10. Where Do These Stairs Go?

The debris-scattered passage opens into a cavern some 40 feet wide and about 30 feet across. In the center of the room is the beginning of a steep, narrow stone staircase leading down into unlighted depths.

The stairs in this room are trapped. The steps lead down at a steep 75-degree angle to the south for 30 feet, at which point an iron door is just visible. The 15th, 16th, and 17th steps are trapped so that any weight upon them causes all the steps on the staircase to collapse into a chute. Characters who make a successful Strength/Muscle check can cling to chinks in the newly formed



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wall and can attempt to make a Climbing proficiency check to climb out. Unlucky characters slide down the chute past the iron door, which swung open as the chute formed, into a vat of purple worm stomach acid (harvested by a Duergar hunting party for this trap and other uses); the vat is 20-feet wide and 15-feet deep.

Those who fall into the vat take 1d8 points of damage every round they remain in the acid. A successful Strength/Muscle check is needed to climb out of the vat. Even after a character climbs out, he or she continues to take 1d4 points of damage for 1d6 rounds as the residual acid burns off. Characters at the bottom of the slide must make successful Climbing proficiency checks to climb up the chute. Those failing will, of course, slide right back down into the acid. The acid has eaten away any valuable items which may have been dunked here; however, a flickering light may be seen glowing at the bottom of the vat. This is from a muted *continual light* spell cast upon a quartz pebble tossed into the vat by a Duergar with a warped sense of humor (a widely shared racial characteristic).

11. Scorpion Den

The rough tunnel widens into a larger cavern to the northwest. The contents of this chamber are shielded by large boulders strewn along the tunnel boundary. The tunnel continues on past the chamber.

The Duergar have recently managed to start a small den of cave scorpions in this chamber. The scorpions lair here but hunt throughout the underdeeps for food (via the passages provided by area 16). The scorpions are 75% likely to be present; otherwise they are out hunting. If the scorpions are present, they immediately attack any intruders. The chamber contains various refuse and debris common to a lair of a large beast. In the far (northwestern) corner of the cave, a large egg sack contains 6 scorpion eggs. Also woven into the egg sack secretions are some shiny souvenirs retrieved from previous victims, including a pouch containing 286 gp, 543 sp, and 13 cp. There is also a glass (nephelium) whistle with the name "Nightcaller" inscribed upon it in Duergarish characters. When blown over a grave in darkness or at night, one corpse below animates, as per *animate dead*, and claws its way to the surface (if interred in soft earth or under loose stones). This zombie serves the whistler faithfully until destroyed or turned. The whistle

can be used once per week. Good-aligned characters are risking a change in alignment if they use this item after learning its unholy purpose.

- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** Unless PCs are taking special precautions when traveling down the corridor, the scorpions hear them and prepare for possible attack by attempting to ambush PCs making their way around the 7-foot-tall boulders which partially block the tunnel from the chamber. PCs hit by a pincer are considered grappled; they may attempt a *bend bars/lift gates* roll once per round to free themselves. Grappled characters are automatically stung; however, the poison of these particular giant scorpions is not as deadly as most of their kind, causing 2d10 hp of damage per sting (1d2 on a successful save). These scorpions attack in the fast phase of the combat round, and their stingers use a d6 knockdown die.

Giant scorpions (4): AC 3; MV 15; HD 5+5; hp 35, 33, 30, 31; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1d10/1d10/1d4 + special (pincer/pincer/tail sting); SA poison tail sting; SZ M (5-foot long); ML steady (11); Int non- (0); AL N; XP 650 each.

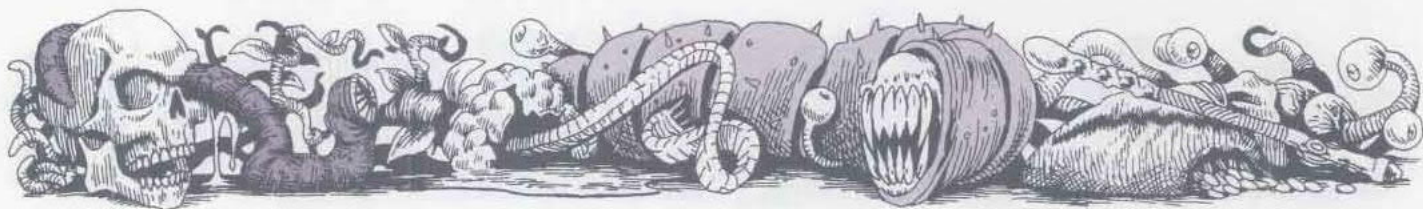
12. This Doesn't Seem To Be Working

A 10-foot by 10-foot carved room lies behind the door. The floor of the room is strangely tilted, and small bits of glass of various shapes are scattered upon it. There is another stone door in the eastern wall of this room.

This was once another trapped room. However, due to time and poor upkeep, this trap is not currently functioning. The items upon the floor are broken pieces of the nephelium gears, pulleys, and cogs which were once an integral part of the trap. Characters who brave entry and attempt to open the eastern door will hear a grating noise as of metal on metal, and the floor will lurch . . . but that is all.

13. Mostly Empty

A rough cavern approximately 25-foot by 30-foot in dimension contains nothing but rocky debris and shadows. A faint charnel smell lingers in the air, its source not apparent.



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Undead were once stationed here, but over the years, the energies of the unquiet spirits have waned to the point where only residual traces remain. One of the consequences of this residue is the very faint, almost unnoticeable smell of rotting flesh which permeates the area. The other effect has occurred only recently as a result of the alien corruption seeping outward from the inner complex, but it manifests when any intelligent creature sleeps in this room. Because of this place's old link to undead spirits, the sleeper will be plagued with dreams in which the dreamer finds himself or herself in a rotting undead body upon a field of the recently slain, perhaps a battlefield. The dreamer finds that he or she is ravenously hungry and unable to stop himself or herself from partaking of the bountiful feast lying unguarded upon the field. Beings of good alignment must make a Wisdom/Willpower check or permanently lose one point of Wisdom each time the dream is dreamt due to its corrupt nature.

14. Just Some Deep Mud

This passage widens to the south, forming two large caverns. There doesn't appear to be anything of interest in either of the caves; however, the ceiling rises out of sight in both areas. The floor appears to be wet and muddy in both of the areas as well.

This cavern is a hollow in the midst of a natural sink-hole formed by the passage of subterranean waters over geologic time. Characters who walk into the mud at first only notice that the mud is thick. Movement rates through the mud are halved. Those who make it to within 5 feet of the rear walls may suddenly be attacked by the bats that have colonized the hollow spaces in the ceiling above. These large bats normally hunt in the underdeeps but have a 85% chance of being present when PCs are present. Characters who stop forward progress (in order to fend off attacking bats) begin to sink in the mud at a rate of 1 foot per combat round. Once a character begins sinking, his or her movement rate drops by 2 for every foot he or she has sunk, automatically dropping to 0 when the character is chest deep in mud. Each round, the character can make a Dexterity/Balance check to avoid sinking 1 foot for that round, if no other actions are taken (such as attacking). Characters on the edge of the mud pools can hold long items or throw ropes to sinking characters. Each successful

Strength/Muscle check pulls a sinking character 1 foot up from the mud. Characters who sink under are gone for good, as they continue to sink for about 50 feet. If the PCs have some magical means of navigating the mud, they can glean a few things from the bottom of the morass, including a lot of bones, 578 cp, 2,345 sp, 764 gp, 3 gems worth 150 gp apiece, and a ring enruned as "Gedion's Ring of Armoring" (a ring which acts as *bracers of defense*, AC 3). It takes one turn of searching to come upon each 100 coins, each single gem, or the ring.

- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** Characters who are sinking get no Dexterity bonuses against attacking bats. All the bats act in the fast phase of combat and gain a +1 bonus to attacks when attacking from above. The bats normally deliver a d4 knockdown die, but use a d10 knockdown die against characters who have sunk at least 1 foot in the mud—victims will have difficulty in keeping their balance in shifting mud, making them more likely to topple. A PC who is knocked down sinks below the surface in 3 combat rounds unless he or she can make a successful Strength/Muscle check at a +3 penalty (one check per round is necessary for the PC to remain at his or her current level).

Large bats (20): AC 8; MV 3, fly 18 (C); HD 1; hp 4 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (bite); SA victims of bites have 1% chance of contracting rabies; SD +3 AC bonus vs. missiles; SW "blinded" by silence (-4 penalty to attack rolls and +4 penalty to Armor Class); SZ M (5-foot wingspan); ML unsteady (7); Int animal (1); AL N; XP 35 each.

15. What's That Smell?

As you approach this area, you begin to notice a horribly rank, putrid odor. Also, the stone floors and walls have been coated with some sort of sticky resin or secretion, giving the passage strange new textures. The tunnel mouth opens into a large cavern cloaked in darkness, from which the sound of high-pitched chattering and a strange slithering noise emanates. Bolted into the end of the tunnel mouth are 6 sets of iron manacles. Humanoid bones lie scattered about beneath the manacles.

The Duergar feed the carrion crawlers laired in this cavern on a regular basis by strapping Duergar criminals and the occasional humanoid caught in the under-



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deeps to the manacles. There are 6 sets of manacles at each of the cavern's entrances. The crawlers are content to wait until their food is safely bound, after which they scuttle out to paralyze their victims with sticky secretions. Then it is just a matter of dining at leisure. . . . The crawlers only attack creatures which invade the sanctity of their lair. If this occurs, they attack *en masse*. PCs who clear out the lair find nothing but crawler eggs for their trouble.

- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** Carrion crawlers are 9 feet long, thus they take up two spaces on the combat grid, the extra side spaces being considered as flanking spaces. The crawlers are AC 3 vs. creatures in their facing spaces but only AC 7 vs. creatures in their flank and rear spaces. Crawlers can navigate walls and ceilings, so 1d4 may drop upon PCs from above during combat, which would be considered a charge attack for a +3 attack bonus. The crawlers' tentacle attacks occur in the average phase of the combat round and use a d4 knockdown die. The crawlers attack to the death.

Carrion crawlers (12): AC 3 (head) or 7 (body); MV 12; HD 3+1; hp 14, 15, 13, 16, 18, 15, 14, 15, 13, 16, 18, 15; THAC0 17; #AT 1 or 8; Dmg special (tentacles) or 1d2 (bite); SA paralysis (touch of a tentacle paralyzes victim for 2d6 turns; save vs. paralyzation to negate); SZ L (9-foot long); ML fearless (20); Int non- (0); AL N; XP 420 each.

16. The Road Less Traveled

Before you, the tunnel suddenly shows a complete lack of attention by intelligent hands. Whereas the tunnels to this point, though rough, were approximately 10-foot wide and high, the tunnel before you begins to fluctuate in width, height, and direction just as natural tunnels have a tendency to do below the earth.

This tunnel connects to the underdeeps. This passage was opened by nonmagical tunneling during the time of the Outer Gates' opening approximately 300 years ago. It remains the single natural passage into and out of the mountain. The Duergar use the passage for their regular hunting and gathering forays into the underdeeps, as do the scorpions, bats, and the occasional carrion crawler.

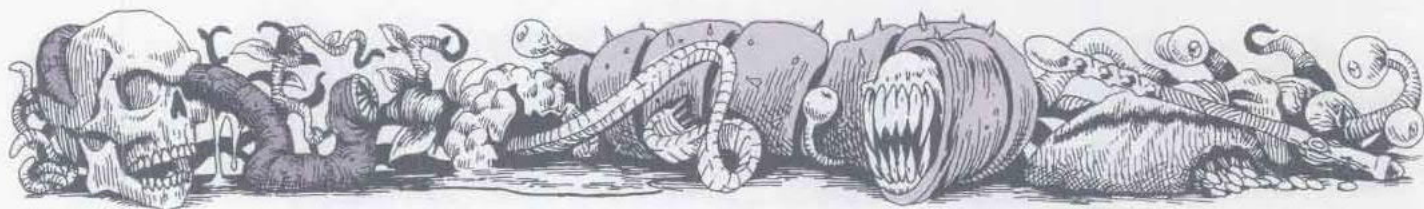
17. Duergar Checkpoint

The rough tunnel gives way to a smoothly carved and paved passage, which leads to the east approximately 40 feet. At the end of the passage there is a large door of stone with a large glass grate in its upper half. A light shines flickering past the grate, in front of which dark shapes throw long shadows.

This is the Duergar checkpoint responsible for allowing or denying access to and from the underdeeps. If any Duergar fled here from the battle in rooms 2a and 2b, the guards here will be on full alert for one full day. If no Duergar fled from the battle to this point, or one full day has passed since the battle at the Outer Gates, the Duergar on guard here will still be ready for a fight to hold the checkpoint. If the guards are on full alert, they will not admit anyone through the checkpoint in either direction. Otherwise the Duergar process travelers with proper credentials (such as Duergar hunting parties entering or leaving, underdeep traders seeking trade in nephelium, etc.). If the checkpoint is not on full alert, the PCs may try to fool the guards into thinking that they hail from the underdeep and have some legitimate business here. However, the guards are alert, so the characters will be at a +4 penalty to any check which the DM deems appropriate to the persuasion. If a battle ensues, and it begins to go against the Duergar, one of the guards will attempt to disengage in order to run back and warn the next checkpoint (room 24) and their overall commander, the dwarf Wellfast.

The stone door is firmly locked; if characters attempt to force it, use the parenthetical numbers on the *open door* column on the Strength table in the *Player's Handbook* to determine their chance of success. PCs attempting to smash out the "glass" bars of the grating are in for a rude shock, as these nephelium bars have the strength of forged steel. The lock on the door can be picked normally. However, any attempt to gain entrance through these methods will be greeted by a hail of heavy crossbow bolts through the grating by the Duergar guards.

- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** Four *invisible* Duergar use their loaded heavy crossbows to cover the first four individuals in any party approaching the door. Any hostile action should allow the covering Duergar to release their bolts before any other



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actions can be resolved (check for surprise on the PCs' part). The Duergar continue to fire crossbow bolts past the grate for as long as possible. If the PCs make it into the room, the guards turn *invisible*, grab up footman's picks, *enlarge* as space allows, then attack. While *enlarged*, the guards are size H and attack in the slow phase of each combat round with a maximum reach of 5 combat squares, delivering a d12 knockdown die.

Duergar of the Watch (10): AC 4; MV 6 (12 when *enlarged*); HD 3+6; hp 30 (average); THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+1 (heavy crossbow with heavy quarrel) or 2d4 (ranseur), x3 when *enlarged*; SA *invisibility*, *enlargement*, *stealth* (-2 penalty to opponents' surprise rolls); SD +4 bonus to saving throws vs. spell, immune to paralysis, illusion/phantasm spells, and poison, rarely surprised (1-in-10 chance); SZ S (4-foot tall) or H (15-foot to 16-foot tall); ML elite (13); Int average to genius (8-18); AL LE; XP 975 each.

18. The Mines

From this point the passage divides and divides again as multiple 5-foot by 5-foot rough shafts delve out from the corridor in all directions. The sounds of hammering as of metal upon rock are faintly audible, but the echoes make the direction impossible to trace. Cart tracks are visible in the rock dust which lies heavy upon the floor.

A maze of mineworks begins at this point. Not all of the various shafts and their tributary tunnels are shown on the map; the DM can randomly generate the twistings and turnings and sudden dead ends of these shafts if it becomes necessary. Every turn spent in the mines gives a cumulative 30% chance of meeting a mining party as detailed in the Duergar Random Encounter Table on page 10; see area 26 for a typical miner's stats.

19. The Dark Delve

The cramped mine shaft suddenly opens into a large cavern. The floor of the cavern is rent by a massive fissure, the bottom of which is lost in darkness.

This deep natural fissure serves as the Duergar colony's rubble and garbage dump. The excavated stone of the mines, the refuse of the colony, and every incidental corpse is thrown down into this chasm, never to be seen again. The chasm stretches downwards for over 1,000 feet, and its bottommost parts are filled with the refuse of the last 300 years of Duergar activity.

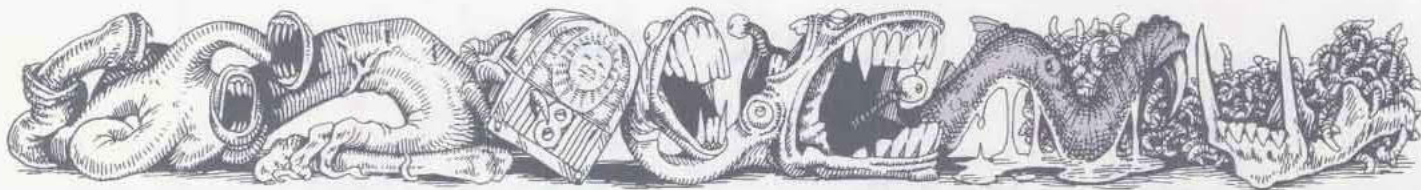
20. Mine Station

The corridor opens up into a very large chamber, 30 feet by 40 feet in dimension. Seven mining carts are lined up along the eastern wall. The northern wall is one large rack half filled with mining implements of all types, but rock picks and hammers predominate. On the western wall, three very large spiders, resembling tarantulas but for their tremendous size, are tethered to iron rings. They all stand quietly feeding upon the corpse of some nameless deep-born creature.

This is where mining parties gather before heading down into the mines. There are always 3 Duergar in this room engaged in the tending of the steeders (the spiders tethered upon the wall) or repairing mining equipment. They defend themselves against an aggressive group who enter the room but ignore parties who merely pass through, presuming them to be underdeep traders. The particular steeders in this room are quite tame and will even let the PCs pet them, having been trained only for the pulling of mine carts, but they pull free of their tethers and defend themselves in the event of attack. Duergar from room 21a (the mess hall) will come running to the sounds of combat. The picks and hammers in the room are of average quality.

- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** The Duergar first go *invisible*, *enlarge*, then attack in the average phase of the combat round, delivering a d10 knockdown die with their *enlarged* picks. The steeders also attack in the average phase, but they deliver a d4 knockdown die.

Duergar (3): AC 4; MV 6 (12 when *enlarged*); HD 1+2; hp 9, 7, 8; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+1 (footman's pick, no damage bonus when *enlarged*); SA *invisibility*, *enlargement*; SD +4 bonus to saving throws vs. spell, immune to paralysis, illusions, and poison, rarely surprised (1-in-10 chance); SZ S (4-foot tall) or L (7-foot tall); ML elite (13); Int average (8-10); AL LE; XP 420 each.



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Steeders (3): AC 4; MV 12; HD 4+4; hp 24, 28, 26; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (bite); SA ignores armor bonuses when attacks (Dexterity and magical bonuses to AC do apply), success indicates that prey is clung to with sticky secretions (Strength/Muscle or Dexterity/Balance check at -10 penalty required to pull free), victim suffers -2 penalties to attacks and damage while held and will be automatically bitten once per round; SZ L (8-foot in diameter); ML elite (13); Int low (7); AL CE; XP 975 each.

21a. Mess Hall

A 10-foot-high arch gives off the main passage into a large chamber. The hall contains four long stone tables. Seated at benches pulled up to the tables are six Duergar. The Duergar are heartily eating some sort of stew being ladled out by some variety of goblinoid slave.

The sounds of altercation at the mining station would have brought all six Duergar running, ready for a fight. Otherwise, they are found here and ignore passing individuals in the passage in order to concentrate upon their meal. Three goblin slaves run in and out of the room, serving the Duergar, wiping down the stone tables, and preparing the meals in the kitchen which lies directly off the mess hall. The slaves flee into the kitchen if any combat breaks out in the room.

• **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** See the PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations as listed for room 20.

Duergar (6): AC 4; MV 6 (12 when *enlarged*); HD 1+2; hp 9, 9, 10, 6, 8, 10; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+1 (footman's pick, no damage bonus when *enlarged*); SA *invisibility, enlargement*; SD +4 bonus to saving throws vs. spell, immune to paralysis, illusion/phantasm spells, and poison, rarely surprised (1-in-10 chance); SZ S (4-foot tall) or L (7-foot tall); ML elite (13); Int average to high (8-14); AL LE; XP 420 each.

21b. Kitchen

The kitchen holds all manner of cooking implements stored helter-skelter atop stone tables. Large meat hooks in the ceiling provide a sturdy support for the butchering of game creatures brought up from the underdeep. Three cots in the corner provide the goblin cooks with a place to sleep.

Nothing of great value is to be found in the kitchen. The goblins fight only if cornered, trying to placate intruders first by offering them "food, nice food."

• **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** If holding kitchen knives, the goblins attack in the fast phase and deliver a d4 knockdown die. Unarmed goblins attack in the very fast phase and do not deliver a knockdown die with a fist attack.

Goblins (3): AC 10; MV 6; HD 1-1; hp 4, 3, 2; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (kitchen knife); SZ S (4-foot tall); ML average (10); Int low (5-6); AL LE; XP 15 each.

22. Pools

A short corridor opens almost immediately into a natural cavern. To the northwest the floor of the cavern slopes down to meet the edge of a subterranean pool, dark and quiet. The odor of fungus and moisture is strong in the air, and the faint sound of trickling water upon stone brushes lightly on your ears. Upon the far wall of the pool are what appear to be glowing gems embedded in the rocky wall of the cavern.

Small trickles of water run down from the ceiling, keeping the pool full. The excess moisture seeps away through minute crevasses in the rock and is partly responsible for turning the soft earth to mud in room 14. The glowing gems are merely rock quartz chips which have been enchanted with muted *continual light*.

Duergar who have spent a long shift in the mines sometimes spend some time in this chamber washing off rock dust and sweat before returning to the residential sections of the colony. There is a 25% chance that 6 Duergar are washing within the pool when the player characters enter. The Duergar keep their clothes and armor on when washing, but they do leave their weapons at the pool side. The pool is only 2-feet-deep at its center; however, there is one 30-foot-deep submerged pit (indicated on the DM's map by shading).

The paranoid Duergar have placed a trap in this underwater pit. At its bottom are multiple winches attached to rusting iron chains. The chains secure iron cave-bear traps which float just below the surface via self-renewing spells of *levitation*. Whenever anyone plunges into the water over the pit, he or she has a 90% chance of being caught in the iron jaws of a trap for 1d10 points of damage, a 50% chance of two traps snapping shut, and a 15% chance of

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three traps closing upon the poor, flailing PC. The appropriate winches immediately begin to rescind their chains, pulling any creature caught in the jaws of the traps down to 15 feet below the surface of the water. Those who fail a Wisdom/Intuition check at a +4 penalty have not had time to prepare a breath; thus they only have one round to act before they must begin making Constitution/Fitness checks each round (at a cumulative +2 penalty) in order to hold their breath. Those failing this check will drown. A character must make a successful *bend bars/lift gate* roll for each trap to free himself or herself.

- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** PCs who wish to unchivalrously eradicate bathing Duergar and who take the combat into the pool move at only 3/4 of their regular movement rate while in the water. Also, all attacks are made at a -1 penalty due to the hindering effect of the muddy liquid. The Duergar attempt to lure attacking PCs into the 30-foot pit by positioning themselves behind it. Those PCs failing a Dexterity/Balance check (at a +3 penalty) plunge into the water if they should happen to step into the pit, submerging entirely, even if only for a moment. The unarmed Duergar then attempt to overbear one or two charac-

ters disconcerted by a comrade's sudden disappearance into the pit, doing their best to hold anyone they knock down underwater until he or she drowns. In all other respects, the considerations listed under the description of area 20 apply here as well.

Duergar (6): AC 4; MV 6 (12 when *enlarged*); HD 1+2; hp 9, 7, 8, 8, 5, 9; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg special (see above); SA *invisibility, enlargement*; SD +4 bonus to saving throws vs. spell, immune to paralysis, illusion/phantasm spells, and poison, rarely surprised (1-in-10 chance); SZ S (4-foot tall) or L (7-foot tall); ML elite (13); Int high to genius (14-18); AL LE; XP 420 each.

23. Slave Pen

In the western wall of the corridor there is a 10-foot-wide and 10-foot-deep recess. The area contains many chains and chokers, all apparently made of glass, hanging upon wall racks. The western end of the declivity is blocked by a glass portcullis, beyond which a larger chamber opens. The murmur of low guttural voices and the occasional whimper or snarl can be heard from the darkness beyond the bars.



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The Duergar keep a large family of goblins as slaves in the chamber beyond the declivity. These goblins have been slaves for generations and know of no other lifestyle. They live and breed within the slave pen, being fed once a day by the Duergar. These slaves have various tasks, but most of them fill out mining details. None of the slaves are armed, and they are useless in battle even if weapons are provided for them. They travel in groups of 1d6 to the residential areas of the Duergar complex via the elevator (room 28) and could guide a determined party to it (the PCs might have trouble getting it to work, however). However, goblins coerced to show the way have a 40% chance of leading the party directly into the strongest concentration of Duergar forces they know of (i.e., room 31, the bazaar).

• **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** As the goblins in area 21b.

Goblins (20): AC 10; MV 6; HD 1-1; hp 5 (average); THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d2 (kick, bite, punch) or by weapon; SZ S (4-foot tall); ML average (10); Int low (5-6); AL LE; XP 15 each.

24. Checkpoint

The corridor opens up ahead into a 20-foot by 30-foot chamber. Three figures stand here, scrutinizing the corridor. They hold polearms and seem eager to use them in the course of their duties. In the northeastern corner of the chamber is a stone table around which are pulled three stone stools. A vessel of some sort sits in the center of the table, surrounded by three large flagons.

If a Duergar from the underdeep checkpoint (room 17) has alerted the guards here, the guards here will have *enlarged* and turned *invisible*, waiting in ambush for any intruders. Whether or not any warning precedes the PCs to this room, there is always an invisible Duergar stationed in this room whose only duty is to immediately inform Wellfast of any irregularities at this checkpoint.

The vessel on the table is a pitcher filled with weak beer, called *cresch* in the Duergar dialect, which the Duergar brew from a special variety of lichen found in the underdeeps. *Cresch* affects PCs as normal ale.

• **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** See the considerations printed under areas 2a and 2b.

Duergar (4): AC 4; MV 6 (12 when *enlarged*); HD 3+6; hp 30, 29, 28, 30; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2d4 (ranseur), x3 when *enlarged*; SA *invisibility, enlargement, stealth* (-2 penalty to opponents' surprise rolls); SD +4 bonus to saving throws vs. spell, immune to paralysis, illusion/phantasm spells, and poison, rarely surprised (1-in-10 chance); SZ S (4-foot tall) or H (15-foot to 16-foot); ML elite (13); Int average to genius (8-18); AL LE; XP 975 each.

25. Rubble

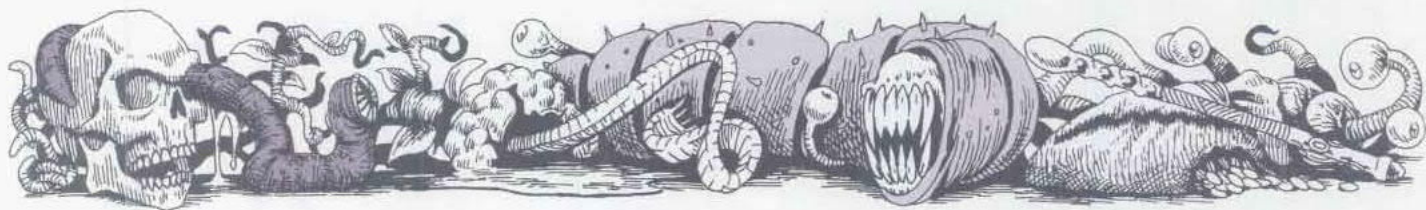
The passageway opens into one end of a large chamber or hall. The area extends to the west some 40 feet before a mass of rock rubble blocks the rest of the 20-foot-wide and 20-foot-tall passage. It is impossible to estimate how thick the rock debris is. Another smaller passage gives off this hall to the south.

This hall was once a part of the original passage leading into the heart of the mountain. The Duergar have walled it off and piled rubble against the west wall to foil *passwall* magics and the like from room 2b. The only way to the inner complex is through the Duergar complex, as Wellfast decreed when he became the commander of the Duergar military twenty-six years ago. A wall along the eastern side of the chamber blocks the continuation of the original corridor. It is not obvious to the untrained eye that the blocking wall is not part of the original construction: a successful Wisdom/Intuition or stonework check, plus a full turn spent carefully examining the wall, will reveal this information.

26. Smeltery

Read the following text as the characters approach room 26:

Actinic light flares and flashes into the corridor from an archway in the corridor's western wall. The odor of burnt iron is strong in the air, and the rumble of chanting voices bides with the clang of metal and the roar of raging fires.



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Read the following when the PCs look into Room 26:

This very large chamber has a ceiling which is at least 40-foot tall, allowing the two massive smelting furnaces room to stand. The furnaces look to be made of shining obsidian, with hatch ports for coal and ore cunningly worked into the sides. Giant-sized Duergar work massive bellows in rhythm to a guttural chant sung by all. Other Duergar shovel coal into the furnaces' bases while their compatriots pour crushed rock into hatches higher up the sides. The activity seems chaotic yet ordered in the strobing light of molten ores sparking as they flow out of the one furnace and into the second, larger furnace to the southwest. Iron chips and glassy nuggets lie scattered upon the heavily scorched and burnt floor. The smoky, acrid odor of burning ore is almost overpowering.

This is the Duergar smeltery, where ore brought out of the mine in carts pulled by steeders is refined to forge-grade iron and nephelium. The workers here are engrossed in their work and only respond to PCs who act in an aggressive or suspicious manner (otherwise assuming them to be an underdeep merchant party).

- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** See the considerations as described under heading 20.

Duergar Miners (8): AC 4; MV 6 (12 when *enlarged*); HD 1+2; hp 9 (average); THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+1 (footman's pick, no damage bonus when *enlarged*); SA *invisibility, enlargement, stealth* (-2 penalty to opponents' surprise rolls); SD +4 bonus to saving throws vs. spell, immune to paralysis, illusion/phantasm spells, and poison, rarely surprised (1-in-10 chance); SZ S (4-foot tall) or L (7-foot tall); ML elite (13); Int average to exceptional (10-16); AL LE; XP 420 each.

27. Materials

This cluttered chamber is filled floor-to-ceiling with smelted glassy material. The unusual ore has been formed into cloudy rods and sheets after its immersion in the second furnace. The Duergar apparently stockpile the refined ore here for future use.

The plethora of nephelium ore is stored here in preparation for forge and craft work, or for direct sale in the bazaar of the grand promenade (area 31). Other than nephelium, nothing of interest can be found in this chamber.

28. Duergar Elevator

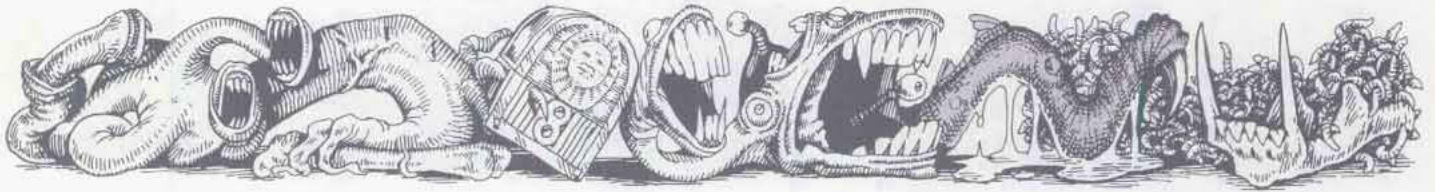
There is a 10-foot-wide alcove on the eastern side of the corridor. A thin crack marks the point at which the passage ends and the alcove begins. An iron grate can apparently be pulled across the inside of the alcove to block it off from the hallway proper.

This chamber is an elevator box, suspended in a square shaft by a length of chain; the end of a thin metal chain can be seen through a square hole in the ceiling. The chain is anchored 20 feet above, at the top of the shaft. To utilize this elevator, Duergar reach up through the hole and use their special power to *enlarge* the chain to double its current length (from 20 feet to 40 feet). The process of *enlargement* lowers the contents of the elevator 20 feet down to the forge hall (area 55-57), where the sheets and rods of nephelium are off-loaded. This elevator also serves as the primary means of access between the mining level and the rest of the Duergar complex because the only other passage is *warded* (see the text under area 31). The elevator ascends again when the effects of the *enlargement* are canceled or lapse. Because of the manner in which this transport is operated, most PCs should find it difficult to make use of the elevator.

29. Storeroom & Repair

This chamber is very dusty and appears to be little used. Mining carts in various stages of disrepair are arranged neatly on the floor of the room, while the walls are filled with broken mining implements and snapped harnesses of unusual design.

The Duergar responsible for repairing the equipment as it broke down was killed a couple of months earlier during a sortie into the gibberling-infested Twisted Caverns. Certain Duergar venture there from time to time in order to harvest choice "darkscape" mushrooms (see area 73 for more details), which can inspire lucid dreams of particular power in the recipient. If the PCs search for secret doors and are successful, they discover a hidden cache of these strange luminescent purple mushrooms in a small leather bag behind a steeder harness. There are four mushrooms in the bag. A PC who eats one or more of these mushrooms must make a System Shock roll. Those making the roll fall asleep within 2 turns and experience lucid dreams



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of such vividness that the PC should be hard pressed to differentiate it from reality (i.e., from the dreamer's viewpoint, he or she has been transported to some strange alien landscape). It is impossible to wake a PC who has ingested darkscape for 1d4+4 hours, after which time the dose wears off. Ingestion of darkscape will also instantaneously kill a burrowing gibberslug (see Wellfast's description in room 41 for more on these horrors). PCs who fail their initial System Shock roll must save vs. poison or take 2d10 points of damage and remain incapacitated for 1d4+4 hours or until magically healed (either through *neutralize poison* or regaining all the lost hit points).

30. Guard Rec Room

This largish chamber seems to have been formed into an arena of sorts. Stone benches surround a 20-foot-diameter platform which has been walled off with what appears to be glass to form a transparent cylinder. There are two doors of the same material on opposite sides of the cylinder. What looks to be weapons in poor repair are scattered about the floor of the circular chamber. Red-brown stains are splattered upon both the floor of the glasslike cylinder and upon its interior walls.

The combat pit, sheathed with nephelium, was constructed so that overworked guards and miners could take their ease while watching two or more unlucky slaves fight to the death. Much wagering occurs among the Duergar concerning the outcome of each fight and from time to time a slave champion will emerge as a favorite for a brief time. These champions never usually last long, however, due to the high mortality rate of the slaves while they are worked in the mines. Nothing of value can be found within the cylinder, only rusted weapons and dried blood. There is a 25% chance that when the PCs enter they find 4d4 Duergar here watching two goblins tear into each other inside the cylinder.

Duergar (4d4): AC 4; MV 6 (12 when *enlarged*); HD 1+2; hp 9 (average); THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+1 (footman's pick, no damage bonus when *enlarged*); SA *invisibility, enlargement, stealth* (-2 penalty to opponents' surprise rolls); SD +4 bonus to saving throws vs. spell, immune to paralysis, illusion/phantasm spells, and poison, rarely surprised (1-in-10 chance); SZ S (4-foot tall) or L (7-foot tall); ML elite (13); Int average to genius (8-18); AL LE; XP 420 each.

Goblins (2): AC 10; MV 6; HD 1-1; hp 3, 6; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (kitchen knife); SZ S (4-foot tall); ML average (10); Int low (5-6); AL LE; XP 35 each.

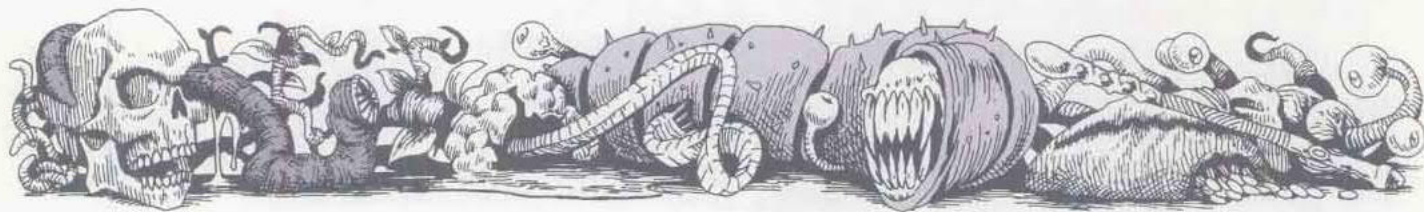
31. The Grand Promenade

The door in the northern wall opening onto this chamber from the upper level—the door the PCs are most likely to enter through—is *warded* as described below after the boxed text.

Before you is a tremendous open space, obviously carved from the rock by intelligent hands. The 140-foot by 80-foot chamber appears to be a large "open air" bazaar, in which dozens of semi-permanent tent-like structures are arranged into neat rows. Duergar can be seen milling between the tents, apparently bartering with shopkeepers over strange inventories. The torches and magical glows which light the entire area cause strange shadows to be cast 30 feet up onto the walls of the 10-foot-wide stone ledge which bounds the entire chamber. Duergar riding giant spider mounts patrol the ledge, eyeing the shoppers and traders in the bazaar below, ready to intervene at the first sign of trouble. Various doors and alcoves open up off the ledge and the bazaar.

As already noted, PCs are most likely to arrive on the ledge level (unless they discovered and mastered the elevator room at area 28). The stone door which provides passage from the north onto the ledge level is never used by any of the Duergar; they always use the elevator. Whenever the door on the ledge is opened, a *glyph of warding* (specially researched by Naentoth, the chief Duergar cleric) magically alerts all the steeder-riders on ledge-patrol and both Wellfast and Naentoth, whatever their locations. If Wellfast has received reports concerning the PCs' incursion from the entry room (area 2b) or from either of the two checkpoints (areas 17 and 24), the steeder patrols will be on specific lookout for the party and will attack on sight any party which obviously hails directly from the upperworld. Refer to the bulleted **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations** section at the end of this heading for all the gory details.

The Duergar have set up a permanent bazaar in this chamber which draws all manner of underdeep merchants to trade for the Duergar's valuable nephelium and nephelium-crafted items. The Duergar trade for goods, including specialty items such as salt, which they cannot provide for themselves. The sidebar on page 30 lists suggested proprietors and the items which they



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predominantly stock. The DM is free to determine actual inventories and associated costs from equivalent items in the *Player's Handbook* if the need arises; note, however, that there are no magical items in any of the inventories. Each merchant has 200 to 1200 (2d6x100) gp locked in some manner of strong box, if it becomes necessary to determine the cash on hand of any particular merchant.

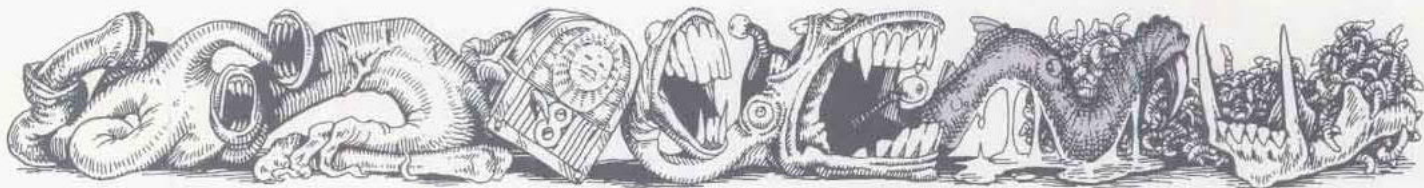
- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** Use **Tactical Map #2** for this encounter. If Wellfast has been alerted to the PCs' intrusion, he has implemented a series of measures which should expose and trap the party in the grand promenade. Each paragraph below details the actions of each particular group following the battle plan. The actions described in each paragraph do not necessarily occur sequentially; instead, each group's listed actions may occur simultaneously. Read the sections carefully so that all the activity can be coordinated.

Balcony Steeder Riders. The balcony normally has 6 steeder-riding Duergar patrolling the balcony. Each steeder rider carries a lance and a long sword. Steeder-riders never *enlarge* their mounts, as it makes them skittish and hard to control. Currently there are 6 visible steeder-riders and 6 *invisible* steeder-riders patrolling the balcony at approximately equal spacing. If the magical door ward (on the door in the center of the north wall on the balcony level, marked with a "W" on the DM's map) alerts them, 4 of the visible riders use their full movement to race around to the balcony door even if the party is not visible beyond it. The other 2 visible riders unsling horns and sound a general call-to-arms throughout the chamber. The first 4 riders engage the party, trying to draw them out onto the balcony so that the door can be closed behind the PCs, cutting them off from retreat. If they have trouble, the 2 remaining visible riders urge their mounts to leap across the intervening distance (steeders may leap 240 feet with Duergar riders) in the average phase, using their lances for a charge attack occurring in the slow phase of the same round, delivering a d12 knockdown with a successful attack. If the PCs make it down onto the floor of the promenade, the steeders can easily leap down after them with charge attacks as well. The charge gains a +2 bonus to the attack roll, plus an additional +1 for attacking from above. Lances inflict double damage in a charge attack (the DM may also wish to increase the chance for knockdowns to occur following a charge attack). Guarding PCs with longer weapons than the 15-foot lances or

those who have spears set will gain the first attack. After the 2 remaining visible riders have charged, the 6 *invisible* riders also leap in charge attacks as well, one at a time as space on the balcony allows (the Large steeders take up one 5-foot by 5-foot square). The first *invisible* rider to charge can cause the attacked PC to check for surprise; a surprised PC cannot retaliate in the same round as he or she was surprised. Riders who have completed a charge throw down their lances and draw their long swords for melee combat, attacking in the average phase and delivering a d8 knockdown. Mounted adversaries gain +1 to attacks against unmounted characters, and unmounted characters suffer a -1 penalty to attacks aimed at mounted foes. Don't forget that the steeders themselves also attack in the average phase of each round, since they are Large creatures.

Ledge Garrison. Meanwhile, the horn call rouses the Duergar garrisons who are stationed in rooms 32 and 33 (8 Duergar in each). The Duergar respond 1d4 rounds after the general call-to-arms horn blast, issuing from both rooms. Duergar emerging from rooms 32 and 33 run towards any conflict they can see upon the balcony, *enlarging* to 10-foot heights (these Duergar only *enlarge* to L heights, thus taking up one combat square). If the PCs have made it to the floor of the bazaar 30 feet below, the emerging Duergar descend the spiral staircase as quickly as possible in an attempt to engage the PCs in melee combat. They refrain from using crossbows and similar missile weapons while the PCs are engaged with other Duergar. These garrison Duergar fight until dead or until their morale breaks. Keep in mind the **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations** described in area 2a regarding *enlarged* Duergar with ranseurs during this battle. The garrison Duergar attack in the slow phase, delivering a d10 knockdown.

Acolyte Priests. The Duergar steeder-riders and the garrison soldiers will be assisted by the 4 Duergar acolytes who are described fully under Room 52. The acolytes arrive up the stairs (area 36) onto the balcony 2d4 rounds after the call-to-arms goes out. The acolytes aid their fellow Duergar through use of their *cure light wounds*, *cure moderate wounds*, and *aid* spells as appropriate. They do not enter into the fray unless directly attacked by a PC. The spells *cure light wounds*, *cure moderate wounds*, and *aid* all go off in the average phase of any combat round they are cast. The acolytes' stats can be found under the heading for area 52, but for ease of reference they are also reprinted at the end of this heading.



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Wellfast. When Wellfast is alerted by the magical door ward or the call-to-arms, he immediately leaves his suite of rooms (areas 37–42), arriving on the ledge in front of the door to room 39. Wellfast studies the situation for one round before taking any actions. If he observes a battle in progress on the ledge, he screams instructions to his troops in response to the specific actions of the PCs. If the PCs make a break towards any of the various doors, Wellfast directs surviving troops to give chase, joining in the pursuit himself. If the party members manage to elude this tracking force, Wellfast puts all Duergar on full alert with orders to slay on sight any non-Duergar (many of the merchants are in trouble if this happens . . .). If the PCs make it to the bazaar level, the dwarf leaps from the ledge, trusting to his magical *armor of feather falling* to gently deposit him upon the ground below. Wellfast makes a stand in front of the door to area 59 if the PCs try to get past, aided by Naentoth and any surviving troops (who may get rear attacks if they come up from behind on PCs intent on battling Wellfast). If a single PC champion focuses his or her attention on Wellfast, the DM may wish to initiate a duel, as described in Chapter Two of *PLAYER'S OPTION: Combat & Tactics*. Duergar are highly lawful and do not interfere in the duel, waiting to see who emerges triumphant. If any other party members aid the dueling PC, the duel ends and nearby Duergar are free to assist their master in the melee. In the event that the party makes it past area 59 and the dwarven commander remains alive, he tracks the PCs into the Twisted Caverns and Inner Sanctum, turning up during an already dangerous encounter with murder in his eyes and froth on his lips. Wellfast is described fully under the description for room 41, which the DM needs to read prior to any conflict in order to fully utilize the character. Wellfast's battle axe attack occurs during the average phase of the combat round, delivering a d10 knockdown, but his ability to spit gibber-slugs (1 every 4 rounds) occurs during the fast phase of the combat round.

Naentoth. When Naentoth is alerted by the magical door ward or the call-to-arms, he first collects his crypt thing servant from room 51, then leaves the temple area (rooms 47–50), exiting on the bazaar level to the north of room 47. Naentoth positions himself in front of the door leading to area 59, as per Wellfast's orders, then targets his ranged spells such as *flamestrike* (phase: slow; knockdown die: d8), *recitation* (phase: slow), *silence 15-foot radius* (phase: average), and *dictate* (phase: average) as seems appropriate. If at any time it seems that the PCs have a real chance of winning the battle (or if the DM feels that

the PCs are in really dire straits), Naentoth switches sides, attacking the feared dwarf commander Wellfast from behind in an attempt to kill him quickly. If Naentoth is successful in his assassination attempt, he orders the surviving Duergar to cease their conflict against the PCs and allows the party to penetrate the mountain further if that is their intention. The Duergar warriors and commoners do not take Naentoth's commands unless Wellfast is slain. Naentoth is described fully under the entry for room 48, which the DM needs to read prior to any conflict in order to fully utilize the priest; note that he has 163 spell points, not the 155 usual to a priest of his Wisdom and level, due to the ceremony he performs daily in room 47b.

Bazaar Merchants & Shoppers. The call-to-arms sounding through the chamber signals the shopkeepers to quickly pack up their inventories and seal their tents the best they can. The merchants stay inside their tents during any battle, only entering melee to protect themselves or their wares. At the same time, about half of the Duergar shoppers panic, running pell-mell through the grand promenade towards their personal quarters (area 54). The other half of the shoppers mill excitedly towards wherever they see combat taking place, as annoying spectators are wont to do. If the battle moves down from the balcony to in amongst the tents of the bazaar, 1d2 common Duergar attempt to attack a random party member each combat round with personal weapons. The common Duergar are scattered throughout the entire chamber, and the DM is encouraged to scatter 5d10 markers signifying their presence over all the areas not covered by tents. These random attacks from the common Duergar should impart a wild, chaotic feel to the running battle, which should take place throughout the length and breadth of the grand promenade (room 31). Duergar commoners *enlarge* to their maximum heights if engaging in combat, of course.

Steeder-Riding Duergar (12): AC 4; MV 6 (12 when *enlarged*); HD 3+6; hp 21, 26, 27, 22, 21, 22, 20, 23, 23, 26, 20, 18; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8+1 (lance) or 1d8 (long sword), x2 when *enlarged*; SA *invisibility, enlargement* (won't use *enlargement* while riding a steeder), *stealth* (-2 penalty to opponents' surprise rolls), double damage on charge; SD +4 bonus to saving throws vs. spell, immune to paralysis, illusion/phantasm spells, and poison, rarely surprised (1-in-10 chance); SZ S (4-foot tall) or H (12-foot to 15-foot tall); ML elite (13); Int average to genius (8–18); AL LE; XP 975 each.

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- A. *Alheric (Duergar)*—nephelium sheets and rods
- B. *Gorsebad (Drow)*—goblin slaves
- C. *Maree (Duergar)*—medicinal lichen, fungi
- D. *Postasis (Duergar)*—gemstones, jewelry
- E. *Firthem (Duergar)*—cresch (lichen beer)
- F. *Iscath (Duergar)*—steeders
- G. *Iscarvo (Duergar)*—steeder accessories
- H. *Muntoth (Duergar)*—sweetmeats (rock candy, etc.)
- I. *Nanan (Derro)*—tribal handcrafts, decoratives
- J. *Thayos (deep gnome)*—spices, legumes
- K. *Caseus (deep gnome)*—grilled stirge parts
- L. *Mogari (Duergar)*—charms, fortunes read
- M. *Heszba (Drow)*—soapstone sculpture
- N. *Burana (illithid)*—slave accessories (shackles, whips, etc.)
- O. *Dawser (Duergar)*—household furniture
- P. *Ensercry (Duergar)*—household items (crockery, carpet, etc.)
- Q. *Gallipre (Drow)*—maps, compasses, chalk, & more!
- R. *Kasenah (Duergar)*—fried cavefish on papyrus towels
- S. *Mme. Besht (Duergar)*—Duergar adult entertainments
- T. *Belanow (Duergar)*—specializing in poisons
- U. *Thrak (Spriggan)*—pets (eyewings, dwarf gargoyles, etc.)
- V. *Cuva (Duergar)*—personalized mining implements
- W. *Kante (Duergar)*—games of chance, "Dwarfstones"
- X. *Mel (Duergar)*—decorative fungi
- Y. **Cazpar (human)*—kaffee (expensive upperworld stimulant)
- Z. **Rasteno (human)*—grain alcohol ("upperworld cordial")

*Note: human vendors have previously arrived circuitously via the underdeeps, not the Outer Gates.

Steeders (12): AC 4; MV 12; HD 4+4; hp 24 (average); THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (bite); SA ignores armor bonuses when attacks (Dexterity and magical bonuses to AC do apply), success indicates that prey is clung to with sticky secretions (Strength/Muscle or Dexterity/Balance check at -10 penalty required to pull free), victim suffers -2 penalties to attacks and damage while held and will be automatically bitten once per round; SZ L (8-foot in diameter); ML elite (13); Int low (7); AL CE; XP 975 each.

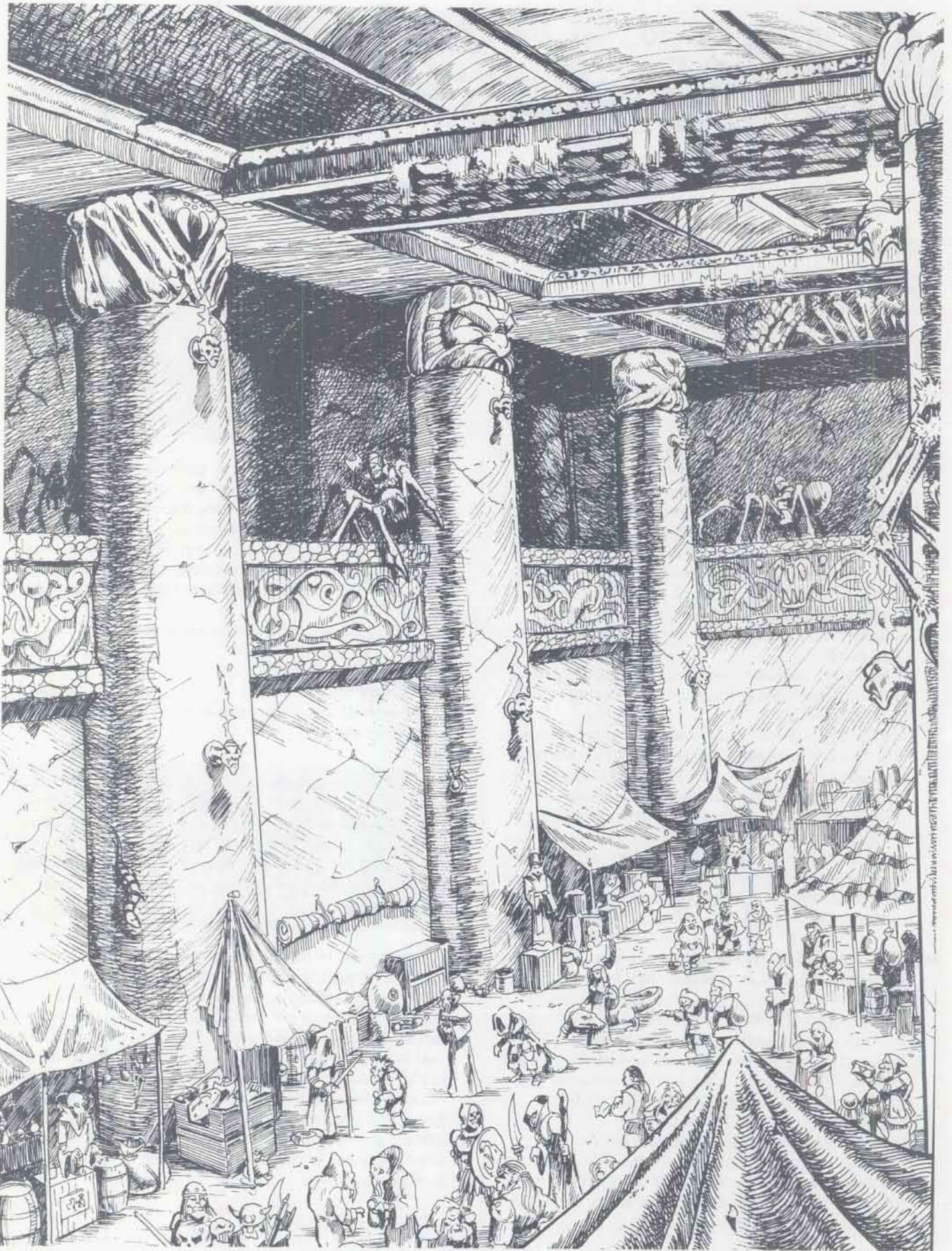
Garrison Duergar (16): AC 4; MV 6 (12 when enlarged); HD 3+6; hp 30 (average); THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2d4 (ranseur), x2 when enlarged; SA invisibility, enlargement, stealth (-2 penalty to opponents' surprise rolls); SD +4 bonus to saving throws vs. spell, immune to paralysis, illusion/phantasm spells, and poison, rarely surprised (1-in-10 chance); SZ S (4-foot tall) or L (10-foot tall); ML elite (13); Int average to genius (8-18); AL LE; XP 975 each.

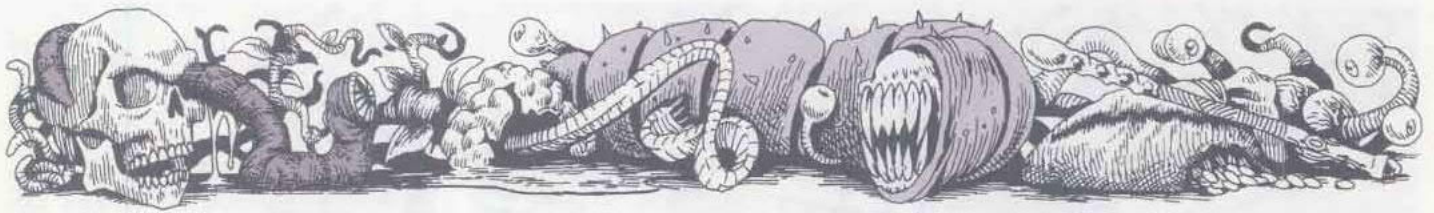
Common Duergar (10d10+20): AC 4; MV 6 (12 when enlarged); HD 1+2; hp 6 (average); THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (rock pick, no damage bonus when enlarged); SA invisibility, enlargement, stealth (-2 penalty to opponents' surprise rolls); SD +4 bonus to saving throws vs. spell, immune to paralysis, illusion/phantasm spells, and poison, rarely surprised (1-in-10 chance); SZ S (4-foot tall) or L (7-foot to 10-foot tall); ML unsteady (7); Int average to genius (8-18); AL LE; XP 350 each.

Duergar Clerics, 3rd-level (4): AC 3; MV 6 (12 when enlarged); HD 3+6; hp 21 (a), 22 (b), 24 (c), 30 (d); THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+1 (war hammer), x2 or x3 when enlarged; SA invisibility, enlargement, stealth (-2 penalty to opponents' surprise rolls); SD +4 bonus to saving throws vs. spell, immune to paralysis, illusion/phantasm spells, and poison, rarely surprised (1-in-10 chance); SZ S (4-foot tall) or H (12-foot to 15-foot tall); ML elite (13); Int average to genius (8-18); AL LE; XP 975 each. Special abilities: -1 bonus to Armor Class, *meld into stone* (once per day).

Individual Spells:

a. Gaswyn: (Wisdom 17: 35 spell points) [orison]; 1st—*cure light wounds* (x2), [major free]; 2nd—*cure moderate wounds** (x3).





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b. Hithum: (Wisdom 15: 30 spell points) [orison] (x2); 1st—cure light wounds (x4); 2nd—aid, cure moderate wounds*.

c. Bilyn Cos: (Wisdom 16: 35 spell points) [orison]; 1st—cure light wounds (x3), invisibility to undead; 2nd—aid, chant, cure moderate wounds*.

d. Dasdom: (Wisdom 14: 23 spell points) [orison] (x3); 1st—cure light wounds (x3), [major free].

*PLAYER'S OPTION:S&M

Naentoth, 9th-level Duergar Cleric: AC 3; MV 6 (12 when enlarged); hp 49; THAC0 16 (13 with war hammer +3); #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+4 (war hammer +3), x5 when enlarged; SA spells, invisibility, enlargement, stealth; SD spells, -1 bonus to Armor Class, +5 bonus to saving throws vs. spell, standard Duergar immunities, rarely surprised; SZ S (4½-foot tall) or H (15-foot tall); ML fearless (20); AL LE; XP 9,000. Str 15, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 17, Chr 10 (subabilities are equal to prime statistics).

Special Abilities: meld into stone, wall of stone (each once per day).

Standard Equipment: nephelium-forged chainmail and helm, nephelium-forged shield bearing symbol of broken crossbow.

Special Equipment: Fist of Laduguer (war hammer +3); Cloak of Earthstriding (wearer can pass through 1000 feet of stone per day), 5 Draughts of Laduguer's Tears (potions of extra healing), Baxter's Clasp (brooch of shielding with 83 points of protection remaining).

Spells (163 spell points): 1st—none; 2nd—cure moderate wounds* (x2), silence 15-foot radius; 3rd—animate dead, dictate* (x2), glyph of warding; 4th—recitation*; 5th—flamestrike (x3), impeding permission†.

*PLAYER'S OPTION:S&M †Tome of Magic

Wellfast, 9th-level dwarf Fighter: AC 0 (chainmail +3, ring of protection +1, Dexterity bonus); MV 6; hp 92; THAC0 12 (6 with battle axe +3, Strength bonus, and axe specialization); #AT 2; Dmg 1d8+8 (battle axe +3, Strength bonus, axe specialization); SA spit gibberslugs; SD +5 bonus to saving throws vs. wand/rod/staff, spell, and poison, +1 bonus to all other saving throws; SZ S (4½-foot tall); ML fearless (20); AL CE; XP 6,000. Str 18/56, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 9, Chr 5 (subabilities are equal to prime statistics).

Special Equipment: Preserver (battle axe +3, cure serious wounds on wielder thrice per day); Cliff saver (chain mail +3, acts as ring of feather falling thrice per day), Bue's Ring (ring of protection +1).

32 and 33. Garrison Barracks

A functional 20-foot by 30-foot chamber of stone holds eight small leather cots. A large table in the center of the room has eight stone stools pulled neatly up to it. A 10-foot by 10-foot area in the southern corner of the room, raised 1 foot up from the surrounding floor, is covered by a leather mat. Hanging on the wall near the strange platform are two sets of bulky-looking leather gloves.

Here the respective balcony garrisons stand their assigned watches. In time not spent playing bones at the table or sleeping in the cots, the Duergar competitively battle each other with contests of punching and wrestling on the padded platform. The leather gloves hanging upon the walls supplement the punching contests: whoever remains standing at the end of a conflict is hailed as the victor.

Stats for these guards can be found under the description for area 31.

34. Armory

The stone door to this room is normally locked. Wellfast carries the key.

This chamber is home to a multitude of weapons. Wall racks are adorned with all manner of piercing and slashing weapons, while standing shelves in the center of the room hold crushing and bludgeoning implements. One wall rack holds what appear to be finely carved and crafted wooden crossbows, with a large barrel of quarrels at the foot of the rack.

This room holds excess weaponry which has not yet been assigned to a Duergar or that stand ready to serve as replacements for broken weapons. Many of the wall weapons are ranseurs and heavy steeder lances; however, there is also a good selection of axes and long swords. The maces and rock-picks in the center shelves are rarely passed out, and a fine patina of dust has settled for them, as they are paid little heed. The bow rack holds 4 crossbows +1, Drow-crafted and therefore likely to lose their dweomer after exposure to daylight. The quarrels are of common manufacture.



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35. Steeder Post

The ledge widens into a large, open chamber. Large stone vats hang on every available wall at a height of 3 feet. Each vat seems to be filled with a jellied liquid of questionable origin which smells horrible. There are iron rings in the walls above each of the vats, and a stone counter in the center of the room holds complicated-looking saddle gear and odd-looking brushes and other implements.

Duergar who are on balcony patrol bring their steeders into this room every couple of hours to rest, feed, and otherwise attend to their mount's needs. The steeders are fed a filthy concoction of jellied vermin and other small underdeep creatures which smells awful in close quarters. The saddles can be fitted to a steeder by those with a proficiency in Steeder Riding. The brushes, clippers, and leg-shoes scattered on the counter also see frequent use by the riders attending their mounts.

36. Stairs

These stairs lead down in three flights to area 45, adjacent to the acolytes' quarters.

37. Remnants

An assortment of paintings in marble frames adorn the walls of this room. The paintings seemingly depict upper-world landscapes and cities. In the southwestern corner of the room stands an easel with an unfinished work. The thick layer of dust on the stool and easel indicates that the painter has not taken up the brush for an extended period of time. A paint-spattered apron is draped over the stone stool which is pulled up to the easel.

Wellfast used to spend much time in this room, attempting to lose himself in the intricacies of painting. However, as Madreus's "influence" over him (as described under area 41) grew, he came to spend less and less time painting until he ceased completely. The finished and framed paintings all are signed "Wellfast Brightblade" with dwarvish (not Duergar) characters. PCs searching for clues concerning Nigel's whereabouts should recognize this as one of the names of Nigel's companions on the diary scrap they found earlier. The child of Nigel can remember meeting Wellfast

long ago, specifically because of Wellfast's uncanny talent with both an axe and a paintbrush. If the PCs search behind the paintings, they find a scrap of parchment thrust into the stone frame of the painting showing a serene lake. The dwarvish writing on the parchment is brief:

Nigel betrayed me, betrayed Quaren, for knowledge. His Master is also mine. It cannot be otherwise, for I am now of two minds . . . Only while painting can I push the writhing nightmares and oozing daydreams away . . . although I find that I am beginning to like them.

Wellfast scribed this note during one of his last attempts at painting.

38. Trophies

This elongated room seems to display various hunting trophies. The skin on many of the preserved trophies seems to be strangely loose and twisted in places. Many underdeep beasts are represented in the room, along with a fair sampling of goblinoids and Duergar, and even a preserved Drow. The expressions on the humanoid trophies' faces all bear the unrelieved rictus of utter horror.

After Wellfast gave up his hobby of painting, he found that hunting was a great way to "kill" time. All the trophies in this room were killed through the use of Wellfast's alienoid-derived power to deposit gibberslugs into living bodies (see area 41 for a full description). When the gestating eggs came to term, all that remained of the "pregnant" host creatures were skin husks, some of which Wellfast has had stuffed and mounted in this chamber. PCs who investigate any of the trophies find that they are filled with stone dust and loose earth. Some of the stuffed Duergar in the chamber were those Wellfast killed in his takeover bid, including Grymange (the old high priest) and Selvandel (the rightful chief of the Duergar colony). The prominent display of these two deposed authority figures is enough to keep most of the present Duergar in line.

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39. Wellfast's Reception

Draped on the southern wall of this room is a huge square section of black scale-hide. Whatever the nature of the beast of which the skin was once a part, it must have been huge. The room also contains a large desk carved of stone set next to the eastern wall. Upon the desk are various sheets of parchment and writing utensils arranged in a neat and orderly fashion. The Duergar warrior sitting behind the desk looks up and frowns as the door opens.

Gaskel the Duergar serves as Wellfast's personal secretary and mouthpiece. Other Duergar who have business must first go through Gaskel, which seems a good arrangement for all concerned. Only matters of the highest priority make it to Wellfast himself. The secretary attempts to physically restrain anyone who tries to barge past without an appointment. If the PCs rush into the room in the midst of a large combat, Gaskel will be standing near the door *enlarged* and *invisible*, battle axe in hand, ready to defend his desk from the types of messes which usually occur during melees. Gaskel carries a nephelium-forged *battle axe +2* enruned as "Crystal Cleaver" and wears nephelium-forged *chain mail +1* simply enruned as the "Links of Gaskel." Due to his position, he normally has 10d10 gp plus 1d10 100 gp gems in the large pouch at his belt.

The desk top holds various memos from Wellfast, penned by Gaskel, relating to mining, troop morale, and other mundane issues. Many of them seem to be mere exercises in authority, affecting hardly anything with their pronouncements. The single desk drawer must first be *reduced* slightly in order to be pulled out (its edges have been designed that way, as have many common items found in Duergar households). The drawer contains a plethora of older documents, in nature the same as those on the desk top.

- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** When *enlarged* to Huge size, Gaskel abides by the same **PLAYER'S OPTION** considerations described previously for *enlarged* Duergar.

Gaskel, Duergar warrior-secretary: AC 3; MV 6 (12); HD 3+6; hp 29; THAC0 17 (15 with *battle axe +2*); #AT 1; Dmg 1d8+2 (*battle axe +2*), x3 when *enlarged*; SA *invisibility, enlargement, stealth* (-2 penalty to opponents' surprise rolls); SD +4 bonus to saving throws vs. spell, immune to paralysis, illusion/phantasm spells,

and poison, rarely surprised (1-in-10 chance); SZ S (4-foot, 2 inches tall) or H (15-foot tall); ML champion (15); AL LE; XP 975. Str 13, Dex 8, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 14, Chr 9 (subabilities are equal to prime statistics).

Special Equipment: Crystal Cleaver (*battle axe +2*), Links of Gaskel (*chain mail +1*).

40. War Room

A massive stone table inlaid with tiles of cloudy glass dominates this room. The tiles have been individually painted so that together they form an extended map. Stone counters painted red have been placed in various places upon its surface. Along the edges of the tile map, a border of swirling tentacles and eyes has been added to the stone by a proficient painter. Stone stools stand around the edges of the table, ready for use. There is a stone door, painted black, in the eastern wall.

Here Wellfast has created a nephelium map of the upper-level of the Duergar complex. The red markers indicate garrisons of six or more Duergar, corresponding to the places where Duergar forces are positioned as described in this text. The map also shows the proper route through the Duergar colony to the inner complex, labeled on the map as "The Twisted Caverns." PCs who study this map can use the information to find their way more quickly, but no routes on the map are entirely clear of red garrison markers.

41. Wellfast's Quarters

The floor, walls, and ceiling of this room have all been painted utterly black. In the center of the floor is a large cave bear skin of purest white. A simple glass stool sits upon the rug. A glass bed frame of disquieting design crouches against the southern wall. At the foot of the bed stands a marble-topped bedstand holding a few small personal items, its glass legs shaped like rigid snakes. A small wooden rolltop desk stands closed against the western wall, while opposite against the eastern wall stands a closed stone wardrobe, also painted black. There are doors in the room's northern and western walls.

Wellfast is one and the same as Wellfast Brightblade, companion to long-lost Nigel. Much has changed since his brave days of adventuring in the light of the upper-

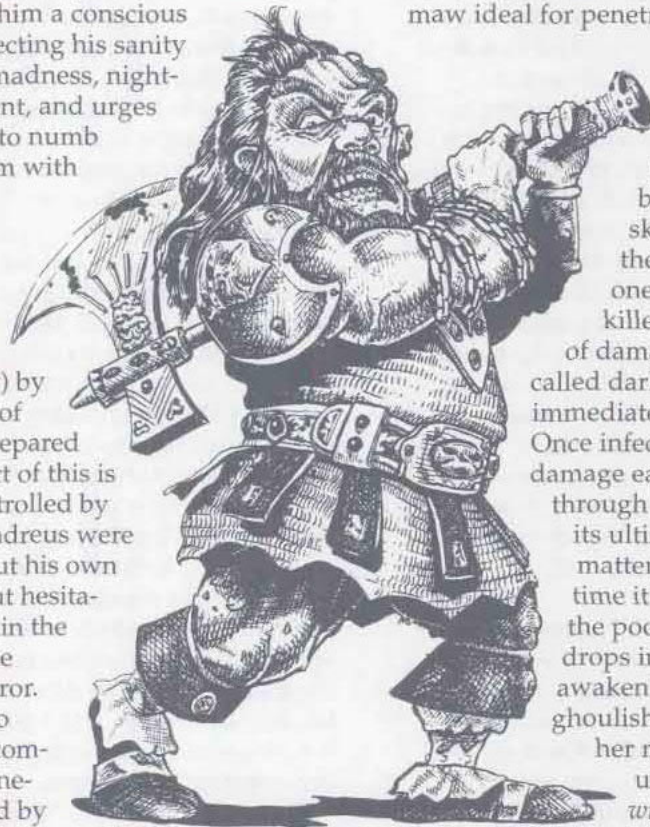
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world, however. Wellfast now spends much time here sitting on his stool contemplating his black walls. When he followed Nigel to Firestorm Peak twenty-seven years ago, he never dreamed that they would find the horror of Madreus and his Lunatic Gods in the center of the mountain. He was never more shocked than when Nigel betrayed him and Quaren (Derek the Warcaller had been lost earlier to a deadly Duergar trap) for the sick teachings offered by Madreus. He never learned what became of Quaren, but in his rare lucid moments he still curses the hour he was implanted with the gibberslug. The alien slug chewed into his brain case, making him a conscious puppet of Madreus and infecting his sanity with daydreams of raving madness, nightmares of unspeakable content, and urges which used to shake him into numb abnegation but lately fill him with an unholy glee.

The gibberslug has effectively subsumed one of the lobes of Wellfast's brain. The process of transformation was halted before its final culmination (see below) by a special dilute formulation of the darkscape mushroom prepared by Madreus. The direct effect of this is that the dwarf is utterly controlled by the words of Madreus. If Madreus were to command him to pluck out his own eyes, he would do so without hesitation, even though deep within the remnants of his own mind he would be shuddering in horror. His current commands are to hold power in the Duergar complex, see to it that no one penetrates the inner complex held by Madreus, and slay outright intruders from the upperworld. He long ago accomplished the task of taking command of the Duergar complex. Now all that remains is to keep out intruders, whoever they might be. His compulsions are so strong that the dwarf would not physically hesitate to slay even close companions or family members of old.

Wellfast underwent a few physical changes following the fracturing of his brain. The left side of his head is horribly swollen and his hair there is matted with dark

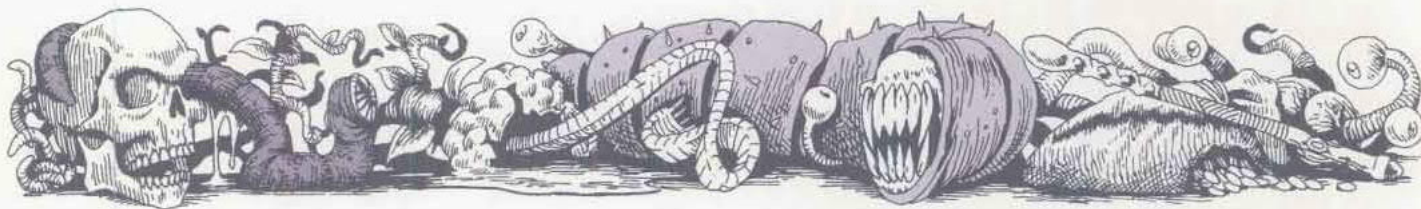
beslimed scales. More disturbing is the way that Wellfast's flesh visibly moves as small creatures skitter beneath his skin (gibberslugs). The Duergar under his command are terrified of him, whispering horrific tales concerning the fates of those who have crossed the dwarf. They have all seen or heard the consequences of being injected with one of Wellfast's "skin-pets." Wellfast can spit (treat range as a dagger) a burrowing gibberslug at a melee target in addition to any normal action once every 4 rounds in the very fast phase. Gibberslugs resemble bloated leeches, the pulsing pink color of just-born hairless mice, complete with a nasty maw ideal for penetrating skin or soft tissue. Wellfast



needs to make a successful attack roll to hit his targets. Once hit, characters who fail a saving throw vs. death magic are unable to brush away or shake off the gibberslug before it easily penetrates skin or hide. If a flame is applied to the gibberslug's point of entry within one round, the slug is automatically killed (and the PC takes 1d4+4 points of damage). Ingestion of the mushroom called darkscape (found in area 73) also immediately kills a burrowing gibberslug. Once infected, the PC suffers 1d4 points of damage each round as the slug bores its way through the soft tissue towards the brain, its ultimate goal. The slug reaches gray matter in 1d6+5 combat rounds, at which time it melds itself to the brain stem of the poor shmuk. The victim immediately drops into a sleep from which none can awaken him or her, as nightmares of ghoulish intensity begin to ravage his or her mind. At this point the PC becomes unrecoverable by any means save *wish*. The nightmares are just a side effect of the gestating slug, which

quickly subsumes the host's brain, then his or her body. When the process is complete (in 1d20+4 hours), a fully grown gibberling emerges from the husk of skin left behind by the victim. The gibberling has no memories of the former victim (but it does slightly resemble him or her) and will immediately rush to attack the nearest living creature not of its own kind.

The PC who, as a child, knew Wellfast will recognize him despite his new look. Although it is unlikely in the



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chaos of battle that much meaningful information can be exchanged, Wellfast would not be adverse to shouting terse answers to battlefield questions, while at the same time doing his frenzied best to slay the questioner. Wellfast only knows sketchy details of the truth about the Vast Gate and the Lunatic Gods, really only the words themselves and the fact that they are connected with his current alien-infected state.

All the "glass" items in the boxed room description are, of course, nephelium. The personal items on the bedstand include a brush and beard comb, a nephelium glass half-filled with drinking water, a nephelium nail clipper, and a small cylindrical lodestone embedded in a larger piece of floatable cork. The rolltop desk is quite a rarity, hailing from the upperworld via circuitous underdeep routes. It is locked (Wellfast carries the key on his person) and trapped with a needle coated with type-A poison (anyone pricked suffers 15 points of damage on a failed saving throw vs. poison). The desk contains hundreds of blank memo sheets as well as 2 quills and a mostly empty stoppered inkwell. Hidden amongst the sheets is an unrolled scroll labeled "Fyrd'M's Demonic Defense" (a scroll of *protection vs. possession*) that Wellfast secretly procured in the bazaar in an effort to free himself. Unfortunately, Wellfast can't read magic, and the scroll wouldn't work anyway because the dwarf is transformed (half his brain is alien protoplasm), not "possessed" in the normal sense of the word. The wardrobe contains various cloaks, tunics, pants, and boots of dwarven size. A secret door hidden at the back of the wardrobe leads to room 42.

Wellfast, 9th-level dwarf Fighter: AC 0 (*chainmail* +3, *ring of protection* +1, Dexterity bonus); MV 6; hp 92; THAC0 12 (6 with *battle axe* +3, Strength bonus, and axe specialization); #AT 2; Dmg 1d8+8 (*battle axe* +3, Strength bonus, axe specialization); SA spit gibber-slugs; SD +5 bonus to saving throws vs. wand/rod/staff, spell, and poison, +1 bonus to all other saving throws; SZ S (4½-foot tall); ML fearless (20); AL CE; XP 6,000. Str 18/56, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 9, Chr 5 (subabilities are equal to prime statistics).

Special Equipment: Preserver (*battle axe* +3, *cure serious wounds* on wielder thrice per day); Cliffsaver (*chain mail* +3, acts as *ring of feather falling* thrice per day), Bue's Ring (*ring of protection* +1).

42. Secret Room

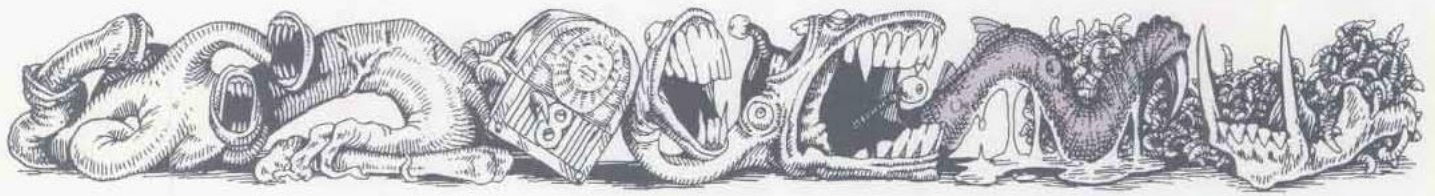
This small chamber hidden behind the wardrobe contains a large leather sack, a red crystal rod, and a single small chest of exquisite craftsmanship carved of dark wood and inlaid with marble designs. A gold key plate inscribed with mystic runes is attached to the front of the chest. A thick layer of dust lies over all.

The crystal rod looks as if it is composed of red sapphire; this is one of the three components which are all necessary to change the focus of the Vast Gate. Madreus realized that if the components were scattered, each would be that much less likely to be collected and used upon the gate. Wellfast keeps the sapphire component here, guarding it as per Madreus' command. Madreus keeps one component himself, while the third is guarded by the deepspawn in room 74 of the Twisted Caverns. Wellfast knows that the crystal rod is necessary to the working of the Gate, and also knows that a "real nasty from the Far Realm" guards one other component, but he does not know that Madreus has the final component.

The chest was recovered from the remains of an illithid caravan which was slaughtered by unknown agents. A Duergar hunting party ranging further afield than normal stumbled upon the scene only to find the recently slain illithids. The Duergar assumed Drow were responsible, but it seemed strange that the personal belongings of the 'flayers had not been looted. The Duergar promptly took care of it, and one of the items they recovered was the chest now in this room. No key could be found, and the lock could not be picked. It seemed shamefully unlawful to smash such a well-designed chest just to see what it contained, so the leader of the hunting party gave it to Wellfast as a gift. Wellfast locked it in this secret room and promptly forgot about it, never investigating its contents.

The chest is locked (-35% penalty on attempts to Pick Locks) but not trapped. The chest contains a book entitled "Quicken The Mind" in illithid braille (a *tome of clear thought*). A search of the interior may detect a concealed compartment containing a wand inscribed with the illithid word "K'dlid" (a *wand of negation*), as well as a pouch containing emerald-set earrings worth 450 gp apiece.

The sack contains Wellfast's personal wealth, not that he has need of it in his current state: 1,223 sp, 1,195 gp, and 5 gems worth 200 gp apiece.



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43. Stairs

These stairs lead down in three flights to area 46, adjacent to Naentoth's quarters.

44. Empty

Behind the stone door at the foot of the stairs is a small room. It contains a few scattered building blocks of stone, a discarded trowel and hammer, and much dust.

This chamber was once part of the temple rooms to the east. In recent years, however, new construction walled it off, and now no good use has been found for it by the Duergar, save as a forgotten storeroom for unneeded building materials and tools.

45. Stairs

These stairs lead up to area 36, adjacent to the ledge.

46. Stairs

These stairs lead up to area 43, adjacent to Wellfast's quarters.

47a. Main Temple

Ornate double doors of glass stand to the north of this large chamber of worship, counterpoint to the massive altar of obsidian on the opposite side of the room in a semicircular alcove. There is also a stone door in both the eastern and western walls. Columns of native stone line an inlaid path of red marble from the doors to the altar. Each of the four corners of the temple holds a 15-foot-tall red marble statue of a charismatic but evil-looking dark dwarf in various poses of dignified contemplation. A large fire burns in a sunken fire pit directly before the altar, its flames tinged with blackness. The chamber seems to be overly warm but otherwise comfortable.

This is the public temple of Laduguer, the grim god worshipped by the Duergar of Firestorm Peak. Naentoth and his acolytes hold ceremonies for the pious here once every 15 days. At those times the chamber is filled (standing room only) with chanting Duergar as Naentoth performs the mysteries of the Duergar faith at the altar. The acolytes assist Naentoth as necessary during the ceremonies and collect tithes from the congregation.

The statues are all of the stern dwarven god

Laduguer. Apart from being masterpieces of craft, they possess no supernatural or interesting traits. However, the fire in the shallow pit before the altar burns magically, requiring no fuel (the black tinge to the flame tips is the side effect). In all other respects, the fire acts in a normal manner—i.e., flammable items placed into the blaze will burn.

The altar is carved from a single piece of obsidian, and the grim visage of Laduguer is carved in bas-relief on its front. On the surface of the altar are the impressions of two humanoid hand prints. When one sworn to Laduguer's service places his or her hands in them, it triggers the secret door behind the altar leading to the room behind (room 47b), causing it to open. When anyone who is not a priest of the dwarvish god places his or her hands within the prints, the cavern visage on the front of the altar can be seen to scowl, a heartbeat before the fire pit briefly flares up with the force of a 6d6 fireball, affecting everyone in the temple. The fire dies back down to normal dimensions immediately following the flare-up, and the secret door remains closed.

47b. Chamber of Meditation

This secret door can be found normally, but it is magically locked (treat as if a wizard lock cast at 10th level were affecting it). Only the appropriate palm prints or more potent magic will open this door.

The secret door opens to reveal a narrow chamber beyond, tiled with an alternating pattern of obsidian and red marble. Each tile piece is 1-foot square, and each depicts a face of the god Laduguer with various expressions ranging between contemplation and rage. A simple 3-foot by 3-foot brown leather mat lies upon the floor.

Only Naentoth knows of the existence of this chamber (the miners and engineer who carved it were killed in an unfortunate "hunting accident"). The tiles have been individually enchanted so that the aggregated sum of their magical emanations focus upon the center of the room, where the leather mat is situated. Anyone who spends 1 turn meditating upon the mat feels spiritually energized. More practically, any priest so doing will also be endowed with an extra 2nd-level spell or two 1st-level spells of the character's choice above and beyond what he or she can normally memorize. Therefore if a priest could normally only memorize three 1st-level spells, meditation in this chamber would temporarily give him

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or her access to a fourth and a fifth 1st-level spell, or to one 2nd-level spell (even if he or she normally could not cast at that level). Once the extra spells are cast, the priest is once again restricted to his or her normal casting restrictions. Only meditation in this room can once again give access to the additional extra spells. This chamber is usable by the same person once per day.

- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** If the *PLAYER'S OPTION: Spells & Magic* spell point system is in use, the meditating priest gains 8 spell points, allowing him or her to memorize either two major fixed 1st-level spells, one major fixed 2nd-level spell plus two orisons (priestly cantrips), or access to one major free 1st-level spell. Alternatively, the priest might energize one minor fixed slot plus two orisons with the extra spell points.

48. Naentoth's Study

A large desk fashioned of red marble stands in the center of this room. The four tiled walls of the chamber depict a wraparound scene of breathtaking cavern geology. The painting on the northern wall is partially obscured by a stone bookshelf which is completely filled with leather tomes and scroll cases. There is a stone door in each of the eastern, western, and southern walls.

Naentoth is 70% likely to be found here perusing theological texts or composing tracts praising the greatness of Laduguer, unless he has been alerted by the door ward or the call-to-arms, in which case his actions are described under the heading for area 31. PCs who surprise him here in his chambers can expect a lethal response by Naentoth, who screams for the temple crypt thing he keeps in room 51 and his acolytes in area 52, who respond (if still alive) in 1d4 rounds.

As a priest of Laduguer, Naentoth strongly resents the fairly recent arrival of Wellfast and his takeover of the Duergar colony (even though Naentoth's predecessor was killed at that time, allowing Naentoth to become the high priest). If Naentoth could manage it safely, he would do away with Wellfast for the greater glory of Laduguer. However, in all the plans he has devised so far, his safety has not been guaranteed, so Naentoth waits. It is possible that the party's intrusion could provide him with the opportunity he needs to finally finish off Wellfast when the dwarf commander least expects it. See Naentoth's *PLAYER'S OPTION* entry under the entry

for area 31. If Naentoth is losing a battle where Wellfast is not present, he calls out for a parley, telling the party that he will assist them in an effort to take out Wellfast if they spare his life. Being lawful, Naentoth will abide by whatever agreement is made, if any; remember that his chief goal is to preserve the Duergar colony at all costs.

The desk top is empty of documents, holding only a neatly arranged quill and inkwell. The single drawer in the desk holds blank scrolls of paper, suitable for writing (but not magical writing). The shelves contain various tomes in a variety of languages on the theological topics of stone, fire, the glorious destiny of the Duergar, etc. There is also one very funny, scurrilous volume on the cowardice and ineptitude of the surface dwarves (from a Duergarish point of view). Wellfast would kill Naentoth if he knew of this book's presence, but given the warrior's total lack of interest in Duergar theology the cleric is quite safe. The scroll cases hold many years worth of religious tracts written by Naentoth and his predecessor, Grymange, but nothing of real interest to the PCs (unless they have a special interest in Duergar lore or dwarven theology).

Naentoth, 9th-level Duergar cleric: AC 3; MV 6 (12 when enlarged); hp 49; THAC0 16 (13 with *war hammer* +3); #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+4 (*war hammer* +3), x5 when enlarged; SA spells, *invisibility*, *enlargement*, *stealth* (-2 penalty to opponents' surprise rolls); SD spells, -1 bonus to Armor Class, +5 bonus to saving throws vs. spell, immune to paralysis, illusion/phantasm spells, and poison, rarely surprised (1-in-10 chance); SZ S (4½-foot tall) or H (15-foot tall); ML fearless (20); AL LE; XP 9,000. Str 15, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 17, Chr 10 (subabilities are equal to prime statistics).

Special Abilities: *meld into stone*, *wall of stone* (each once per day).

Standard Equipment: nephelium-forged chainmail and helm, nephelium-forged shield bearing symbol of broken crossbow.

Special Equipment: *Fist of Laduguer* (*war hammer* +3); *Cloak of Earthstriding* (wearer can pass through 1000 feet of stone per day), 5 *Draughts of Laduguer's Tears* (*potions of extra healing*), *Baxter's Clasp* (*brooch of shielding* with 83 points of protection remaining).

Spells (163 spell points): 1st—none; 2nd—*cure moderate wounds** (x2), *silence 15-foot radius*; 3rd—*animate dead*, *dictate** (x2), *glyph of warding*; 4th—*recitation**; 5th—*flamestrike* (x3), *impeding permission*†.

**PLAYER'S OPTION: S&M* †*Tome of Magic*

49. Naentoth's Quarters

A *glyph of warding* is drawn upon the door to room 49. It safely admits only those who truly worship the Duergar god Laduguer. Those who attempt to open the door and are not of the proper faith are subject to 9d4 points of electrical damage (save for half damage).

A tastefully decorated bed chamber furnished with items of only the finest craftsmanship greets your eyes. In the center of the room, an ornate bed frame of carved marble holds a huge mattress padded with black satin pillows. A stone wardrobe stands behind the bed on the eastern wall. The walls are undecorated, but various sculptures and other miscellaneous items are arranged artfully around the chamber, either free-standing or on small tables.

Naentoth spends only a minimum amount of time in this room each day, just enough to catch enough sleep to get by on. The wardrobe contains many priestly cassocks of dwarven size, as well as a couple of sets of sleeping clothes, complete with nightcaps. Most sculptures are normal in all respects, excepting an ivory sculpted goat (this is a *figurine of wondrous power: The Goat of Terror* with 2 charges left). The other item of interest looks to be an intricately carved stoppered iron vase—in fact an *iron flask* for which the command word has been forgotten. The *flask* currently contains an insane efreeti who attacks anyone so foolish as to release it. Naentoth does not know the true nature of these items, displaying them only for their beauty of craftsmanship.

Beneath the bed is a locked black lacquered wooden chest. It is protected by (surprise, surprise) a *glyph of warding*, which does 9d4 points of cold damage to whoever attempts to pick the lock. Inside the chest are 389 sp, 168 gp, and 5 gems worth 200 gp apiece.

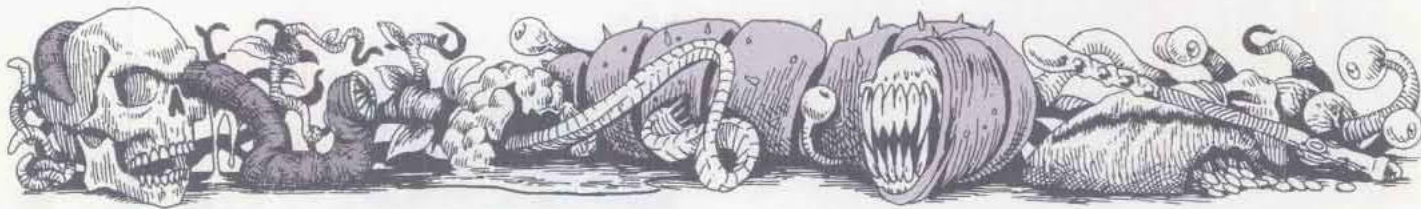
The Efreeti: AC 2; MV 9, fly 24 (B); HD 10; hp 80; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg 3d8 (huge scimitar); SA see below; SD immune to normal flames; SW insane; SZ L (12-foot tall); ML fearless (20); Int very (12); AL LE; XP 8,000. Special abilities: create illusion, *detect magic*, *enlarge*, *gaseous form*, *invisibility*, *polymorph self*, *wall of fire* (once per day), produce flame, *pyrotechnics* (at will).



50. Sacristy

This chamber is dimly lit by a brazier in the southwestern corner. By the flickering light you can see a large counter on the northern wall. The counter holds dozens of small-to-medium size stone vessels, each of which has a shield-with-broken-crossbow motif carved upon it in bas-relief. Hooks on the various wall surfaces hold long robes which also bear the same motif. There is a stone door in each of the eastern, western, and southern walls.

This room is consecrated to hold the sacred vessels and vestments of Laduguer's faith. The "shield and broken crossbow" motif is the symbol of the Duergar god. If undue noise is made in this room, the temple caretaker will investigate from room 51.



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51. Temple Caretaker

This bare room is small, cold, and lightless. Deep scratches scar the stone in ugly streaks. Opposite the door is a stone stool, upon which sits a horribly emaciated figure, its eyes burning with a hellish light all their own. The figure speaks but one word in a deep, dry-throated rattle: "Revelations."

This crypt thing was created by Grymange (Naentoth's predecessor) to assist in temple services, guard the temple against unlawful intrusion, and to keep the place clean (a stone cabinet behind the stool holds buckets, mops, and sponges). When the high priesthood passed to Naentoth, he also gained control over the temple custodian. Obviously, the crypt thing will not be found here if it has already been destroyed by the PCs in an earlier altercation (see the descriptions of rooms 31 and 48). If the crypt thing is here, it gives the watchword, "Revelations." If the password, "shield and bow" is not spoken within the round, the crypt thing attacks. If the proper password is given, it assumes the party has legitimate business within the temple and only troubles them if they break something or make a mess (or if commanded by an acolyte or the high priest). The first attack of this crypt thing will be an attempt to *teleport* the party 60 feet above the floor of the Twisted Cavern (room 71). It then resorts to *melee* against those unaffected by the expulsion.

- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** Both the spell-like power of the crypt thing and its claw attacks are resolved in the fast phase of each combat round; the claws deliver a d4 knockdown die.

Crypt thing (1): AC 3; MV 12; HD 6; hp 44; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (claws); SA *teleport* group; SD immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, and similar spells, cannot be turned, immune to normal weapons; SZ M (6-foot tall); ML fanatic (18); Int very (11); AL N; XP 975.

52. Acolytes' Chambers

This 40-foot hallway provides access to six doors; two to the north, two to the south, and one each on the eastern and western terminuses of the passage. Both the northern and southern sets of doors are standing open.

The open doors lead to the private cells of each of the clerics who currently serve Naentoth as acolytes of Laduguer. They spend their private time here in their individual cells in meditation, prayer, and study. Each hopes to one day succeed Naentoth as the high priest, but in the meanwhile hard work and humility are what each can expect as the fruit of their religious beliefs. The acolytes will respond to a general call-to-arms (see room 31 for details) or to Naentoth's yells for assistance (see room 48 for details) as a group. If not already killed in combat in some previous encounter with the PCs, each will be found in his or her individual cell (areas 52a through 52d). Their various hit points and spells are distinguished below.

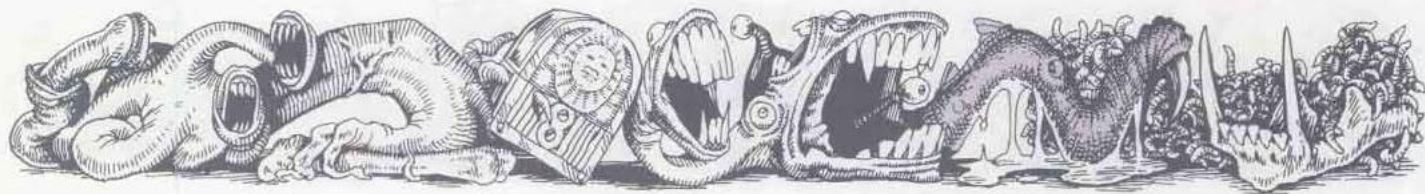
- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** *Enlarged* Duergar acolytes armed with war hammers add 1 to their reach and are thus able to threaten 10 feet (two 5-foot squares) in their facing direction. They attack in the slow phase, delivering a d8 knockdown die. The sound of a fight in one cell brings the remaining acolytes out into the hallway to investigate.

Duergar Clerics, 3rd-level (4): AC 3; MV 6 (12 when *enlarged*); HD 3+6; hp 21 (a), 22 (b), 24 (c), 30 (d); THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+1 (war hammer), x2 or x3 when *enlarged*; SA *invisibility*, *enlargement*, *stealth* (-2 penalty to opponents' surprise rolls); SD +4 bonus to saving throws vs. spell, immune to paralysis, illusion/phantasm spells, and poison, rarely surprised (1-in-10 chance); SZ S (4-foot tall) or H (12-foot to 15-foot tall); ML elite (13); Int average to genius (8-18); AL LE; XP 975 each. Special abilities: -1 bonus to Armor Class, *meld into stone* (once per day).

Individual Spells:

- Gaswyn:** (Wisdom 17: 35 spell points). [*orison*]; 1st—*cure light wounds* (x2), [*major free*]; 2nd—*cure moderate wounds** (x3).
- Hithum:** (Wisdom 15: 30 spell points). [*orison*] (x2); 1st—*cure light wounds* (x4); 2nd—*aid*, *cure moderate wounds**.
- Blyyn Cos:** (Wisdom 16: 35 spell points). [*orison*]; 1st—*cure light wounds* (x3), *invisibility to undead*; 2nd—*aid*, *chant*, *cure moderate wounds**.
- Dasdom:** (Wisdom 14: 23 spell points). [*orison*] (x3); 1st—*cure light wounds* (x3), [*major free*].

***PLAYER'S OPTION:** S&M



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53a. The Pub

This room is filled with long, low stone tables and benches. A wide counter on the west wall holds large barrels which have been set up to dispense liquid. A strong odor of spilled beer—apparently the beverage of choice among the many Duergar assembled here—fills the chamber.

Many Duergar spend their free hours here in the pub, drinking and socializing among their own kind. There is no bartender; the patrons are expected to provide their own mugs and to help themselves from the tapped kegs. Normally 2d10 Duergar can be found here, but if the call-to-arms has sounded within the last 24 hours of the party's entry into this room, the tables will be vacant. If the PCs do encounter Duergar in this area, the drunken Duergar insist that the newcomers join them in a drinking contest. Violent actions on the part of the PCs bring a like response from the revelers.

The door in the southern wall leads to a small garderobe or privy.

- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** *Enlarged* Duergar pub patrons armed with rock picks add 1 to their reach and are thus able to threaten 10 feet (two 5-foot squares) in their facing direction. They attack in the slow phase, delivering a d8 knockdown die. All the gathered Duergar will attack the party in the face of PC aggression.

Duergar (2d10): AC 4; MV 6 (12 when *enlarged*); HD 1+2; hp 6 (average); THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (rock pick, no bonus when *enlarged*); SA *invisibility, enlargement*; SD +4 bonus to saving throws vs. spell, immune to paralysis, illusion/phantasm spells, and poison; SW drunk; SZ S (4-foot tall) or L (7- to 10-foot tall); ML unsteady (7); Int average to genius (8–18); AL LE; XP 350 each.

53b. Dark Dwarf Brewing

The short stone passage opens into a high chamber of unadorned stone. A sour, malty odor hangs in the air, seemingly emanating from the liquid furiously boiling in a massive iron pot suspend over a roaring fire in the southeastern corner of the chamber. Along the remainder of the eastern wall are shelves which hold bulging burlap bags. Along the southern wall are 3 large cylindrical stone vats,

each 5-feet tall and 3-feet wide, closed with stone lids. A glassy-looking device rises out of the center of each lid. The entire western wall serves as a holding bay for dozens of barrels. Finally, the center of the room holds a stone table upon which various hoses, pipes, and funnels are visible. Beside the entrance passage is a stone door in the northern wall.

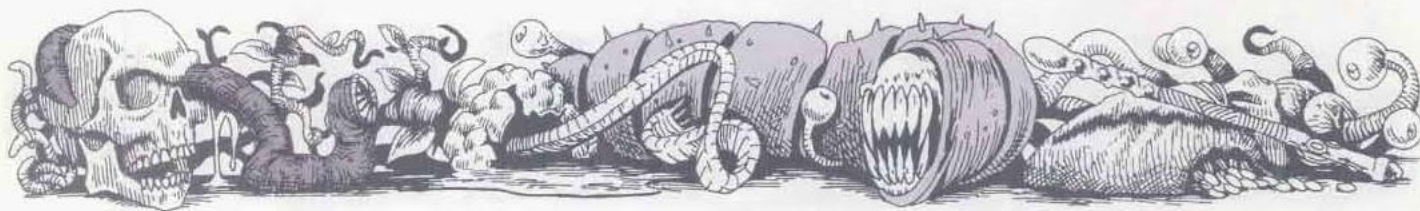
This chamber is where the *cresch*, the Duergar ale, is brewed by Ekward the master brewer. The large pot is used to malt specially gathered mushroom spores (which are stored in the burlap sacks on the wall shelves) and to boil the wort (using other herbal additives also found on the shelves). After the boil, Ekward transfers the contents of the pot into the large stone vats in the southern portion of the room. There, each wort ferments for 4 to 8 weeks, the excess gasses being passed out through the fermentation locks attached to the lids. Fermentation locks are designed to allow the gases of fermentation to escape without permitting contaminating organisms or oxygen back in. When fermentation is complete, the *cresch* is decanted into the barrels (composed of rigid mushroom fiber), where it is aged for a couple of weeks before drinking (although if the supply runs low in room 53a, the Duergar figure that green *cresch* tastes better than none at all). Ekward in 95% likely to be found here.

Ekward (Duergar brewmaster): AC 4; MV 6 (12 when *enlarged*); HD 1+2; hp 5; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (rock pick, no bonus when *enlarged*); SA *invisibility, enlargement, stealth* (–2 penalty to opponents' surprise rolls); SD +4 bonus to saving throws vs. spell, immune to paralysis, illusion/phantasm spells, and poison, rarely surprised (1-in-10 chance); SZ S (4-foot tall) or L (7-foot tall); ML unsteady (7); Int average (8); AL LE; XP 350.

53c. Ekward's Quarters

This small room contains only a small leather mattress and simple stone table. A few scroll cases lie upon the table, along with quill and inkwell.

If Ekward was not found in area 53b, he will be here. Nothing of import is contained in this room, unless the PCs wish to acquire basic scrolls (penned in Duergar) explaining the rudiments of brewing with mushroom spores.



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54. Duergar Common Quarters

Wafting down a wide corridor leading northward are various smells of cooking mingled with the sounds of children playing and other less identifiable but no less domestic noises. The multiple doorways visible from your vantage point seemingly lead to personal residences and Duergar family dwellings.

This hallway indeed provides access to the private homes of the Duergar residents when they are not billeted in other locations (such as guard posts). If there has been a recent battle in the grand promenade (room 31) in the last 5 hours, only silence greets the characters, and all of the doors are shut and barred from within. If the PCs wish to engage in a room-by-room exploration of the Duergar private dwellings, they discover 95 family chambers leading directly off the passage. Each chamber is approximately 30-foot by 30-foot, containing a fire pit, stone cabinets holding nephelium cooking implements, a large table, and various types of benches and chairs. Each room also provides access to a second smaller chamber filled with leather mattresses and fur blankets for sleeping and stone wardrobes containing spare clothing. A small tunnel in each sleeping chamber leads to a garderobe which two adjoining family units share. A search for valuables in each room will yield little beyond potentially useful domestic items, such as cookware, short (10-foot to 20-foot) ropes, food, etc. Each Duergar adult carries his or her personal wealth on his or her person, usually in the amount of 2 to 8 (2d4) gp and 1 to 4 (1d4) gems of 10 gp value each.

Each family chamber has a 50% chance of containing 1d2 adult Duergar, and a 30% chance of containing 1d4 Duergar children (if only children are present, assume that their parents are absent, either in the mines, at the market, or on guard duty). Those chambers containing Duergar will be barred on the inside with a metal rod if the sound of conflict has been heard from nearby chambers. Duergar adults in their homes fight to the death, but the Duergar children hide in the sleeping chambers and are noncombatants (they will not defend themselves if attacked but either beg for mercy or stoically accept their fate).

- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** *Enlarged* Duergar adults armed with rock picks add 1 to their reach and are thus able to threaten 10 feet (two 5-foot squares) in their facing direction. They attack in the slow phase, delivering

a d8 knockdown. The sounds of conflict in one chamber have a 10% chance to bring 1d4+2 other Duergar to investigate and to assist threatened neighbors.

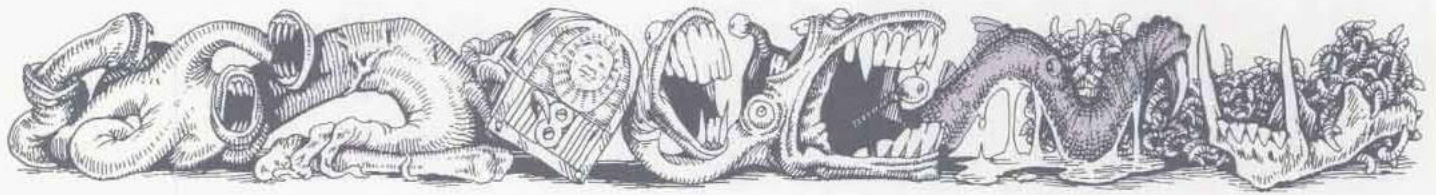
Duergar adults: AC 4; MV 6 (12 when *enlarged*); HD 1+2; hp 6 (average); THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (rock pick, no bonus when *enlarged*); SA *invisibility, enlargement, stealth* (-2 penalty to opponents' surprise rolls); SD +4 bonus to saving throws vs. poison, immune to paralysis, illusion/phantasm spells, and poison, rarely surprised (1-in-10 chance); SZ S (4-foot tall) or L (7-foot to 10-foot tall); ML unsteady (7); Int average to genius (8-18); AL LE; XP 350 each.

55. Forge Hall

This chamber resounds with the clanging of hammers, the shouts of hoarse voices, and the hiss of vented steam. The sources of these varied noises are not directly apparent, but seem to emanate from the many arches giving off this hall into smaller subchambers. The main chamber is lit by a glowing lampstone suspended from the ceiling by a glassy chain. The light competes with the occasional sharp flashes of red flame that strobe now and again from the subchambers. Dark silhouettes are visible within the smaller chambers, moving with terse purpose.

This chamber unifies the six major forge chambers of the Duergar. Duergar smiths create nephelium-forged masterpieces within the confines of these rooms. A growing market within the underdeep is willing to travel to the Duergar bazaar to trade or buy outright items forged with nephelium, due to the metal's unique properties (hard as iron but transparent as glass).

Those Duergar who have proved their competence at craftwork are taken on as apprentices and journeymen of the master smiths, thereby able to shirk the tedium of soldiering and minework for the joy of metalworking. Each subchamber holds three Duergar hard at work at their craft. Besides the Duergar smiths, each of the six subchambers holds a workbench, a water tub, an anvil, a tool table, a forge, and a coal bin. There are also racks to hold the nephelium rods and sheets used by the smiths to make new items and repair old articles. The workbenches hold a variety of tools, including several varieties of tongs, several varieties of hammers, chisels, flatters, fullers, and swages.



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- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** *Enlarged* Duergar smiths armed with hammers add 1 to their reach and are thus able to threaten 10 feet (two 5-foot squares) in their facing direction. They attack in the slow phase, delivering a d8 knockdown. The sound of an altercation in any one of the subchambers will bring all the Duergar from the remaining five forge chambers to assist embattled craftsduergar.

Duergar smiths (18): AC 4; MV 6 (12 when *enlarged*); HD 1+2; hp 6 (average); THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (rock pick, no bonus when *enlarged*); SA *invisibility, enlargement, stealth* (-2 penalty to opponents' surprise rolls); SD +4 bonus to saving throws vs. spell, immune to paralysis, illusion/phantasm spells, and poison, rarely surprised (1-in-10 chance); SZ S (4-foot tall) or L (7-foot to 10-foot tall); ML steady (11); Int average to genius (8-18); AL LE; XP 350 each.

56. Holding Area

This open area is filled with sheets of glass stacked against the walls, and rods of the same substance are lying in small holding bins, blocking straightforward access.

Raw nephelium from the smeltery brought down in the elevator (area 28) often piles up in this area before it can be brought into the subchambers of room 55.

57. Craft Storage

The door to this storage chamber is locked. Those who attempt to pick the lock or break down the door are affected with the *glyph of warding* cast by Naentoth for 9d4 points of electrical damage.

Stone shelves and tables here are filled with dozens of different items, all apparently formed of glass. Cookware, lamps, doors, armor, weapons, and more are all visible from where you stand.

This storeroom holds finished nephelium-forged items which have not yet been distributed among the Duergar. There are a variety of items here, including weapons and armor (Duergar-sized, of course). Allow the PCs to state what they are looking for; there is a 85% chance that any normal or mundane item that could conceivably be

crafted of nephelium exists within this chamber. The PCs find nothing but mundane items: esoteric or magical items will not be found here.

58. Collapsed Chamber

The door to this area on the bazaar level is locked and *warded*. Anyone approaching the door and attempting entry sets off the *glyph of warding* cast by Naentoth for 9d4 points of fire damage.

The chamber before you is filled from floor to ceiling with tumbled boulders and rocky debris. The room seems to have collapsed long ago and seemingly has not been disturbed since that event. The few floor tiles and wall hangings still visible on the edges of the rockfall indicate that this chamber was at one time not only very large but also magnificently decorated. Now only dull echoes, dust, and darkness reside here.

This was once the entry foyer of the private residence of Selvandel, the deposed chief of this Duergar colony. When Wellfast conquered the Duergar here with the assistance of the gibberling hordes from the Twisted Caverns and other even more disquieting creatures, he ordered this chamber collapsed by the mining engineers now under his control. Once the residence and the adjoining rooms were destroyed utterly, he ordered the entrance locked and *warded*, and further commanded that none should evermore speak the name of Selvandel upon pain of death or worse.

59. The Last Defense

When the stone door connecting room 31 to this corridor is opened, a special *glyph of warding* very similar to the *glyph* described under heading 31 will be activated. This *glyph*, however, magically alerts the garrison of guards in room 60 unless the words "*Duergar shall inherit the deeps*" are spoken (in Duergarish) before opening the door. The garrison's only duty is to respond quickly and decisively when they are alerted by the power of the ward. In such an event, they rush from their chamber and assemble in the corridor to block further access to the east. One of the Duergar also activates the trap at the western terminus of the passage (marked on the map).

The trap is activated by a lever in room 60. When the lever is pulled, a 20-foot section of corridor at the very western end the hallway becomes poised to swing open

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if more than 40 lbs of pressure is applied to it. Anyone triggering the trap and failing a Dexterity/Balance check (at a +4 penalty) falls 30 feet onto a bed of nephelium spikes. In addition to the 3d6 points of falling damage, the victim is also subject to 4d4 points of damage incurred when falling upon the sharp spikes. A search of the trap yields nothing interesting.

- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** The garrison assembles into a pike hedge immediately outside the doorway to room 60, their ranseurs pointed down the corridor towards the west. All the Duergar will be *enlarged* and *invisible*. This allows only two Duergar in close order to occupy the three lines of the pike hedge since they will only *enlarge* to Large size while in the corridor (if for some reason the fight moves outside, they can *enlarge* further to increase their damage bonus from x2 to x3); in Large form they take up one combat square apiece even in close order. The Duergar in the pike hedge are all guarding, but since they are *invisible*, it is possible that these Duergar will be able to attack first with surprise anyway. The pike hedge threatens the 3 squares directly in front of it and should be very effective in blocking access through the 10-foot hallway. The Duergar in the front range of the hedge are armed with pickaxes, but the remaining two lines of Duergar hold ranseurs. All the Duergar in the pike hedge have a -1 AC bonus, and the 2 rows behind the initial row are considered to have 50% cover (-4 AC bonus vs. missiles). When the Duergar have sighted their quarry, they begin to move down the corridor towards the west at a half-move per round (MV 6 when *enlarged*), attempting to flush intruders into the activated trap at the end of the corridor. These Duergar all attack in the slow phase and deliver a d12 knockdown.

Duergar elite guards (6): AC 4; MV 6 (12 when *enlarged*); HD 3+6; hp 30, 31, 32, 30, 33, 31; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2d4 (ranseur) or 1d8 (battle axe), x2 or x3 when *enlarged*; SA *invisibility*, *enlargement*, *stealth* (-2 penalty to opponents' surprise rolls); SD +4 bonus to saving throws vs. spell, immune to paralysis, illusion/phantasm spells, and poison, rarely surprised (1-in-10 chance); SZ S (4-foot tall), L (10-foot tall), or H (15-foot to 16-foot tall); ML champion (16); Int high to exceptional (13-16); AL LE; XP 975 each.

60. Garrison Barracks

This is an undecorated chamber of native rock. On the southern wall is a large glassy lever set into the stone wall, the purpose of which is not immediately apparent. Near the lever is a stone table around which are pulled six stone stools. On top of the table are small piles of small, thin plaques with painted designs. The only other immediately apparent items are the six neatly arranged leather mats in the eastern portion of the chamber.

The six Duergar stationed in this room (whose stats appear under the previous heading) spend their free time engaged in fierce card games at the table near the lever. However, even in the midst of intense play, the Duergar are ready to respond the warning of the *glyph* from area 59. The aroused Duergar first pull the nearby lever, which is the mechanism for activating the trap in area 59, then assemble in a pike hedge immediately outside the door within 1 combat round of the *glyph* warning.

The cards are thin pieces of painted tile, each depicting a horrendous underdeep creature on its facing side and complex Duergarish symbols on the flip side. The quality of each individual painting is enough to make individual cards worth 1 sp apiece, and an entire deck might be worth 20 gp to a collector of esoteric items. There are fifty-five cards in each deck, and a total of six decks.

61. Stairs

These stairs lead up to area 62.

62. Stairs

These stairs lead down to area 61.

63. Steeder Breeding Pits

This natural-looking cavern looks as if it has been subtly smoothed to form shallow 10-foot-diameter circular alcoves in the walls and floor. In the center of each alcove is a 5-foot-diameter pit, the contents of which are concealed by depth and darkness. However, a charnel stink rises from the entire area, providing a macabre background for the occasional slurping, sucking noises rising from the dark orifices.

This room is devoted to the breeding and care of young steeders, the large spiders the Duergar use both as mounts and beasts of burden. Each pit is 10-feet deep and bevels out to 10 feet in diameter at the bottom; each holds a recently hatched clutch of 3d6 steeder young. The Duergar keep the young steeders well fed with the cast-off portions of creatures hunted in the underdeep. Disturbed steederlings do not attack living creatures but merely attempt to scuttle about trying to avoid direct contact. If necessary, treat each steederling as a 1-1 HD creature with 1 hp and an AC of 10.

64. Quarters of the Keeper

This room is decorated with various crude paintings applied directly to the stone walls. The paintings, while done with an obviously unskilled hand, clearly show spiders of all shapes, sizes, and varieties. There are narrow wall tapestries on each of the four walls, seemingly woven of thick spider webbing. In the center of the room is a large leather mattress, beside which is a small stand holding a few small items.

The Duergar responsible for the breeding and stabling of the steeder population keeps this room for his private quarters. He answers only to the name "Keeper of Spiders," and if his profession is not enough of an explanation for that appellation, one look into this room would clear up any remaining question. The Keeper goes beyond merely having a fondness for creatures which go on eight legs; he was recently afflicted with an extreme philosophy, arachnaphilia (an inordinate fondness for all things relating to spiders). This derangement is a symptom of the growing field of corruption emanating from the center of the mountain. One physical result of this insanity is that the Keeper always has 1d10+10 normal spiders visibly crawling upon his clothes and hair. His chamber is also home to two dozen large spiders. These spiders, which crawl upon the ceiling, ignore PCs who enter the room unless attacked or unless ordered to the attack by the Keeper. Unless the PCs specifically state they examine the ceiling, they may not be aware of the threat lurking above.

The Keeper can be found in this room 50% of the time, the rest of his time being equally divided between the breeding pits (area 63) and the steeder stable (room 65). The Keeper, in his derangement, will be quite friendly towards any PC who shares or pretends to share his interest in spiders (even to the point of placing some of the "little pets"



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crawling about his person on that PC). He *enlarges* and flies into a berserker rage if he sees the PCs actually *harm* a spider: in such cases, his hit points are doubled, his AC rises to 6 (due to disregard of personal life and limb), his attacks have a +2 bonus to hit, and he inflicts +3 points of damage per strike. In a berserker state, he will fight until dead, wailing a lament to the beloved spiders all the while.

Because of the Keeper's weird affinity to all things arachnid, characters who kill him thereafter permanently suffer the enmity of any and all spiders they encounter (e.g., the worst possible reactions from all spider-kin) until undergoing *atonement* for the deed.

- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** The Keeper abides by PLAYER'S OPTION considerations already noted for Huge Duergar; he will not *enlarge* past 15 feet in height, due to the low clearance, despite his high hit point total. The two dozen spiders, being Small creatures, can fit two to a combat square with no penalty. Spiders dropping upon PCs from above are considered to be charging, for a +3 bonus to the attack roll (+2 for charge, +1 from above). PCs who are specifically guarding against attack from above gain first attack against dropping spiders.

The Keeper, 6th-level Duergar Warrior: AC 3 or 6; MV 6 (12 when *enlarged*); hp 48 or 96; THAC0 15 (11 with *battle axe* +2 in berserker rage); #AT 1; Dmg 1d8+5 (*battle axe* +2, berserker rage), x3 when *enlarged*; SA *invisibility*, *enlargement*, berserker rage, poisoned battle axe (Class E poison: save vs. poison or die, inflicts 20 points even on success save); SD +4 bonus on saving throws vs. spell, immune to paralysis, illusion/phantasm spells, and poison, rarely surprised (1-in-10 chance); SW insanity (arachnophilia); SZ S (4-foot tall) or H (15-foot tall); ML fanatic (18); AL LE; XP 8,000. Str 14, Dex 9, Con 11, Int 16, Wis 10, Chr 7.

Special Equipment: Venom (*battle axe* +2, poisons wound with Class E poison on a natural roll of 20), Chitonmail (*chain mail* +1, allows wearer to *spider climb* thrice per day).

Large spiders (24): AC 8; MV 6, web 15; HD 1+1; hp 5 (average); THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1 + special (bite); SA poisonous bite (Class A poison: save vs. poison at a +2 bonus or suffer 15 points of damage); SZ S (2-foot diameter); ML unsteady (7) unless Keeper is endangered, when rises to fanatic (18); Int non-(0); AL N; XP 175 each.

65. Steeder Stables

This large chamber is lighted by a row of three torches on the western wall. Between the torch mounts are racks holding many saddle-like apparatus, leather straps, blankets, and riding crops. In the center of the room is a large stone table holding brushes, bandages, and rags. There are more than a dozen large transparent buckets beneath the table, filled with what appear to be dead cave rats. Glassy portcullis bars line the eastern wall of the chamber, providing cage fronts for what appear to be stables or cells. The movement of large creatures is visible in the shadows of many of the alcoves.

The Keeper of Spiders has sole responsibility for the care and training of the Duergar colony's steeder population (he recently fed his apprentice to a steeder when she made a slighting reference to their charges). In this room, he stables, grooms, and feeds off-duty steeders, which are kept locked (the key hangs on the wall on a hook) in the steeder cages, four to a cage. The steeders defend themselves if attacked, if they can get out of the cages. The Keeper can be found in this room 25% of the time, otherwise he will be in either room 64 (where his stats appear) or room 63.

Steeders (6d4): AC 4; MV 12; HD 4+4; hp 24 (average); THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (bite); SA ignores armor bonuses when attacks (Dexterity and magical bonuses to AC do apply), success indicates that prey is clung to with sticky secretions (Strength/Muscle or Dexterity/Balance check at -10 penalty required to pull free), victim suffers -2 penalties to attacks and damage while held and will be automatically bitten once per round; SZ L (8-foot in diameter); ML elite (13); Int low (7); AL CE; XP 975 each.

66. Checkpoint

The corridor opens to the north into a 20-foot by 30-foot chamber. Six polearm-wielding figures stand here, half scrutinizing the corridor to the south while the other half gaze north through the barred window in a stone door. In the northeastern corner of the chamber is a stone table around which are pulled six stone stools. A glassy pitcher sits in the center of the table, surrounded by six large flagons.

It is the responsibility of the Duergar in this room to guard against intrusion from uncontrolled creatures who reside deeper inside the mountain. The Twisted Caverns alone hold a variety of dangerous entities who sometimes wander too close to Duergar territory. The stone door and the armed guard are usually enough to deter aggression, but from time to time Wellfast has to be called upon to turn back a particularly dangerous monstrosity.

The Duergar in this room may not necessarily be expecting the PCs to come up behind them in an attempt to penetrate further *into* the mountain; however, once they realize the PCs' intent, they attempt to stop them with force.

The nephelium vessel on the table is a pitcher filled with that weak beer called *cresch* in the Duergar dialect, which the deep dwarves brew from a special variety of lichen found in the underdeeps. *Cresch* affects PCs as normal ale.

• **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** See the considerations printed under areas 2a and 2b.

Duergar (6): AC 4; MV 6 (12 when *enlarged*); HD 3+6; hp 29, 30, 29, 30, 32, 30; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+1 (footman's pick), x3 when *enlarged*; SA *invisibility*, *enlargement*, *stealth* (-2 penalty to opponents' surprise rolls); SD +4 bonus to saving throws vs. spell, immune to paralysis, illusion/phantasm spells, and poison, rarely surprised (1-in-10 chance); SZ S (4-foot tall) or H (15-foot to 16-foot tall); ML elite (13); Int average to very (8-12); AL LE; XP 975 each.

67. Rubble

The carved passage opens into a very large chamber or hall. The area extends to the west approximately 15 feet before a mass of rock rubble blocks the rest of the 20-foot-wide and 20-foot-tall passage. It is difficult to estimate how thick the rock debris might be. To the east the hall extends off into utter darkness.

This hall was once a part of the original passage leading into the inner complex. The Duergar have walled it off and piled rubble on the west wall to foil *passwall* magics and the like from room 25. The only way back is through most of the Duergar holdings. This chamber marks the end of the Duergar-controlled complex; from this point on, things are quite different to the east. The passage stretches unbroken for another half mile to the heart of the mountain.



The Twisted Caverns

The Twisted Caverns is the name applied to the corrupt, creature-infested no-man's-land which lies between the Duergar-controlled Outer Complex and the Inner Sanctum of Madreus. Most areas of this region have been bored out by the strange creatures which inhabit them. These creatures (sometimes referred to below as alienoids) have for the most part arrived from the Far Realm during the infrequent openings of the Vast Gate over the millennia since the area was abandoned by the Elder Elves. Other monstrosities and their spawn which inhabit the Caverns are the result of mutations arising from the field of corruption leaking through the Vast Gate.

The field of corruption's present boundaries extend to the edge of the Duergar-controlled territories. However, Madreus has been manipulating methods of quickly expanding the field and has enjoyed some success (already random effects have spread to the Duergar and even to areas outside the mountain). Apart from the fluctuations caused by Madreus, the field generates some specific effects this close to the Vast Gate in addition to those listed on pages 10–11. All PCs are automatically subject to these effects while they remain within either the Twisted Caverns (areas 68 to 93) or the Inner Sanctum (areas 94 to 123). These effects are detailed below. PCs who have some way to shield their minds from psychic influence may be immune to some or all of these effects, at the DM's option.

Regardless of practical effects, the PCs can't help but notice a strange chill to the air, accompanied by an indefinable but definite feeling of *wrongness*.

Dream Corruption: This effect is similar to that of room 13 in the Duergar-controlled Outer Complex; unprotected mortal minds who penetrate Firestorm Peak this far have cause to fear their nightmares. The effect manifests when any intelligent creature sleeps anywhere within the Twisted Caverns or the Inner Sanctum. The sleeping being is plagued with dreams in which the dreamer finds himself or herself in an unformed, gelatinous body which is coming upon a scene of the recently slain, perhaps on a plague-ridden street. The dreamer finds that he or she is ravenously hungry and is unable to stop himself or herself from partaking of the bountiful feast lying unguarded upon the road. The dreamer uses his or her new-found body to directly digest "food" in a horribly external fashion. Sane beings must make a Wisdom/Willpower check; failure results in the loss of one point of Wisdom each time the dream is dreamt, due to its corrupt nature. For

each night a PC can sleep a full eight hours outside the field of corruption, a successful Wisdom/Willpower check restores one point of lost Wisdom, to the original maximum. Creatures who reach zero Wisdom are considered permanently insane and fall under the control of the DM forevermore.

Mood Corruption: This effect has randomly manifested outside the immediate area of the Vast Gate in the Duergar complex (but who could tell in this already cruel and sadistic race?) and in the upper-world. However, this close to the source of the contamination, this effect of the field of corruption is a constant companion. PCs in this zone of influence are easily aggravated. Tempers flare, and an argument can quickly get out of control. Each time the PCs have an argument or even a disagreement among themselves, the DM should have those characters who are directly involved roll a Wisdom/Willpower check with a +4 bonus to the PCs' rolls. Those who fail the first time feel a sudden burning desire to end the disagreement in a decisive manner—say, by smacking the naysayer over the head with a hammer—but they are able to hold back with an effort of will. PCs who fail this check a second time during the course of a party disagreement suddenly feel a homicidal mania come upon them, and they strike out at their erstwhile companion with murderous intent for 1d3 rounds. The other involved characters may or may not be similarly affected, depending upon the outcome of their Wisdom/Willpower checks. After 1d3 rounds of this fury have elapsed, another Wisdom/Willpower check can be made by the effected PC(s) in an attempt to regain their reason and self-control. Those failing continue to attack their friends for another 1d3 rounds. This cycle continues until all can shake their heads clear or a conflict is lethally resolved. This effect will continue to haunt the party until they leave the Twisted Caverns and Inner Sanctum.

Form Corruption: Random mutations have been seen in the Shirelands around Firestorm Peak. These strange mutations have for the most part been rare occurrences. However, this close to the source of the contamination, the field of corruption is more intense. Every time the PC heals normally or magically from damage, the contamination from the Vast Gate has a window of opportunity to mutate the character. The percentage chance equals the number of hit points healed. For example, if the PC takes 12 points of damage in a battle and then has 8 points of that magically

The Twisted Caverns

healed, he or she stands an 8% chance of being affected; if instead he or she had received the attention of someone versed in the Healing proficiency and had 2 points of that same damage healed, he or she would stand a 2% chance of acquiring a mutation. The maximum chance of form corruption is 10% during any 24 hour period, so even if a character suffered 20 points of damage and had it all healed in short order, he or she would still only have a 10% chance of a mutation.

A PC afflicted with form corruption witnesses the growth of a strange new vestigial addition to his or her body at the point where the wound was healed. The vestigial organ or appendage has a 50% chance to be beneficial, in which case it will grow to full size and usefulness within 24 hours. The other 50% of the time the mutation is useless, remaining vestigial. These mutations are entirely up to the imagination of the DM, but here are a few suggestions: an extra mouth or eye appears on palm or forehead, a random limb becomes a tentacle, the tongue becomes an insectile proboscis, spittle becomes mildly acidic, etc. In game terms each mutation should confer no more than a +/-1 to an ability score or natural AC. If an ability is gained through some strange new limb, eye, or weird appendage, it is recommended that only effects up to the equivalent of 1st-level spells be allowed, usable once per day. The troll population has been particularly susceptible to this effect due to their regenerative abilities

Alienoid Perpetuation: The field of corruption provides a necessary element for the life cycle in many of the alienoids which roam the inner complexes of Firestorm Peak, in much the same way as protein is required in the diets of normal animals (not to say that alienoids do not appreciate real protein supplements). So long as the Vast Gate remains keyed to the Far Realm of the alien entities (even in the interim between Bridgings), the brood gibberling (including Wellfast), gibbering mouthers, living wall, and dharculus will continue to thrive. If the Vast Gate were to be rekeyed or destroyed, these creatures would all sicken and die within one month. Every year the contamination grows, spreading the range of the alienoids further and further. Fortunately, the pace has been quite slow . . . until recently. Unless stopped, Madreus will soon have the knowledge and power necessary to keep the Vast Gate open permanently. This will allow him to quickly expand the field of corruption to such an extent that the civilized world beyond could be in dire jeopardy.

Check for random encounters on the **Twisted Caverns Random Encounter Table** every 3 hours the party remains in areas 68 to 123, except when as DM you deem it appropriate to give the PCs a brief respite. To use the table below, roll a d20 every 18 turns. Results higher than 6 indicate no encounter has occurred. Results of 1 to 6 indicate an encounter. Select the appropriate column (1 or 2) based on the party's location, then read the number rolled on the d20 across to the right to determine the actual encounter. Use column 1 for map areas 68-93 and column 2 for areas 94-123. To conserve space, the stats for each of the creatures encountered have not been reprinted here, but an entry number has been provided for each monster encountered, indicating where similar creature stats can be referenced.

Twisted Caverns Random Encounter Table

1	2	Encounters:
1		gibberling sortie (1d10), area 71.
2		myconids (1d4+3), area 89.
3		troll mutates (4d4), area 80.
4		brood gibberlings (1d4), area 71.
5	1	dharculus (1), area 103.
6	2	huge gibbering moulder (1), area 75.
	3	Duergar minions (2d8), area 113.
	4	neh-thalgu (1), area 98.
	5	gibbering mouthers (1d6), area 68.
	6	healthy troll mutates (1d4), area 123.

Unless specifically noted otherwise in the text or upon the map, assume all tunnels to be 5-foot wide. The ceilings of both tunnels and most caverns are also between 8 and 10 feet high, unless described differently in the specific room headings. There are some areas on the map which are obviously big enough to be a chamber but are not numbered. Unnumbered chambers are merely empty, containing nothing but dust and perhaps a few well-gnawed bones of gibberlings. All the surfaces of the tunnels and caverns bear striations, the remnant claw and tooth marks of the insane creatures which have burrowed into the rock of the mountain.

68. Lumps of Soil

The rough tunnel opens into a larger cavern of irregular shape. Rocky columns hide the full extent of the room, but from the tunnel entrance you can see a few 5-foot-tall heaps of earthy material scattered around the floor of the chamber.

The Twisted Caverns

The earthy lumps are resting gibbering mouters, living in a herd due to the concentrated effects of the field of corruption. Over the ages, a few gibbering mouters have escaped Firestorm Peak and managed to live in the outer world, singly bringing death and terror wherever they slithered. Their original origin, however, was from the lunatic Far Realm on the other side of the Vast Gate. Here within the Twisted Caverns, many groups of these foul creatures live, able to subsist for long periods on nothing but the foul emanations of the contamination.

This room contains no valuables, as gibbering mouters do not lair but instead keep on the move. The mouters present in this room are merely resting before they flow forward once more, looking for choice bits of flesh to consume.

The first PC who investigates one of the earthy masses will be in for a surprise when it suddenly opens all its eyes and mouths, showing itself to be a horrid amoeboid monster composed of gnashing teeth and blinking, glazed stares. The other mouters also wake and begin to gibber in mindless hunger. The sound of the gibbering forces all the PCs to attempt saving throws vs. spell. Those characters who fail must roll a d8 and determine results. On a roll of 1, the victim wanders aimlessly for one round; on a roll of 2 to 5, the victim stands motionless, stunned for one round; on a roll of

6 to 7, the victim attacks the nearest living creature for one round; and on a roll of 8, the victim runs in fear for two rounds. Gibbering only affects the PCs once per combat.

Every 1d4 rounds of combat, one of the mouters spits its reactive saliva upon the floor. The spittle of a gibbering mouter flares with white light if it strikes any non-organic surface. Even with the muting effect mentioned on page 11, the resulting flash is bright enough to blind characters looking at it if they fail to save vs. petrification—the blindness lasts 1d3 rounds. The mouters can attempt to bite blinded opponents with a +2 bonus to attack rolls. Blinded victims attack with a -4 penalty (the Blind-fighting proficiency cuts this penalty in half).

Mouters can bring 6 mouths to attack a single PC. Any attack that exceeds the required attack score by +2 or more indicates that the mouth attaches to the victim and drains an additional hit point per round thereafter. When three or more mouths are attached to a single victim, that character will be pulled down unless he or she makes a Dexterity/Balance check each round. The mouter flows over fallen victims and bites with 12 mouths, gaining a +4 bonus to strike its prone opponent. If a victim reaches zero hit points, he or she is absorbed into the mouter, giving it another mouth and a pair of eyes, as well as 1



The Twisted Caverns

extra permanent hp, up to the maximum for its HD (if this maximum is exceeded, the moulder fissions into two separate creatures, each with half the original's hit point total). Non-organic material is left behind.

Finally, a moulder can liquefy earth or stone beneath it within a 5-foot radius of itself, changing it to a thick quicksand. It requires a full round to turn stone to earth, and a half round to turn the earth to quicksand. Characters in melee range begin to sink into the quicksand at a rate of 1 foot per combat round. Once a character begins sinking, his or her movement rate drops 2 for every foot he or she sinks, automatically dropping to zero when the character is chest-deep in the quicksand. A character can attempt a Dexterity/Balance check each round to avoid sinking that round or attempt to get clear; this is only possible if no other actions are taken (such as attacking or defending). Keep in mind that the maximum depth a character can sink is 5 feet. Gibbering moulders automatically flow over characters who have reached their individual chest height in mud.

- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** Gibbering moulders make all their attacks in the fast round. Moulders who have slithered over a fallen or sinking character attack that character in the very fast round with all twelve mouths. Gibbering moulders use a d6 knockdown die if two mouths successfully hit in the same round, a d8 for four mouths, and a d10 knockdown die if all six mouths successfully attack a character. Gibbering moulders automatically flow over characters knocked down in this way.

Gibbering moulders (3): AC 1; MV 3, swim 6; HD 4+3; hp 19, 21, 20; THAC0 17; #AT 6+; Dmg 1 (x6) plus special; SA gibbering, spit, bite; SD ground control; SZ M (5-foot tall); ML elite (14); Int semi (2-4); AL Neutral; XP 975.

69. Them Bones, Them Bones

Piled in heaps throughout most of the rough chamber are what appear to be literally hundreds of shattered skeletons. The twisted humanoid bones are marred here and there by clinging remnants of rotting flesh, the odor of which suddenly becomes horribly immediate on a wayward cavern draft. Suddenly, a foul humanoid walks from around a rough stone pillar, contentedly munching on a long femur bone, initially oblivious to your presence. The rattling, crunching sounds coming from amidst the bone heaps indicates that this creature may not be alone.

As a matter of course, non-dee spawned gibberlings (see entry 74) in the Twisted Caverns gather slain beasts (victims of the frequent conflict among the various twisted creatures who inhabit this area, mainly amongst the differing "clans" of gibberlings) as they come upon them, depositing them in holding caverns such as this one for curing. When the requisite number of days have passed, hungry gibberlings return to these caverns to rummage through the leavings, looking for a choice selection. At any one time, at least 20 gibberlings can be found in this room, burrowing through the bones or hunkered down next to a wall or natural pillar enjoying the fruits of its search. Disturbing the gibberlings in any way causes all the creatures present in the room to wildly attack the defenders. Unfortunately, even torchlight is enough to send these creatures into a frenzy. An in-depth description of gibberlings can be found under the heading for room 70.

- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** See the bulleted **PLAYER'S OPTION** considerations under the heading for room 70.

Gibberlings (20): AC 10; MV 9; HD 1; hp 4 (average); THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+1 (bone club); SA mass assault; SZ M (5-foot tall); ML unsteady (5); Int low (5-7); AL CN; XP 35 each.

70. Here There Be Gibberlings

Alien chittering and ghostly shrieks echo from the mouth of this room as the PCs approach.

The floor of this large irregular cavern is covered with what appear to be the skins of various underdeep creatures; however, there are also many skins not immediately identifiable. Dozens of jabbering, hunchbacked humanoids dance a lunatic waltz about the chamber, accompanied by their own hoarse shrieks. Several of the creatures seem to be larger than the others, and the smaller creatures give way before them. A horrible chill runs down your back as suddenly see that there seem to be small creatures moving beneath their skin, creeping and writhing in an entirely unsettling fashion.

Gibberlings gibber. They also jabber, scream, howl, and chitter. They are the unholy remnants of naturally evolved creatures which have been consumed and reborn by influences not of this world. Their pale, hunchbacked



bodies are deformed and twisted, their eyes are vacant, and their maws are slaving pits which desire constant nourishment. Individually weak, but in groups a deadly menace, the upperworld has come to fear the occasional escaped clans which roam far and wide. The origins of the gibberling race lie on the other side of the Vast Gate, but those creatures transplanted here have had little difficulty in maintaining the species deep in the dark burrows of Firestorm Peak for two reasons.

The first reason is connected with the skins lying about the floor; they are the remnants of one method of gibberling reproduction. Specialized gibberlings known as brood gibberlings inject their larvae into living organisms, even other gibberlings. The larvae, known as gibberslugs, are evident on an adult brood as they constantly skitter and writhe beneath the skin of their parent. Slugs injected into a host soon take over the organism, consuming it from the inside, leaving only the skin from which a fully developed gibberling emerges, the result of a gruesome metamorphosis. Each brood gibberling can mentally control any gibberlings which it has personally created, giving rise to various clans (Wellfast has this same power). Clans sometimes cooperate

and sometimes war, depending upon the whims of the brood gibberlings. Brood gibberlings often seek to "convert" gibberlings of other clans to its own. Over the millennia, gibberlings have broken out into the underdeep and the upperworld, but their origin lies here.

Brood gibberlings, however, are tied to the field of corruption which centers on the Vast Gate and cannot live for long without its influence. These creatures are the font of new gibberlings, laying gibberslugs (see Wellfast's description under heading 41) in other living creatures. However, whereas Wellfast spits his gibberslugs at targets, a brood gibberling's slugs reside under its gums, ready to infect prey on a successful bite attack. Characters who fail a saving throw vs. death magic are unable to brush away or shake off the clinging gibberslug before it easily penetrates skin or hide. The text under heading 41 describes the consequences of a burrowing gibberslug . . . check there if a PC is unfortunate enough to be infected.

The second reason the population is able to maintain itself has to do with the deepspawn living in the caverns, which has used its ability to spawn young to create a great many gibberlings, as well as troll mutants and even

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a few myconids. The deepspawn can be considered the head of its own clan, although it normally allows its spawn to "run with the pack" as it were.

Any light carried by the PCs infuriates the gibberlings present, and the brood gibberlings command the assembled dancers to attack. The brood gibberlings rush the characters as well, attempting to infect the PCs with a gibberslug or two. A large bonfire can hold these gibberlings at bay for 1d4+1 rounds.

- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** Gibberlings use the bones of their dead as clubs or knives, allowing them an attack in the average phase with a d8 or d6 knock-down die, respectively. Because the bones are their weapons of choice, gibberlings have a +1 attack bonus with them (thus the THAC0 of 19). However, 45% of the time, gibberlings who outnumber foes will make an overbear attempt as described in *PLAYER'S OPTION: Combat & Tactics*. Gibberlings attack prone characters with their clubs at a +4 attack bonus; characters who are pulled prone must take a full move action to rise. Brood gibberlings use their infecting bite attack in the fast phase of the combat round. Note that PCs who are either pulled down or slain will draw 1d6+4 gibberlings from the general melee, squatting down in the midst of a battle to slake their raging hungers.

Gibberlings (36): AC 10; MV 9; HD 1; hp 4 (average); THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+1 (bone club); SA mass assault; SZ M (5-foot tall); ML unsteady (5); Int low (5-7); AL CN; XP 35 each.

Brood gibberlings (3): AC 8 (Dexterity bonus); MV 12; HD 4+2; hp 26, 30, 29; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+4 (bite); SA bite injects gibberslug; SZ M (6-foot tall); ML elite (13); Int average (8-10); AL CN; XP 950 each.

71. Huge Cavern

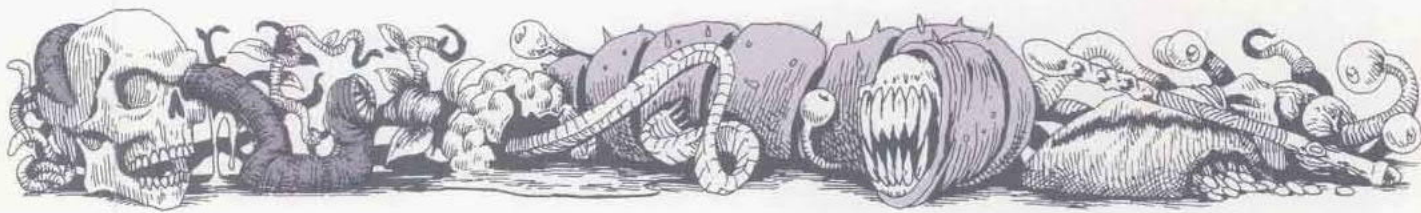
The smooth walls of the original hallway have been tumbled and breached here, as has the ceiling, which rises up into darkness. The extent of the damage has created a vast cavern whose true dimensions are hidden both by darkness and by rocky protrusions. A low susurrus of blended clicks, moans, and gurgles echoes through the chamber, their source not immediately apparent. Strewn about the chamber is loose rubble, bones, animal skins, and the occasional gleam of leather and glass.

The ceiling rises to 60 feet in height in the center of this chamber. The leather and glass remnants are actually the weapons and nephelium armor of slain Duergar foraging parties who were hot on the trail of darkscape mushrooms. If allowed the peace to search, the PCs could find 1 to 100 gp and a +1 weapon or armor piece per turn scattered amidst the rubble. Unfortunately, this chamber is a lair for the largest gathering of gibberlings in the Twisted Caverns. Unlucky dark dwarves have met their doom here, and the party might as well if they are not extremely careful. In fact, taking warning from the abundant evidence of the grisly fate of clearly well-armed Duergar warbands, the party might very well determine that their best option concerning this room is to merely run for their lives; there are approximately 100 gibberlings altogether in the northern and southern margins of this room or in adjacent tunnels. The gibberlings are lying together in huge furry masses, resting from their most recent burst of lunatic activity. Many of the creatures have dug multiple burrows, so that 3 or 4 gibberlings can lie curl up within 2-foot-wide holes.

Parties carrying a light source are automatically noticed by the quiescent gibberlings. PCs who are advancing without light are still 75% likely to be noticed by their scent alone. Gibberlings who are aware of the PCs advance remain still until the brood gibberlings in the chamber give the mental command of to attack. The four brood gibberlings give the attack order once the PCs have reached the center of the chamber, whereupon gibberlings come howling out of the darkness, waving bone clubs and splintered bone knives. In seemingly endless numbers, they swarm forward, uttering ghastly howls, clicks, shrieks, and insane chattering laughter. Brood gibberlings take 1d4+3 rounds each to make their way to the front lines of combat. Gibberlings are discussed more fully under the description of area 70 above.

The continuation of the original corridor to the east collapsed long ago. Further access to the east towards the Inner Sanctum is utterly impossible without extreme magical measures; characters seeking these inner chambers must try the caverns to the southeast.

- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** Use **Tactical Map #3** for this encounter. The gibberlings attempt to keep the PCs in the center of the chamber, continually bringing up reinforcing waves of manic gibberlings from the burrows to fill in any gaps left by PC weaponry. Groups of twelve gibberlings fight together: when six out of each group of twelve has been killed, the remaining six make



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a morale check. These morale checks do not effect any of the other groups, however. Even though each gibberling does not individually present much of a threat, a mass attack of this nature should make wise PCs think about retreating. Gibberlings pursue PCs at a MV of 9 for as long as they can keep the PCs in sight. If the PCs manage to barricade themselves behind a sturdy door or something similar, the gibberlings batter upon it for 1d10 rounds before losing interest, at which point they swirl and gibber away into the darkness. See the bulleted **PLAYER'S OPTION** Considerations under the description of room 70 for additional information.

Gibberlings (100): AC 10; MV 9; HD 1; hp 4 (average); THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+1 (bone club); SA mass assault; SZ M (5-foot tall); ML unsteady (5); Int low (5-7); AL CN; XP 35 each.

Brood gibberlings (4): AC 8 (Dexterity bonus); MV 12; HD 4+2; hp 25, 34, 33, 24; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+4 (bite); SA bite injects gibberslug; SZ M (6-foot tall); ML elite (13); Int average (8-10); AL CN; XP 950 each.

72. Hatching Chamber

This convoluted chamber of stone contains two forms lying in limp positions of collapse upon the chamber floor. One of the figures seem to be Duergar, while the other's long, slender form and dark skin indicate that she might well be of Drowish descent. The figures appear to be breathing but otherwise unmoving.

When brood gibberlings successfully impregnate another humanoid species they usually allow the gestating creature to lie where it happens to fall. However, one in two hundred gibberling hatchings will produce a brood gibberling. Gibberlings have the ability to detect gestating clan mothers, and when they do, they bring their future leaders into this room to be born.

PCs who examine the bodies will not be able to detect anything out of the ordinary, but a successful Wisdom check turns up a small penetration wound within a larger bite on both of the supine figures (the point where the gibberslug entered the poor creature). PCs who take the Duergar or Drow with them in some sort of misguided attempt at rescue are in for a rude shock. A fully formed brood gibberling will hatch from each of the figures in

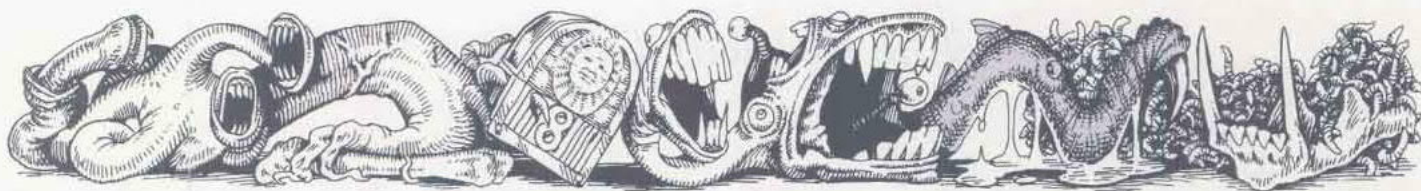
1d4 hours, attacking the PCs in manic fury (see Wellfast's description under the entry for room 41 for more information; if it becomes necessary, use the brood gibberling stats presented in the description of room 70 or 71).

PCs who merely search the dark dwarf and elf, but leave them lie, will be better rewarded. A thorough search of the unconscious bodies reveals 1,456 sp, 623 gp, and 2 gems worth 50 gp apiece. In addition, the Drow has a sheathed longsword enruned as "Bloodfear" in Drowish characters. The blade appears to be fashioned of bone, but in fact it is unbreakable. It acts as a *longsword* +3, but in battle the blade absorbs all the blood which falls upon it, drawing the fluid into its interior using a fine tracery of vein-like conduits which only appear after the blade has drawn blood. For every 20 points of damage delivered by the sword against living, flesh-and-blood opponents, the damage bonus of the blade increases by +1, until it reaches a maximum total of +7 damage, at which point it becomes temporarily satiated. The extra points of damage are the result of the blade literally "sucking" the blood from its foes with each successful hit. For example, after *Bloodfear* has delivered 60 points of damage, its attack bonus remains at +3 (this never changes) but its damage bonus will have increased from +3 to +6. The damage bonus lasts only the length of a single combat; when a particular conflict ends, the blade drops back to +3 damage in one round. The blade is chaotically aligned, and acts as only a *longsword* +1 in the hands of a lawfully aligned being.

73. Fungal Garden

The cave before you is lit by a pale luminescence which seems to emanate from the walls and ceiling. The floor of the cavern is host to large clumps of fungal growth, including many rings of knee-high purple-capped mushrooms. Beyond the fungal garden lies a large pool of water, its surface calm and unrippled, reflecting the glowing stone walls.

The pale light is produced by a bioluminescent lichen which covers the walls and ceiling of this cavern. The light provided by the lichen has combined with the field of corruption to create a strange new strain of fungus, known by the Duergar as darkscape mushroom, or simply darkscape. Darkscape acts as a powerful narcotic (as fully described under the entry for room 29), but due to the chaotic logic of the field of corruption these mushrooms are also a bane to many of the creatures of the Far



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Realm. As previously stated, darkscape kills burrowing gibberslugs immediately. The mushroom also acts as a powerful poison (with a -4 penalty to all saving throws) against living gibberlings, gibbering mouther, deepspawn, and any of the various monster mutates which reside in the Twisted Caverns. If any of these creatures were to accidentally ingest darkscape, an immediate saving throw vs. death would be in order, and a successful save would still inflict 2d10 points of damage. If PCs somehow learn of this particular quality of darkscape, anyone with an Herbalism, Cooking, or Alchemy proficiency could distill the darkscape mushroom into a contact poison of the same potency as described above. Note that Wellfast would be likewise affected by this poison.

74. The Lord of the Twisted Caverns

This large cavern appears empty; there is no evidence of lair or nest. Rough pillars of rock formed of calcite and argonite break up the chamber in random symmetry, making it impossible to view the entire extent of the hollow from one observation point. A large pile of rubble rests against the southeastern wall, the dampness of the earth indicating that it may have been only unearthed or disturbed. Looking more closely, you can clearly see the gleam of scattered coins, and perhaps even what could be the hilt of a sword.

Another integral part of gibberling reproduction here in the Twisted Caverns revolves around the resident deepspawn which has tarried in this area after emerging from the Vast Gate long ago. Many others of its kind ventured forth into the outer world many thousands of years ago, bringing terror and death to many over the years. The deepspawn here has eaten at least one of every resident creature in the Twisted Caverns and thus is able to spawn them at need. In fact at least a third of all the gibberlings present in the whole area were spawned (and thus are controlled) by this deepspawn. Gibberlings and other creatures in the caverns who are spawn of this creature live "normal lives" amongst others of its kind, except they regularly bring all manner of foodstuffs to the deepspawn here. The deepspawn trusts to the gibberlings of room 71 and its greater gibbering mouther spawn in room 75 to guard all the accesses to its lair and provide warning if something strange seeks to make its way into the deepspawn's presence.

This creature is also in direct alliance with Madreus.

When Madreus permanently Bridges the gate, this deepspawn will be one of his prime weapons of domination on the surface world. As a fully privileged partner in this undertaking, the creature has received one of the three Crystal Components necessary to re-key the gate to another location. Since these components were created with Elder ingenuity, they are nigh-indestructible. Therefore, Madreus has scattered two of the components to separate well-guarded caches. The first is guarded by Wellfast, the second is here, and the third is held by Madreus himself. The component with the deepspawn is buried directly beneath it in the rubble; it appears as a crystal rod of emerald hue.

The deepspawn lairs beneath the rubble shown on the map against the southeastern wall of the cavern. It is not apparent that the rubble hides any sort of menace at first glance. Any character(s) who approach the earthen pile should be in for a rude awakening when various eyelets, tentacles, and mawed tentacles erupt from the soil in a spray of deadly filth; those attacked may not at first realize that the appendages represent just one creature. The deepspawn's first action is to cast a *hold person* on the nearest PC. It continues to attack from the rubble as long as PCs remain within reach (about 20 feet); if its targets move out of range, it rises up out of the rubble to bring the battle back to its foes. When it does so, there is a 60% chance that the emerald Crystal Component it guards becomes dislodged and falls out of the rubble, as well as a few other items of its stash. The total treasure in the pile is 2600 sp, 1300 gp, 8 gems worth 200 gp apiece, a vial enruned as "Draught of Fire" (a *potion of fire breath*), three vials labeled as "Draught of Diminution" (*potions of diminution*), a two-handed sword enruned as "G'haern" (a *two-handed sword* +2), and a wand enruned as "Jarl's Battlewand" (a *wand of magic missiles* with 36 charges).

Depending on the PCs' power level here, it might be best for them to merely grab the component (if they are aware of its significance) and run. Deepspawn are not exactly built for speed, and it does not pursue fleeing PCs beyond its lair unless they have the emerald component, in which case it gives chase at its full movement rate.

- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** Roll for surprise when PCs are checking out the mound unless they specifically state they are ready for anything. The deepspawn attacks from within the mound for as long as there are PCs within range. Consider the deep spawn as having 90% cover while in the rubble mound

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(-10 to missile attacks and a +10 bonus vs. area-of-effect spells). Being a Huge creature, its tentacles and mawed tentacles only attack on the slow phase of each round, all simultaneously. Once a PC has succumbed to *hold person*, it attempts to constrict a *held* PC with one tentacle (if no PC is initially affected, it continues to cast *hold person* spells every three rounds until someone is affected), while the other two tentacles wield *G'haern* and *Jarl's Battlewand*, respectively. The three mawed tentacles simply lash out with critically damaging bites. It also immediately sends out mental calls for help to its spawn; 1d4+1 rounds after battle is joined, 1d2 gibberlings (30 maximum) and 1 troll mutate (15 maximum) arrive via different entrances to assist in battle, joined by more of their kind every 1d3 rounds thereafter, possibly attacking the PCs from behind with flank bonuses. If the deepspawn is reduced to one-third of its hit point total, it automatically *heals* itself. If then again injured to half its hit point total, it drinks one of its *Draughts of Diminution* (so it can squeeze through narrow corridors) while attempting a fighting withdrawal into area 73, where it casts a *water breathing* spell and then ducks into the pool to regenerate. The tentacle wielding *G'haern* delivers a d12 knockdown die due to

the deepspawn's Huge size; *Jarl's Battlewand* delivers a d6 knockdown die per magic missile.

Deepspawn (1): AC 6; MV 6, swim 8; HD 14; hp 66; THAC0 7; #AT 7; Dmg 3d4 x3 (bites)/1d4+1 (constriction)/1d10+3 (*two-handed sword* +2, Strength bonus)/1d4 +1 x2 (*wand of magic missiles*); SA can cast *hold person* once every three rounds, constriction, use magic items; SD *ESP* and *water breathing* at will, *heal* (self) once per day, immune to all known venoms, regenerate 2 hp per day; SZ H (14-foot diameter, 20-foot-long tentacles); ML champion (16); Int genius (17); AL CE; XP 12,000.

75. Greater Gibbering Moucher

This is a very low cavern, its ceiling only rising to 5 feet near the center. A large mound of thick soil reaches up to the ceiling, forming a fat natural pillar in the center of the close chamber. The rest of the chamber seems remarkably clean and tidy, by most standards, almost as if it had been recently swept.



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Pick one PC to make a Wisdom/Intuition check at a -2 penalty to notice that the “central pillar” seems to be slightly pulsating. This is in fact a very large gibbering mouther specifically spawned by the deepspawn in room 74 to guard this approach to the deepspawn’s lair. If characters enter into the chamber, the mouther suddenly opens all its eyes and mouths and attacks the PCs! See the text under room 68 for the full details of gibbering mouthers—noting, however, that the creature in this room is a larger, meaner version formed by the fusion of two normal-sized mouthers.

- **PLAYER’S OPTION Considerations:** The average height of the ceiling in this room is 4½ feet high. PCs taller than 4½ feet suffer a -1 attack penalty for each additional foot of height (round up). Note that the gibbering mouther reaches all the way to the ceiling, sliding along both it and the floor like a horribly animate amoeboid pillar. See the **PLAYER’S OPTION Considerations** under room 68 for further details of this creature’s tactics.

Greater gibbering mouther (1): AC 1; MV 3, swim 6; HD 8+6; hp 55; THACO 12; #AT 6+; Dmg 1 (x6) plus special; SA *gibbering*, spit, bite; SD ground control; SZ H (10-foot diameter); ML elite (14); Int semi (4); AL Neutral; XP 1,950.

76. Empty

This cavern’s ceiling is quite low, only clearing 5 feet around the central column, dropping to 3 feet around the periphery of the cave. The single massive stalactiform column in the center of the cavern is stained with a brown lichenlike growth. Stumps of stalagmites dot the floor, the rubble of their destruction still lying scattered about the chamber.

Nothing lairs in this chamber and nothing of interest can be found here, but PCs who are overly loud in this chamber could well alert the greater gibbering mouther in room 75. The brown lichen on the stalactite which brushes the floor is just what it appears to be, and quite harmless. This room may also serve to foreshadow the possibility that very low ceilings exist within the Twisted Caverns, which could hinder tall characters or characters who use very long weapons.

77. Nothing Much

Darkness shrouds this low chamber like many others within this twisted burrow; however, it is apparently not enough to check the growth of the clump of puffball fungi that seems to have rooted in a long-dead corpse of a now-unrecognizable humanoid form.

The fungi growing on the gibberling corpse is of a benign variety, not at all dangerous to the PCs. There is nothing of real interest to the PCs in this chamber, save as a possible place to rest.

78. An Impromptu Meal

Another widening of the irregular tunnels creates this large chamber. Strange stone boxwork formations cover the ceiling here in large patches. Breaking the silence are intermittent sounds of slurping and gulping, not to mention the occasional distinctive tearing sound which can only be described as rending. These pleasant sounds originate from the group of humanoid figures gathered around a much larger figure lying upon the floor near the southern wall.

A small group of gibberlings are enjoying a hard-won light snack. They were just able to overcome a severely wounded (but regenerating) troll mutate. The troll mutate was the sole survivor of a band of four which ran into some particularly nasty myconids. The trolls and myconids of the Twisted Caverns constantly hunt each other through the warrens, but neither group has so far been successful in completely exterminating the other.

The gibberlings crouch around their prey now, trusting to their stomach acids to keep the troll flesh down (stomach acid is particularly effective for this; it has a pH of 2). So long as there is a meal before them (it will take them 1 turn to complete their dining), the gibberlings ignore the PCs, unless of course the PCs attack them. Note that if the gibberlings leave their meal untended for more than 6 rounds, it will rise up as a troll mutate with only 3 hp (the first round) and attack anything it sees in an unreasoning fury. Troll mutates are covered more fully under the entry for room 79; gibberlings and their **PLAYER’S OPTION** tactical considerations are covered under the entry for room 70.

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Gibberlings (12): AC 10; MV 9; HD 1; hp 4 (average); THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+1 (bone club); SA mass assault; SZ M (5-foot tall); ML unsteady (5); Int low (5-7); AL CN; XP 35 each.

79. Sentry Post

A small widening of the tunnel ahead forms a small chamber from which a total of four tunnels branch. Standing guard are four tall, gangling humanoid figures with mottled, thick-looking moss-green hides. Their hands end in wickedly sharp claws, and their dark eyes burn with bestial intelligence. A closer look reveals that whatever creatures these might be, their forms have been mutated from the standard humanoid form; every one of them has at least one extra eye and extra arm, as well as other less well-developed vestigial appendages and organs hanging limply upon their bodies. Whatever their physical deviations, the creatures seem capable of guarding every one of the tunnels with a pair (or more) of vigilant eyes. A large, crudely made drum stands in the center of the group, with a large stone mallet near at hand.

These are troll mutate sentries, on guard against roving bands of gibberlings, gibbering moutherers, and myconid work bands (the work bands are not aggressive, but the trolls regard anything in these caverns as either dangerous or a possible source of food). The variety of trolls inhabiting the Twisted Caverns have been cruelly shaped by generations of living under the influence of the field of corruption, weakening the vigor of this subspecies. A full detailing of the history and makeup of the troll mutates can be found under the entry for room 80, which the DM should read before running the encounter in this room.

The trolls in this chamber seek to repel any creature that might wish to travel down the corridors leading to rooms 80, 81, and 82. If the PCs make themselves known but do not attack, the sentries maintain their positions without giving sound to a general warning. The narrow bottleneck of the corridor makes it difficult for any large force to use its numbers in the most effective manner. A single Large troll can block up a tunnel, with its fellows behind it screaming trollish obscenities. If they are attacked, one of the creatures grabs up the mallet and begins pounding out a thrumming, echoing alarm. Other troll mutates respond from rooms 80 and 82 to back up



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this room's guards. The trolls send a band of 5 hunter-seekers to track down any group (including PCs) which breaks off attack and flees back into the warrens.

- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** Refer to the description of room 80 for more references to the troll mutates' combat tactics. Reinforcements from rooms 80 & 82 begin to arrive 3 combat rounds after the initial sounding of the drum at the rate of 1d4 troll mutates for every round that the drum continues to sound. The maximum number of reinforcements that can respond is limited by the total number of trolls that inhabit rooms 80 & 82: thirty-six trolls plus the troll matriarch herself, who will be the final reinforcement. The trolls in room 81 will not respond to a warning; their foremost duty lies in protecting the newly born young.

Troll mutates (4): AC 4; MV 12; HD 3+3; hp 15, 18, 16, 20; THAC0 17; #AT 4; Dmg 1d4+1/1d4+1/1d4+1/1d8+2 (claw/claw/claw/bite); SA severed limbs can attack independently; SD regeneration (3 hp per round); SZ L (8-foot tall); ML elite (14); Int low (5-7); AL CE; XP 1,000 each.

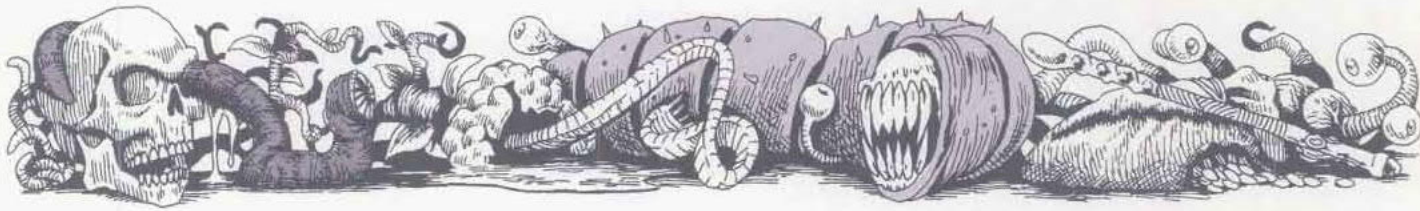
80. Where The Matriarch Rules

A large cavern opens from the rough tunnel. A dim light emanates from several of the natural pillars and numerous stalactites. Revealed by this faerie glow are dozens of very large, grossly misshapen humanoids which seem to be competing one against the next in brutal wrestling bouts. The warped shadows of the competitors writhe grotesquely upon the uneven cavern walls. All of the creatures possess vestigial appendages and organs sprouting randomly upon their bodies, flopping wildly during their gyrating exertions. Presiding over the entire affair is a huge creature of enormous girth. It has two arms, two heads, and a thick, tentacle-like tail. It sits upon a throne of piled bones, intently watching the dancing before it with both of its large heads.

If the troll-mutate lair is on alert from recent drumming, any creatures left in this room are on guard, ready for an attack. There are usually 26 troll-mutates in this room, plus their leader; be sure to subtract any who rushed to the aid of their fellows in room 79 and came to grief there from this total. All the trolls present here attack invading PCs on sight.

Trolls found their way into Firestorm Peak long ago during one of the infrequent openings of the Outer Gates of the mountain. Against all odds, they have managed to survive up to the present; however, their physical integrity has been compromised by the mutating effects of the field of corruption. The trolls were particularly susceptible to the effects of the contamination because of their regenerative powers. Every time a troll is damaged, its body seeks to compensate by inducing hyperactive healing. Unfortunately, this regenerative power combined with the field of corruption produces a much-increased chance of mutating the effects of the healing. Every time a troll regenerates more than 20 hit points, there is a 20% chance that a vestigial appendage or organ grows upon the regenerated spot. There is a 50% chance that this new limb or organ will grow into full usefulness within 24 hours. Otherwise it just hangs upon the troll in grotesque parody of the real thing, especially when the organ generated is normally an internal one. After generations of this effect, some of the mutations have started to breed true, including extra eyes and a fully developed extra limb. However, the overall vigor of the species has decreased due to constant exposure to the field of corruption, so that the average individual troll mutate has half the HD of a normal troll and does less damage with its claw and bite attacks.

The troll matriarch, however, is a throwback to earlier generations. Her strength is as stone and her vitality is legend among those she rules. That it is not to say that she has escaped the mutational effect of the field of corruption but that these effects have not detracted from her abilities. In fact, she has actually gained a couple of useful talents. She has grown a tentacle-like tail which can whip over her heads to deliver a stunning blow for 1d6+3 points of damage. Unlike most of her people, she does not possess an extra arm, but she has sprouted a fully functional extra head, allowing her an additional bite attack per round. As if this were not enough, all this extra gray matter has endowed her with the psionic-like ability to project a powerful telekinetic force thrice per day. The troll-mutate matriarch can successfully trigger this power if she rolls equal to or less than a 16 on a d20. If used offensively, the telekinetic blast causes damage equal to 2d6 hit points plus the target's AC (negative ACs reduce the damage). If the matriarch forgoes both bite attacks in a round, she can use this telekinetic blast ability alone or in conjunction with her claw and tail attacks. If DM is running a psionic campaign, treat the matriarch as a wild talent with 30 PSPs with an improved Project Force devotion.



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The troll matriarch rules here due to her strength. All the other trolls in the warren are males because she kills all females who are born in order to insure her own supremacy. She keeps the troll lair organized to a greater degree than some of her surface cousins; to do otherwise would invite destruction by the gibberling hordes, myconids, or the other random terrors which roam the Twisted Caverns. She knows by scent that some few (15 in all) of her trolls are different in some way than the others, but she doesn't know that they are actually spawn of the deepspawn, ready to obey it and disregard the matriarch if necessary.

PCs who overcome the troll mutates or send them fleeing down the tunnels can search the lair for valuables. All valuables collected by the troll mutates (mostly from Duerger) are confiscated by the matriarch. If the PCs take one turn sifting through the bones which comprise the matriarch's "throne," they recover the following: the Cloak of Otherwhere (a *cloak of displacement* sized for dwarves), a pair of nephelium-forged gauntlets enruned as "Gloves of Impact" (those wearing the gauntlets do an additional 1d6 damage with whatever melee weapon they normally use), 215 sp, 539 gp, and 6 gems each worth 55 gp.

• **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** Troll mutates attack with their claws and bite in the average phase, able to divide up their attacks against multiple targets if they so desire. The claws of a troll can deliver a d6 knockdown die. Note that these trolls have one additional claw attack due to their extra appendage. These trolls regenerate at 3 hp a round, beginning the third round after first taking damage. The troll matriarch lacks any additional claw attacks but does gain one additional bite attack and a tail attack, all of which she can get off with her two claw attacks in the average phase. The tail attack delivers a d8 knockdown die. The matriarch can use her Projected Force ability in the very fast phase of the combat round and then still attack with her claws and tail in the average phase of the same round. The telekinetic blast delivers a d12 knockdown die. While in her throne room, the matriarch commands her troll mutates to attack the PCs from all sides, hoping to gain flank and rear attacks against the intruders.

Troll mutates (26): AC 4; MV 12; HD 3+3; hp 15 (average); THAC0 17; #AT 4; Dmg 1d4+1/1d4+1/1d4+1/1d8+2 (claw/claw/claw/bite); SA severed limbs can attack

independently; SD regeneration (3 hp per round); SZ L (8-foot tall); ML elite (14); Int low (5-7); AL CE; XP 1,000 each.

Troll matriarch: AC 4; MV 12; HD 6+6; hp 51; THAC0 13; #AT 5; Dmg 4d4+4/4d4+4/1d8+4/1d8+4/1d6+3 (claw/claw/bite/bite/tail); SA telekinetic blast thrice per day, severed limbs can attack independently; SD regeneration (3 hp per round); SZ L (9-foot tall); ML champion (16); Int average (8); AL CE; XP 3,000.

81. Troll Nursery

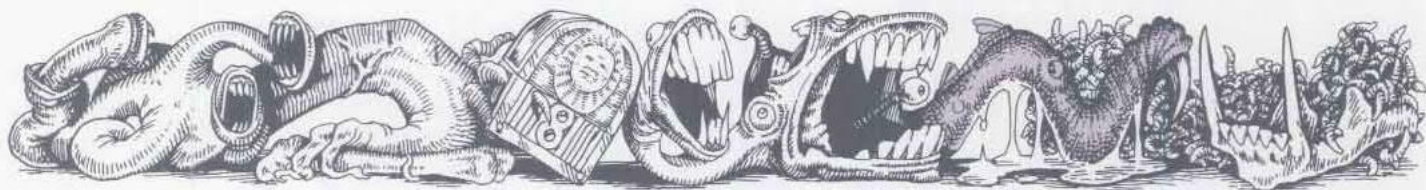
The floor of this cavern is covered with rotting hides, uprooted vegetation, and matted hair. Sitting in various places about the room are small creatures. They look to be almost humanoid, except for their green skins, extra eyes, and three arms. The little creatures seem to be amusing themselves with games of wrestling and chase, rather like kittens. There are also four adults in the chamber, in form similar to the younglings, who seem to be acting as either guardians or nursemaids. They stand about the room, fondly intent on watching the antics of their small charges.

Newborn and young trolls are tended here by a staff carefully selected by the matriarch. It wouldn't do for an adult troll to lose patience with its charges, slaying them out of hand. The matriarch only gives birth to a litter once every five years; thus every young one is important to the lair as a whole.

The adult guardians in this room do not respond to any warning drumbeats. Instead they stand ready to defend the young with their lives, unwilling to let foes harm their charges.

• **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** See the entries under rooms 79 and 80 for full details. The infants are non-combatants.

Troll mutates (4): AC 4; MV 12; HD 3+3; hp 27, 25, 22, 23; THAC0 17; #AT 4; Dmg 1d4+1/1d4+1/1d4+1/1d8+2 (claw/claw/claw/bite); SA severed limbs can attack independently; SD regeneration (3 hp per round); SZ L (8-foot tall); ML elite (14); Int low (5-7); AL CE; XP 1,000 each.



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82. Troll Ready Room

At least a dozen green-skinned humanoid mutates lounge about a high cavern in various states of relaxation. Mats of moss and hair are pushed into the corners, possibly serving as mattresses for the warped creatures who abide here. Several of the creatures are gathered around a haunch of gibberling, tearing at the flesh with hungry gusto.

There are ten troll mutates in this room at all times, although the actual individuals change from day to day. These creatures are supposed to be ready to respond quickly to drumbeats from room 79, but they often fall to lounging between the infrequent inspections of the matriarch. Nothing of much value to the PCs can be found in this cavern.

- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** See the entries under rooms 79 and 80 for trollish tactical references.

Troll mutates (10): AC 4; MV 12; HD 3+3; hp 15 (average); THAC0 17; #AT 4; Dmg 1d4+1/1d4+1/1d4+1/1d8+2 (claw/claw/claw/bite); SA severed limbs can attack independently; SD regeneration (3 hp per round); SZ L (8-foot tall); ML elite (14); Int low (5-7); AL CE; XP 1,000 each.

83. Empty

This cavern appears utterly empty. Even the rubble, dust, and dirt to which you have been accustomed are absent here. The bare rock of the cavern walls remain mute on the subject, however, offering no clue as to who or what keeps this cavern so clean.

Periodically, the greater gibbering moulder in room 75 fissions (by command of the deepspawn) and sends half of its protoplasm directly south to this chamber, where it monitors passage by the other denizens of the caverns. If the PCs take the time to look, they see that the tunnel leading north to area 75 is similarly swept clean by the moulder's flowing mode of travel. When the moulder sentry finishes its monitoring, it travels back up to room 75 and fuses back into the main mass, creating the full HD greater gibbering moulder once again. If the PCs have not yet been in room 75, they have a 4% chance of running upon the sentry, a normal-sized gibbering moulder, in this chamber.

84. Deep and Wide

Before you is a wide cavern whose ceiling rises up into the shadows. The area is dominated by a jagged cleft in the earth, running from a gaping cavity to the south towards the northern wall, almost but not quite cutting off access to the eastern portion of the cavern. A faint but insistent droning hum rises from the depths of the crevice, echoing ominously throughout the chamber.

The crevice existed within Firestorm Peak as a natural vent long before the tunnels of the Twisted Caverns were burrowed by the strange creatures who now reside there. At its broadest, the crevice is 5-feet wide; however, it does not reach across the entire length of the chamber, so access to the tunnels beyond is not cut off. Characters gazing down into the depths of the crack will be hard pressed to locate the bottom, even with a light source. This is mainly due to the webbing which bridges the crack some 40 feet down the shaft (see room 85 for the spinner). The crack itself descends much farther, down for almost a mile, drawing ever smaller and thinner until only a few seemingly innocuous cracks open onto a forgotten tunnel of the underdeeps far below. Cave insects (the only things small enough) from the underdeeps have migrated up the cracks and now live all along the walls in a multitude of varieties. The small creatures are attracted by the field of corruption but tend to die off when they get too close; thus they remain in the crevice. The insects are not normally dangerous to the PCs, although they are a constant annoyance to any character who takes it into his or her head to climb down into the crack to check out the webbing. The webbing has a 20% chance of breaking per human-sized object that falls a full 40 feet on it. Living beings who fall through the web quickly attain terminal velocity, until the crevice narrows to such an extent that the poor soul is subject to traumatic deceleration, taking 20d6 points of damage.

To the south, the crevice extends through the solid stone to room 85. PCs who make any noise within room 84 have a 75% chance of drawing the attention of the whisper spider from the next room; the creature is always alerted if the web in the crevice is disturbed in any way. If aware of intruders, the arachnid quickly scuttles over to investigate by way of the crevice. If it finds tasty-looking gibberling-sized morsels, such as the PCs, it marks one of the characters as its next meal, setting in motion a hunt as described under room 85.

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85. You'd Best Whisper . . .

This medium-sized cavern seems empty. There do not appear to be any exits other than the tunnel by which you entered. A large chasm fills the northeastern portion of the room, from which rises the trill of what sounds like many hundreds or even thousands of insects.

A gargantuan spider makes its home beneath the lip of the crevice in this chamber. It passed up through the small cracks of the vent long ago when it was first hatched far below. Over time it has grown to its present size and slowly developed intelligence beyond what is normal for its species. Whisper spiders possess soft bodies, enabling them to squeeze their 20-foot-diameter bulk through openings as narrow as 8-feet wide. The spider has never ventured too far from room 84 and 85 in its adult life, as many of the tunnels within the Twisted Caverns are only 5-feet wide. The creature subsists on a steady diet of the insects which literally coat the interior of the shaft; however, the creature supplements its diet with red meat whenever possible.

While there are certainly more dangerous creatures within the Twisted Caverns, this spider's out-of-the-way lair and cautious habits have allowed it to thrive. It normally only attacks gibberlings or the rare Duergar, as singly these creatures are quite weak in the spider's estimation. If it detects the PCs, the spider assumes the party to be of the same power level as gibberlings (unless they display some showy magic that would indicate otherwise) and begins to make preparations for its next meal.

The whisper spider will under no circumstances attack the party head-on. It prefers to hide within the crevice (flattening itself into a cavity, thus becoming 80% undetectable) in the event of intrusion into either this cavern or in area 84. When any intruder party leaves, it silently scuttles up from the crack, moves quickly up to the hindmost character before the victim can get out of reach through a 5-foot-wide tunnel, and attempts a bite attack. Any creature so attacked has to make a surprise roll at a -5 penalty (unless the player specifically states that his or her character is keeping an eye out behind) due to the almost supernatural silence that the spider can command even with its vast bulk. If the spider's bite successfully poisons the victim, it shoots a web strand to bind the unconscious character and attempts to drag him or her back down into the crevice before the rest of the party can get in any telling blows, or even become aware of their missing comrade!

The spider keeps its small store of collected treasure in a cavity 40 feet down from the lip of the vent, at the level of the net-like web (see room 84). The cavity contains 2 gems worth 100 gp apiece, a pair of earrings inset with large diamonds worth 200 gp for the set, and a vial labeled "Potion of Spiderkind" (affects imbiber as a spell of *spider climb* cast at the 6th level of ability).

- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** This spider is huge! Its ability to squeeze through passages less than half its normal width enables it to operate throughout the small confines of these two caverns, but it still takes up the maximum space available while in combat, up to its full 20-foot width and 10-foot length (4 combat squares across and 2 combat squares deep), thereby significantly reducing the chance of an opponent getting a flank or rear attack on it. The gargantuan spider attacks in the very slow phase of the combat round due to its bulk. Its poisonous bite does not deliver a knockdown die. The spider will not use its ability to bind its prey with a web strand or net if the victim is not already unconscious—it hasn't survived this long by needlessly entering into combat if it doesn't have to. It defends itself viciously if there are no other options, but it prefers to bargain when backed into a corner (so to speak), ransoming its life with information or by promising to revive a stricken opponent.

Whisper Spider (1): AC 4; MV 9, web 12; HD 8+8; hp 70; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg 2d6 (bite); SA poison (causes coma for 2d4 turns on a failed saving throw vs. poison, -2 penalty to saving throw), stealth (-5 penalty to opponents' surprise rolls), shoot webs (2-foot range, ignores armor, binds opponent); SD 80% undetectable; SZ G (10-foot long, 20-foot in diameter); ML elite (14); Int average (10); AL CE; XP 3,000.

86. Pit Of Fungal Distress

This large cavern appears to be another typical subterranean room within these twisting caverns. Nothing beyond the ordinary natural cavernous features seems to be present within the chamber. The only apparent exits are in the northeastern and southeastern corners.

This room has been insidiously trapped by the myconids who live nearby in rooms 88 to 91 in order to guard their domain from wandering creatures of mad-

ness. When the myconids first discovered this underground complex centuries ago, it was far more quiet and therefore seemed a perfect out-of-the-way place to begin a colony. Unfortunately, the activity of the creatures within these warrens has increased of late, forcing the once-peaceful myconids into an aggressively defensive posture. After all, attacks are not necessary if your defensive maneuvers keep your enemy weak and unbalanced. This is particularly true for the gibberlings and gibbering mouters, which wander randomly in large groups, attacking anything they lay eyes upon.

This cavern has a large portion of its floor trapped. The entire middle section looks like normal, dusty cavern floor but is actually composed of intricately treated fungus fibers to form large tiles. The tiles have been fitted together over a large pit and then camouflaged with loose dirt, scree, and rocky debris (the portion of the cavern floor disguised in this manner is indicated on the map). Within the pit, the myconids regularly tend a nasty bed of fungal delight. Any weight in excess of 40 lbs causes a 5-foot by 5-foot section of tile to give way, dropping the offending creature 10 feet down into a bed of russet mold if he or she fails a Dexterity/Balance check at a -3 penalty (note that characters seeking to rescue their friend who come too close to the newly made hole may be plummeted into the pit in turn as fresh pieces of the tile break off). The mold covers the bottom of the entire pit. In addition to the initial 1d6 points of falling damage, while within 3 feet of the mold the victim also takes 5d4 points of damage per round from the bed of mold's cloud of spores. Also, the victim must successfully save vs. poison or become infected with spore sickness. Victims of spore sickness are instantly paralyzed and die in 5d4 minutes unless they receive magical aid in the form of a *cure disease* or similar spell. Anyone who dies from spore sickness begins to sprout mold growths; when completely covered in mold (1d4 + 20 hours), the victim is transformed into either a myconid of the lowest HD type or a fungal zombie under the command of the myconid king (DM's choice).

Russet mold (1): AC 9; MV 0; HD n/a; hp n/a; THACO n/a; #AT 0; Dmg 5d4 (spores); SA spore sickness; SD immune to weapons, fire, cold; SW killed by alcohol, acid, salt, or *cure disease*; SZ L (10-foot by 25-foot mat); ML n/a; Int non-(0); AL N; XP 35.



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87. Fungal Zombie Defense Post

Both of the western entrances to this chamber are trapped with a hallucinogenic powder produced by the myconids. The powder is bundled and placed on a spider-silk film covering the tunnel entrances. Creatures breaking through the gauzy film release the powder into the air in a 20-foot radius affecting characters as hallucinogenic spores (these are fully described under the description for room 91). Further, any tearing of the gauzy webbing covering the western entrances alerts the many fungal zombies in the room, who attack any and all intruders. Read the following text after the PCs have broken into the room.

This cavern runs at least 40 feet north to south but is only about 20 feet wide. Literally filling this room are dozens of humanoid-shaped creatures seemingly made of purple fungus. A closer look and a sniff reveals that the fungus covers dead flesh; these creatures seem to be some type of zombies. Before you can do much more than register this fact, they all begin to shuffle towards you, raising bony claws and uttering horrid, choking moans.

This room serves as an ideal sentry station for the fungal zombies animated by the king myconid. The fungal animations can be commanded by the king, and these are under orders to attack any non-myconid entering through the western tunnels. The zombies are mostly made up of gibberlings, although there are a few troll mutates and Duergar among the bunch. The zombies are not actually undead but automatons animated by the fungus; thus, they are unturnable. They only last about five weeks before they rot to uselessness, so the king myconid continually reanimates fresh gibberling corpses to keep the force at full strength. The purpose of this room is to keep invading creatures occupied while myconids from rooms 89 and 90 respond to the sounds of conflict with preparations for a fight.

- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** These creatures fight to the end, without checking for morale. They are slow and shambling; their two attacks both go off in the very slow round. They do so little damage with each attack that they do not deliver a knockdown die.

Fungal zombies (30): AC 10; MV 9; HD 1; hp 4 each; THAC0 19; #AT 2; Dmg 1d3/1d3 (bony claws); SD immune to sleep, charm, hold, and similar spells, cannot be turned, holy water has no effect; SZ M (5-foot tall); ML fearless (20); Int non- (0); AL N; XP 25 each.

88. Myconid Farm

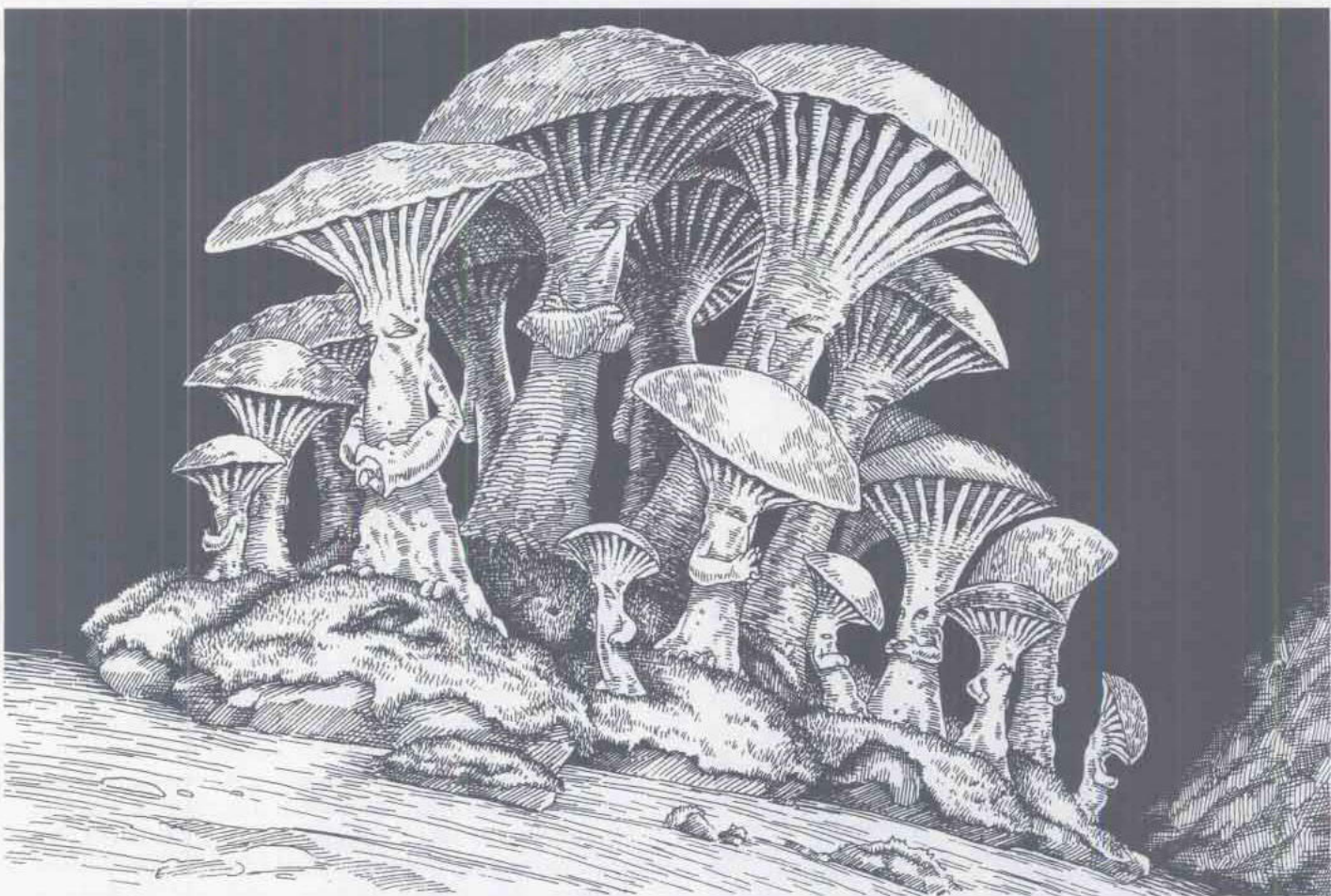
This chamber is absolutely filled, floor to ceiling, with a wild diversity of fungal life forms, including gigantic mushrooms, small polyps, toadstools, lichen, molds of all colors, and more. Strangely enough, there seems to be a definite pattern of growth among the fungi, as if they were specifically planted just so. It almost seems as if this might be some sort of subterranean garden.

This chamber is indeed a small fungal farm tended by the myconids of this colony. When they can get it, the myconids use the remains of troll mutates for fertilizer, as trolls make excellent blood meal when plowed into the rather acidic soil. The myconids use the produce of this farm for both food and as constituents in the strange potions and powders that they often brew. There is a 33% chance for the party to find one of the circles from either room 89 or 90 in here tending the fungi. If the sounds of conflict in room 87 precede the party, any myconids found here will be prepared to defend themselves (see entry 91 for more details about myconid abilities). Note that if either of the 20-member circles are found here, they will not afterwards be in their normal sleeping and melding cavern.

The variety of fungal plants in this room is truly diverse. In addition to the darkscape mushroom, there are several other varieties of medicinal and poisonous plants. PCs with the Herbalism proficiency can find a host of ingredients here for nonmagical potions, balms, and powders at the DM's discretion (see the Herbalism proficiency's description in the *Player's Handbook*). If the player purposes such activities, the suggested time of preparation is 1d4 hours per concoction devised.

89. Third Circle

This cavern is dominated by a very large series of circular moss-covered stones layered one upon the other to form a wide, low, circular pyramid-like structure. There is a basin, filled with a clear liquid, inset in the center of the highest circular layer. Poised upon the platform in a large circle are many figures—variously sized humanoids which have too much in common with toadstools. Their flesh is bloated and spongy, varying in color from purple to gray. Their dark eyes burn with an uncanny fungal intelligence.



If the PCs fought their way through room 87, the twenty myconids here are ready for intruders. However, myconids never strike the first blow, being peaceable creatures at heart. If the party approaches them in a peaceful manner, the myconids may communicate with their *rapport* spores, although they remain suspicious. If PCs seek to barter with the myconids for information, sanctuary, or help, the myconids in this room usher the party to room 91, where the king myconid dwells.

If the PCs somehow manage to arrive silently, there is a 33% chance they find the myconids in a meld-trance, a 33% chance that the myconids are sleeping, or a 33% chance that the myconids are in cavern 88 tending to the farm (unless these myconids or the myconids of the Second Circle have already been found there). In any of these cases, the PCs may move through the room as they like. If they disturb one melded myconid, all of the others come out of their trance as well. PCs who wake a sleeping myconid will be doused in *distress* spores, which expands in a cloud at a rate of 40 feet per round, awakening every myconid in the chamber the very next round. PCs who investigate the basin find fresh, clear spring water (it seeps through the rock from the same sources that feed the pool in room 73).

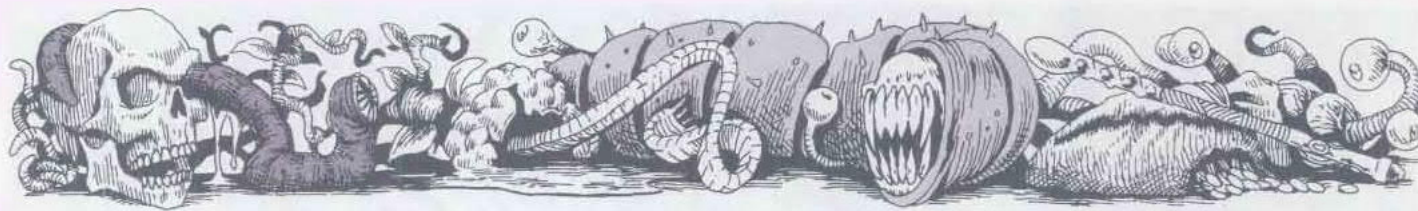
• **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** See room 91 for full details.

Myconids (5): AC 10; MV 9; HD 2; hp 12 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 2d4 (clasped fists); SD spores: *distress, reproducer*; SZ S (4-foot tall); ML steady (12); Int average (8–10); AL LN; XP 120 each.

Myconids (5): AC 10; MV 9; HD 3; hp 18 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 3d4 (clasped fists); SD spores: *distress, reproducer, rapport*; SZ M (6-foot tall); ML steady (12); Int average (8–10); AL LN; XP 175 each.

Myconids (5): AC 10; MV 9; HD 4; hp 24 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 4d4 (clasped fists); SD spores: *distress, reproducer, rapport, pacifier*; SZ L (8-foot tall); ML steady (12); Int average (8–10); AL LN; XP 270 each.

Myconids (5): AC 10; MV 9; HD 5; hp 30 each; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 5d4 (clasped fists); SD spores: *distress, reproducer, rapport, pacifier, hallucinator*; SZ L (10-foot tall); ML steady (12); Int average (8–10); AL LN; XP 420 each.



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90. Second Circle

Barring differences in location and cavern shape, this chamber shares all relevant details with room 89; the room contains a circular mound inhabited by twenty myconids. The myconids in this room react to PC intrusions in the same manner described for room 89.

91. First Circle

The northern portion of this cavern is taken up by a large, flat boulder, which is coated with a yellow-hued mold. An indentation on the south side of the boulder at ground level seems to provide a regal resting point for a mushroom humanoid whose crenelated cap just brushes the 12-foot-high ceiling. Its hands rest in cavities in the rock, out of sight. Surrounding this imposing figure are five additional fungus-folk whose stature is almost as great as the central figure's. These five seem to be hyper-alert, ready to defend the central figure from any and all threats. An air of solemn, quiet expectation hangs in the dark cavern like a cloak, but not a sound is uttered by the strange fungal folk.

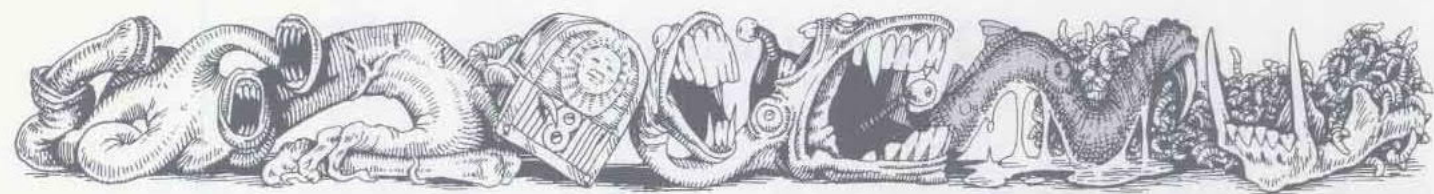
If the PCs enter here peaceably, a good reaction roll on the part of the king myconid (the myconid standing in the hollow of the boulder) allows the characters to tell their tale. The myconid king emits a puff of *rapport* spores at the PCs so that they may all speak mind to mind. The king is very interested to learn that the party plans to penetrate into the Inner Sanctum, as the myconid leader knows that the source of the foul abominations which walk the caverns is within those old walls. It knows that these subterranean ruins have existed since the time of the Elder Elves, and that these ancient beings may very well have been responsible for the original constructions. Further, the king can confirm that a human calling itself Madreus has recently appeared in the Inner Complex and claims rulership over all the creatures of the Twisted Caverns. The king doesn't bow to these dictates, and so far nothing has been able to dislodge the fungus folk from their colony. Most importantly, the large myconid tells the party that an ancient magic known as the Vast Gate is responsible for the current depravities. Through *rapport*-interrogations of a few of Madreus' agents over the last few decades, combined with weird meld-visions from the myconid's fungal god, the king has discovered that the one thing that could change the alignment of the Vast Gate are three Crystal Components. The king does not know what these items

look like or how they might be used. If asked, the king has no knowledge of Nigel or Nigel's companions. If the PCs peacefully garner any of this information, reward them 200 XP apiece for acting sensibly and gathering pertinent information.

If the characters swear to the myconid leader that they will do their utmost to end the supposed reign of Madreus, the king may deign to assist the PCs. While the great majority of myconids detest violence, it's nothing the king and its bodyguards haven't seen before; they remain always apart from the myconid-melds so that they can properly defend the colony from enemies. A DM who feels that the PCs have stated their case in a convincing manner should allow the king to send its strongest 5-HD bodyguard to assist the PCs in the completion of their quest. Furthermore, it arms the myconid with one of its personal weapons described below. The king also gives the PCs three stoppered, hardened plant pods, explaining that they contain the distilled essence of the myconids' hope for peace (each pod is filled with a liquid identical to one *potion of extra healing*).

The leader of the myconids resides in this chamber, spending a large portion of its time standing at its rock throne; myconids do not bend easily, and spend most of their lives standing. The boulder which serves as its throne is covered with dangerous yellow mold. Rough contact has a 50% chance of causing the mold to emit deadly spores; luckily, this colony of myconids has developed an immunity. The myconid leader has two specially prepared clubs of rock which lie in the cavities of the boulder. The yellow mold grows over these clubs if left undisturbed for a week; thus the king myconid always has a very lethal weapon for use against animal-descended organisms close at hand. Each time the king strikes a foe with such a club, there is a 50% chance that the mold releases a cloud of spores in a 10-foot radius. Any creature caught in the cloud must roll a successful saving throw vs. poison or die! Each club can emit a spore cloud only once before it must be replaced in its stone cavity and allowed to "recharge." In the hands of a myconid, the club delivers the same amount of damage as an unarmed myconid of the same HD.

The myconids have been sorely pressed of late to defend their colony. Their normally peaceful routines have been disrupted by their neighbor's strategies of unrelenting aggression. Luckily the myconids have not been compromised by the field of corruption; their fungal bodies and minds seem to offer some immunity from the worst mutational affects of the contamination. However,



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the best-laid plans for peace are easily disrupted by a foe intent on war, and this fact is not lost upon the myconids. In addition to the powerful blows the older myconids can deliver, all the fungus people can emit spores of various types. A 1-HD myconid can emit *distress* spores, which alert all other myconids to danger in a 120-foot radius. At 2-HD, myconids can emit *reproducer* spores capable of sprouting new myconids. At 3-HD, the myconids gain the ability to produce *rapport* spores, allowing them to silently speak with all creatures with a mind. At 4-HD, a myconid can emit a 40-foot-radius cloud of *pacifier* spores that cause all creatures who fail a saving throw vs. poison to stand totally passive for a number of rounds equal to the HD of the myconid who emitted the spores. At 5-HD, a myconid can emit a puff of *hallucinator* spores at one creature, and if that creature fails its saving throw vs. poison, it suffers violent, debilitating hallucinations for a number of turns equal to the HD of the myconid. At 6-HD (only the king myconid has 6 HD), the king can produce *animator* spores, which animate dead humanoid creatures for the defense of the colony; the results of this ability can be found in room 87.

- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** Normal myconids never initiate combat with a physical blow due to their peaceful natures; those that are able (4- and 5-HD myconids) may attempt to end a conflict before it truly begins by emitting a cloud of *pacifier* spores. Myconids can release all spore types in the very fast round. If they wished, myconids could physically attack in the same phase in which they released spores. Thus a S-sized myconid could attack with its clasped fists in the very fast phase, size M myconids can physically attack in the fast phase, and the size L myconids would get off swings in the average phase. Myconids wielding rock clubs may likewise attack in the average phase.

Myconids (5): AC 10; MV 9; HD 5; hp 40, 38, 39, 37, 39; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 5d4 (fist); SD spores: *distress*, *reproducer*, *rapport*, *pacifier*, *hallucinator*; SZ L (10-foot tall); ML elite (13); Int average (10); AL LN; XP 420 each.

King myconid: AC 10; MV 9; HD 6; hp 45; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 6d4 (fist or club); SA moldy club (save vs. poison or die); SD spores: *distress*, *reproducer*, *rapport*, *pacifier*, *hallucinator*, *animator*; SZ L (12-foot tall); ML elite (13); Int very (12); AL LN; XP 650.

92. Duergar Survivors

A weak, flickering light chases brief shadows from the mouth of this chamber, accompanied by the fatty smell of roasting flesh. A closer look reveals a small bank of candles against the southern wall of the chamber, over which a spit is slowly turned by a short, broad figure. Another figure of the same stature lies nearby, groaning in apparent pain.

These two Duergar are on a darkscape-gathering run, but they have been chased horribly off-course by a series of unfortunate run-ins with the denizens of the Twisted Caverns. They have holed up in this cavern, as the creatures of the Twisted Caverns do not seem to go in this direction. After losing most of their rations in their last encounter with a gibbering mouter, these two have been reduced to catching and eating cave rats while the wounded Duergar regains his strength. The healthy dark dwarf has been tempted to leave her hurt companion behind, but she knows that by herself she stands virtually no chance of getting back to Duergar-controlled territory. And besides, that wouldn't be the lawful thing to do.

The PCs can avoid a small conflict here if they wish. The two Duergar here have been out of touch since before the opening of the Outer Gates and are thus unaware of Wellfast's order to kill any obviously upperworld party on sight. The single healthy Duergar will not act in an aggressive manner, and good PCs should avoid killing the dwarf if they don't have a good reason. If the PCs ask the dark dwarf for assistance (they need to be able to speak Duergaric), she shakes her head, mumbling "I just want to get back home"—all of the Duergar have heard enough horror stories about the Inner Sanctum to know enough to keep well away from its dark master unless explicitly summoned into his presence. If the PCs heal the wounded Duergar, award each PC 50 XP for their generous impulse; however, this will not change either of the Duergar's minds. Under no circumstances will they progress further into the complex towards the east. They had a look in that direction, and they didn't at all like what they saw (a horribly animated wall of flesh). The wounded Duergar gives the PCs four doses of darkscape if they healed him, explaining its usefulness against the gibberlings and gibbering mouters.

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Duergar (2): AC 4; MV 6 (12 when *enlarged*); HD 3+6; hp 29, 3 (wounded); THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+1 (footman's pickaxe), x3 when *enlarged*; SA *invisibility, enlargement, stealth* (-2 penalty to opponents' surprise rolls); SD +4 bonus to saving throws vs. spell, immune to paralysis, illusion/phantasm spells, and poison, rarely surprised (1-in-10 chance); SZ S (4-foot tall) or H (15-foot-tall); ML elite (13); Int high (13), very (12); AL LE; XP 975 each.

93. The Fate Of One . . .

The eastern side of this rough cavern has been blocked up by a wall, but what a wall! The barrier appears to be a rotting bulwark of limbs, hands, bones, and faces, twisted and fused together into a connective mass of protoplasm. However, there is one complete humanoid form which hangs spread-eagle, half submerged in the center of the wall. It appears to be a human woman, attached in fleshy bas-relief onto the corrupt surface. As you eye her terrible predicament, the woman suddenly opens her eyes, holds her arms towards you and cries, "Help me! Pull me free! Please, for the love of light, you must help me!"

When Nigel and his companions finally found the Inner Sanctum and the Vast Gate, they were unprepared to deal with the maniacal manifestations of Madreus. Derik's and Wellfast's fates have been described earlier in the text; the boundary wall of alienoid plasm found here was Quaren's fate. Using a twisted spell of his own devising, Madreus incorporated Quaren's living body into a barrier which would further protect his inner realm against random adventurers in the future. Quaren is now completely under the control of Madreus. Unlike the standard living wall described in the *MONSTROUS MANUAL*, Quaren cannot attack her creator. In fact, the wall automatically opens for Madreus and his minions, allowing the Alienist to keep track of the activities in the Twisted Caverns and Duergar colony. On occasion, some of Madreus' more horrible alienoid slaves venture forth for prey, including the neh-thalggu and dharculus.

Quaren's mind is wrecked; she only has a facade of her former memories and personality. The memories she does possess give her a 20% chance to recognize one of the PCs as Nigel's offspring. If this occurs, the portion of the wall with Quaren's shape calls out that PC's name in a disbelieving tone, begging with outstretched arms to be pulled free. Even in the event that



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it does not recognize any of the PCs, the wall still reaches out with Quaren's arms and begs for help. If any member of the party is so moved by this entreaty that he or she grabs one of the groping hands and pulls, that character must make a successful saving throw vs. spells (unless the DM decides that a Strength/Muscle check at a +4 penalty may be more appropriate) as Quaren screams in pain and convulsively jerks back, pulling the character *into* the wall, where he or she is absorbed in turn. Other characters viewing this can elect to grab the trapped PC's hand; however, if they fail their own saves or checks in turn, they are also pulled into the wall. Those absorbed into the wall cannot be recovered by any means short of a *wish*. Viewing a companion being absorbed and then becoming a part of the wall should necessitate a check vs. Wisdom/Willpower; those who fail this check stand rooted in horror for 1d4 rounds, unable to initiate any activity (note that those standing too near may be grabbed by the wall and pulled into its rotting mass).

Passwall and similar spells do not allow passage through the wall; only physical cutting or magical blasting can provide an appropriate opening, which constitutes an attack upon the living wall. The wall never initiates physical combat but responds strongly to an attack. The wall is able to extrude arms and attack simultaneously with the weapons of any creature it has absorbed. It can also cast the memorized spells of any wizard (but not priest) it has absorbed while at the same time delivering physical attacks. These spells are automatically re-energized after 24 hours. Any PC absorbed immediately becomes available for the wall to use against his or her erstwhile companions. So far Quaren the wall has absorbed 2 Duergar, 23 gibberlings, 1 myconid, and 1 troll mutate. The PCs must reduce the wall to 50% of its full hit point total in order to cut a hole big enough to fit human-sized creatures through. Keep in mind that the troll mutate absorbed by the wall allows the whole creature to regenerate 1 hp per round and that if the wall is still alive it will attack creatures passing through a rent in its body, as well as attacking creatures who make it through the wall to its opposite side. There is a 20% chance each round that Quaren's tortured personality briefly reasserts itself and tearfully whispers for them to flee and save themselves, attacking all the while; if the characters succeed in destroying the wall, Quaren—the entire back half of her body eaten away by the wall—begs forgiveness from Nigel's son or daughter with her dying breath.

- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** The Duergar arms wielding battle axes attack in the very fast phase, the clawed gibberling arms attack in the fast phase, while the arms of the myconid and troll mutate attack in the average phase (the troll gets two claw attacks). Quaren herself was a mage and the living wall uses her spells to their full effect against attackers. Quaren's spells are all 3rd-level or below, and thus can all be cast in the fast phase. A single PC standing within 5 feet of the wall can be attacked by 9 pairs of arms at once (3 sets per 5-foot section of wall, with arms from vertical squares adjacent to the facing 5-foot section also able to get in attacks). The arms which attack the PC are randomly determined. For the sake of convenience, assume all the physical attacks of the wall deliver a d6 knockdown die.

Living wall (1): AC 6; MV nil; HD 36, hp 158; THAC0 19 (gibberling arms, Duergar arms), 15 (myconid limbs), 17 (troll arms); #AT 28; Dmg 1d4+1 x23 (gibberling limbs)/1d8 x2 (Duergar arms with battle axes)/ 5d4 (clasped myconid limbs)/1d4+1 x2 (troll arms); SA can cast spells as 5th-level mage (*burning hands, charm person, comprehend languages, magic missile, flaming sphere, pyrotechnics, lightning bolt*); SD regenerate 1 hp per rd; SZ H (10-foot tall, 25-foot wide); ML fearless (20); Int exceptional (17); AL LE; XP 5,000.

The Inner Sanctum

The area referred to as the Inner Sanctum was once the working heart of the Elder Elves' research station. Here, they opened gates to a variety of "nearby" worlds as they sought ever to improve their craft. Unfortunately, they surpassed their best expectations, piercing time and space with their Vast Gate, into a Far Realm where the physical and magical laws were alien to those of this world. The entities in the Far Realm seemed mostly uncaring of such intrusion, but when minor attention did shift towards the Gate, the Elder Elves found it to be entirely inimicable. The nature of the entities beyond the opening was unknown to the Elder Elves, and perhaps forever unknowable by the minds of elves, humans, and like creatures. The only unavoidable knowledge attained was that when the attention of these entities fell upon the Elders, the Elders were wiped out—nearly obliterated to the last elf. Those who survived fled the mountain, sealing it after them as best they could, leaving their research sanctum at the mercy of alien creatures.

The time of the Elder Elves passed in the world above, but beneath Firestorm Peak the fruit of their labor threaded its influence, its contamination, into this world. Organisms of alien nature began to slowly colonize the Inner Sanctum during each brief Bridging of the Vast Gate. The field of corruption grew, gaining ground with each opening, somehow able to maintain its influence even while the Vast Gate remained shut. When Madreus penetrated the Inner Sanctum eighty-one years ago, he found that the field of contamination had spread to the edges of the Twisted Caverns. The Inner Sanctum showed far more colonization from the Far Realm, however, because it was within the field of contamination far longer. Madreus survived, and soon was able to bring most of the denizens of the Sanctum under his control. It became his obsession to find a way to greatly expand the field of contamination into the world at large by permanently keeping the Vast Gate open.

Apart from the effects explained on pages 10–11 and 48–49, the field of contamination manifests additional effects within the Inner Sanctum. The first is a variable dilation of time. The Gate itself causes this distortion, as its focus on the Far Realm is not completely synchronized in time. For every minute that passes within the Inner Sanctum, 1d20 minutes pass in the outer world. Thus, to the outer world Madreus has been within Firestorm Peak for eighty-one years, but to him approximately twenty busy, happy years have passed. The fact that the Gate is slightly out of focus causes occasional "ripples" in time and space which have significant

effects within the Sanctum and the Caverns (see the alternative critical events described on pages 10–11). This distortion of time has been helpful in restraining the growth of the intruding influence of the Far Realm into this world. However, if Madreus has his way, the time differential will soon be synchronized.

The second difference between the Inner Sanctum and the Twisted Caverns is that the Sanctum has become host to a veritable ecosystem of alien organisms. Strange growths, neither purely vegetable nor purely animal, cover the majority of the floors, walls, and ceilings. These background organisms are for the most part tolerant towards living beings of this world, with some notable exceptions. The variety of mobility, color, and form can change from day to day; a green mosslike mat hanging from a ceiling during an initial visit to a room might be gone on the next visit, replaced or subsumed by viscous stalklike projections the color of blood or transformed into small flying mossbats. Any areas within the Inner Sanctum which are not specifically keyed on the map can be assumed to possess this type of chaotic vegetative/animal/alienoid mixture of forms.

94. Past The Living Wall

Revealed beyond the fused flesh of the western wall is a large, rectangular room obviously carved by intelligent hands into the native stone of the mountain. The original purpose of the room is difficult to guess, but it now appears to be home to very strange creatures indeed. A dull blue sludge covers the floor of most of the area, apparently secreted by the dozens of white, wet, and doughy-looking dog-size lumps upon the ceiling. The lumps are moving, slowly migrating among bulbs of satiny black which are each fixed to the ceiling with a mass of fibrous roots. Dark orifices upon the backs of the pale, crawling lumps occasionally drip large gobs of the blue goo, which spatter upon the floor with gurgling slaps. The floor seems to be ever so slightly canted, enough so that the excess sludge very languidly drains towards the southeastern portion of the room, into what appears to be a rough breach in the wall.

Characters who fought their way through Quaren the living wall by cutting an opening big enough to move through (when the wall has lost 50% of its total hit points) must still be vigilant on this side; if the wall is still alive, it continues to physically and magically attack any creature within range.

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The strange blobs, bulbs, and goo described in the boxed text are examples of the strange ecology which has invaded the Sanctum. The black bulbs are vegetative, rooted to the ceiling with tough, fibrous anchors. They draw sustenance directly from the minerals in the stone. The white lumps feed on the black bulbs, producing a blue, gooey byproduct which coats the floor of the chamber. The excess goo slowly drains into room 95. The bulbs, lumps, and goo pose no overt threat to the PCs. However, if a character is so foolish as to sample any of these organisms, he or she must save vs. poison or contract an acute case of gastritis, fatal within 1d4 minutes. The goo itself is not dangerous to the touch, just sticky and annoying. Anyone fighting while standing in the sludge must make a Dexterity/Balance check with a +2 bonus to their roll each round, or slip and fall face first into the muck.

95. Pool Of Blue

This cavern seems to have been forcefully excavated from the room to the north. A glacially slow flow of blue sludge snakes its way into this rough cavern from the northwest. The sludge has pooled into a large reservoir in the southeastern portion of the chamber, approximately 15 feet in diameter and of unknown depth. The surface of the viscous blue liquid is regularly agitated with ripples, as if some sort of large creature or creatures swims beneath the dark surface.

The semi-solid byproduct of the doughy lumps of room 94 pools in this chamber, slowly draining into small cracks to the roots of the mountain. The reservoir in this chamber is approximately 80-feet deep before it narrows to cracks so small that only the goo itself can seep downward. At some point in the not-too-distant future, this slime will break into caverns of the underdeeps, possibly causing nearby subterranean races to take an interest in the origin of the blue material.

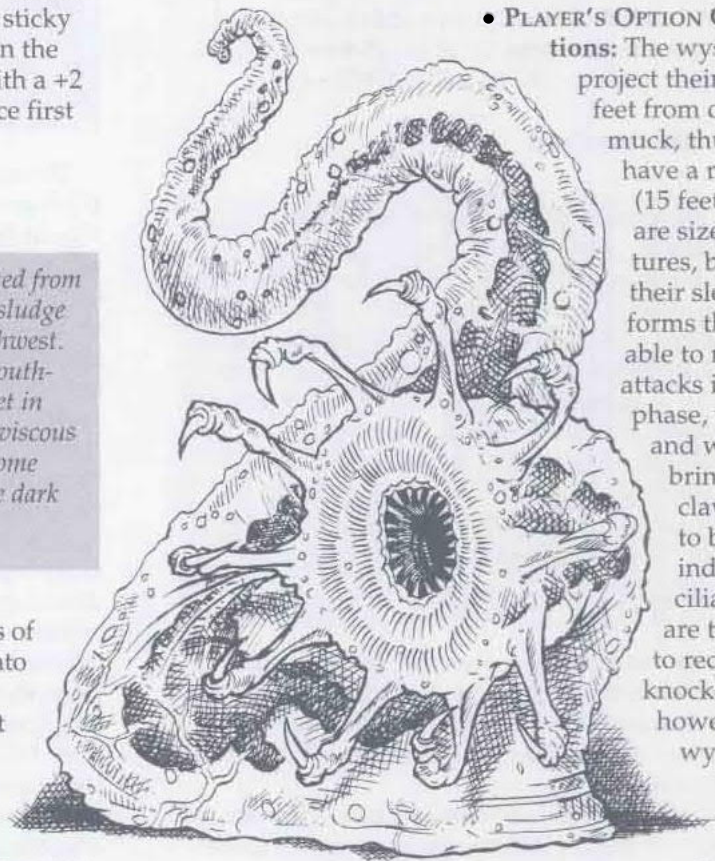
Taking advantage of the pool are several alien worm-like creatures known as wystes (pronounced "wist") which only surface occasionally, as they do not need to breathe. The wysters are each 2-foot in diameter and 25 feet long. Their skin is translucent, showing strange, twisted strands of pulsing organs underneath. Rather than eyes and a mouth, they possess large claw-tipped

cilia which fringe a large sucker hole at the creature's anterior end. The cilia not only allow the wyste to sense its environment and feed itself, they also provide defense against other Far-Realm entities who fancy the wysters for a tasty treat. The dharculus in particular love these critters, and the PCs have a 10% chance of finding a wandering dharculus in this room fishing for dinner (see dharculus description on pages 76-77).

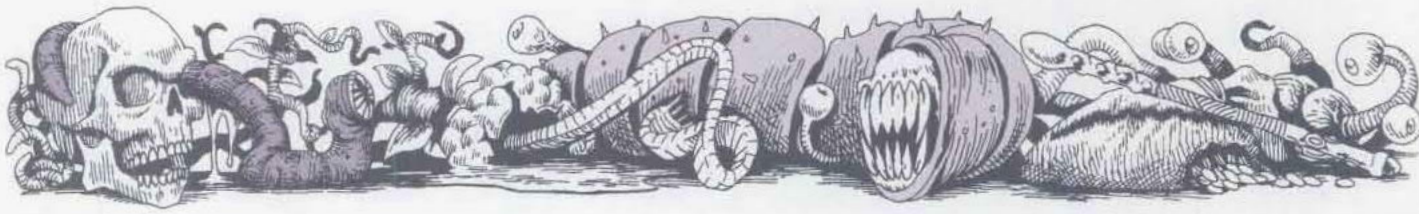
If any PC comes within 5 feet of the pool, four of the wysters burst from the slime and attack, defending their territory against all trespassers.

• PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:

The wysters can project their bodies 15 feet from out of the muck, thus they have a reach of 3 (15 feet). They are size H creatures, but due to their slender forms they are able to make attacks in the fast phase, whipping and writhing to bring their clawed cilia to bear. The individual cilia attacks are too small to require a knockdown; however, a wyste may elect to wrap its body around size



M creatures within 10 feet of the edge of the pool. If one of these entangling attacks succeeds, the wyste retracts into the pool on the next combat phase, attempting to drown its victim within the blue slime. A PC in such straits can make a Strength/Muscle check with a +2 penalty to free himself or herself each round. Once beneath the surface, the character risks drowning (see page 16) and must make a saving throw vs. poison if



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any of the deadly goo gets inside his or her mouth or nose (see entry for room 94). The goo is completely opaque and the distorting effects of the field of corruption make it difficult for submerged characters to tell which way is up; thus, PCs who escape the coiling clutches of the wyste after being pulled beneath the surface must make a successful Swimming or Direction Sense proficiency check or be unable to make it to the surface of the viscous muck, perishing in the horrible goo unless somehow rescued by their friends.

Wyste (4): AC 2; MV 3, swim 15; HD 5+5, hp 28, 32, 30, 29; THAC0 15; #AT 4 or 1; Dmg 1d4+1 x4 (clawed cilia); SA entangling attack; SZ H (25-foot long); ML steady (12); Int non- (0); AL NE; XP 975 each.

96. Intermediate Vestibule

A few small rivulets of blue slime intrude into this squarish stone chamber from under the western arch. Another arch opens northward into a large area, from which a moist breeze seems to be blowing. There are also a couple of breaches in the eastern wall of the chamber, their rough outline indicating that their formation was not part of the original construction of the room. A greenish, ridged resin coats the edges of the breach and seems to extend into the rough tunnel beyond. A faint smell similar to vinegar emanates from this passage. The stone surfaces in the remainder of the room are for the most part bare, excepting a few scattered, unmoving gray polyps near the northern arch.

The resinous material to the east has been secreted by the entity which lurks in room 98. Unfortunately for the PCs, they will most likely have to travel through the breach, because the normal passage in room 97 has been blocked by a rockfall.

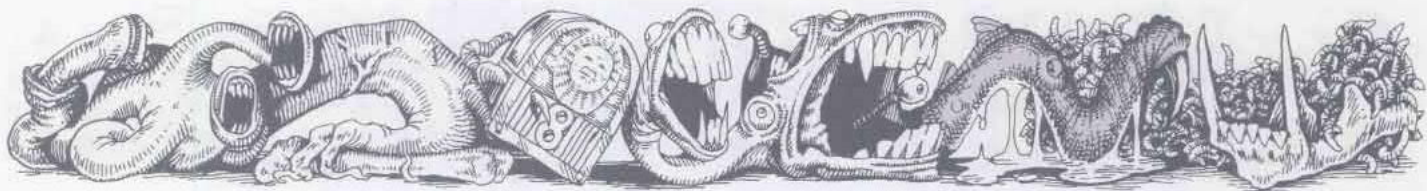
The gray polyps are the size of tulip bulbs. They are the seedling forms of the vegetative organisms which infest room 97. They pose no danger to the PCs and in fact taste like baked bread if they are sampled. Unfortunately, they are completely unnutritious and will not serve as a supplemental food source for creatures of the PCs' world—thus, characters who eat them in place of rations will feel full but gradually begin to suffer the effects of malnourishment. A search of the chamber reveals nothing of any real interest to the PCs.

97. Rockfall

Immediately within the entrance to this room, small gray polyps are thickly congregated. Approximately 10 feet into the room, the polyps give way to large, plantlike growths with very wide fan-shaped leaves of bright yellow. These growths thickly cover the floor, rising to a height of 2 feet. The leaves of the plants seem to be pulsating in unison, as if breathing. Each "breath" is accompanied by a warm, moist draft of air. To the right, the eastern wall of this chamber gently curves away, until its further progress is hidden from view by a large rockfall. In fact, passage towards the eastern side of what once appears to have been a very large hall has been utterly blocked by the debris.

The rockfall blocking passage to the east is 30-feet-thick and composed of very large pieces of debris; it would be a monumental task to attempt to clear the fall without a contingent of miners or similar means.

The gray polyps near the door are seedling versions of the large-leaved plants. The polyps are making a bid to colonize room 96 to the south, but Madreus has his minions clean them out if they get too much of a foothold there. The yellow-leaved vegetation grows so thickly in this room that PCs who attempt to examine the northern or eastern walls will be unable to avoid brushing against the leaves of the plants (dubbed "acidic broadleaf" by Madreus). Every 5 feet of distance traveled through the plants has a 75% chance of disturbing one of the leaves strongly enough so that it releases a puff of acidic pollen. If this happens, all creatures within a 10-foot radius of the disturbance must make a saving throw vs. breath weapon or take 1d10 points of damage as the acidic pollen scorches their flesh. It is easy enough to cut down these plantlike growths with a single swipe of sword, but each 5-foot area cleared in such a manner has a 100% chance of emitting the acidic pollen, and the tool or weapon used to do the cutting must make an item saving throw vs. acid every round or be destroyed. There is nothing of any interest to the PCs in the room in any event, so such an effort would be wasted.



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98. Shortcuts Make For Long Roads

The tunnel before you is scabrous; it is coated with a hardened greenish-brown resin. The resin is whorled and ridged, making footing uncertain. The acidic, vinegarlike odor is very strong in this chamber, seemingly emanating from the organic-looking coating on the floor, ceiling, and walls. A sudden clatter of loud clicks heralds the appearance of a bloated, many-legged figure blocking further access down the tunnel to the southeast.

Unless all the PCs are successfully *moving silently*, the neh-thalggu that lurks herein will hear the approach of the party from rooms 96 or 99 and move to intercept them. Neh-thalggu possess bloated, oily body sacs the color of rotting meat. Dozens of short writhing tentacles fringe a large, tooth-filled maw. Four bulging amber-colored eyes peer out from beneath a brow beetled with head-size lumps. The entire 10-foot-tall monstrosity moves about on six crablike legs.

Neh-thalggu are native to the Far Realm, but a few have colonized other world using the Vast Gate; reports of creatures which could very well be neh-thalggu have surfaced in various far-distant places (such as Mystara, where they are known as "brain collectors"). What makes these creatures truly horrible is their penchant for collecting the gray matter of other sentient creatures; each lump beneath the neh-thalggu's skin is in fact the transplanted brain of a humanoid creature. PCs killed by the neh-thalggu are devoured, their brains added to the creature's mental pool. In addition to the biological needs of the neh-thalggu which the brains fulfill, the additional minds also energize the neh-thalggu's spellcasting abilities. Each brain contributes one spell of up to 3rd-level (or 15 spell points using the *PLAYER'S OPTION: Spells & Magic* system).

This particular neh-thalggu has 7 additional donor-brains and is thus able to cast 7 spells, each once per day. The spell which this creature likes to use exclusively is a modified version of *Melf's acid arrow*, referred to below as *acidic spittle*. When the neh-thalggu casts this spell with its tentacles, it manifests as a blob of resinous spittle which is vomited forth from the creature's mouth, striking the target (saving throw vs. spells to evade) for the standard damage of 2d4. Since the neh-thalggu has 10 HD, the acid continues to burn for four rounds. Following these four rounds, the neh-thalggu-derived acid then begins to harden into the resinous material which is so apparent within this tunnel. The hardening resin does not set quickly enough to further

endanger PCs struck by it, but items struck by the spittle must make item saving throws vs. acid.

Madreus has this creature controlled with his *Lenses of Utter Dominance*. The neh-thalggu is free to roam west of its lair for food, up to and including the Twisted Caverns and Duergar colony. However, it is under orders to leave Madreus' special minions alone. It is also commanded to not allow any creature to pass unless it also serves Madreus.

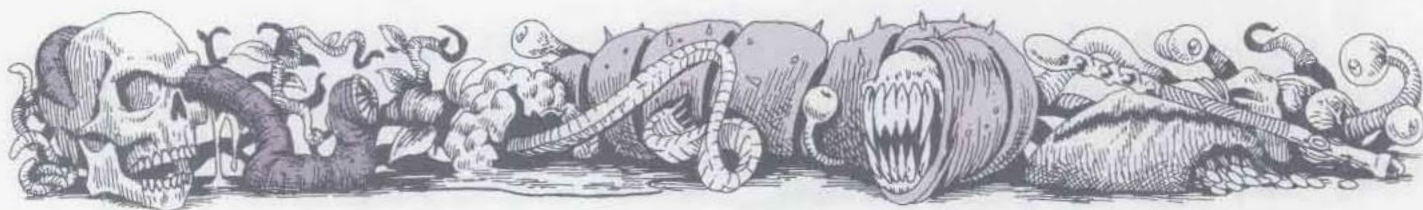
- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** Neh-thalggu are Large creatures and thus bite in the average phase of the combat round. The creature is large enough to block the passage through its lair at the tunnel's narrowest point. The neh-thalggu does this if possible to discourage its foes from getting behind it for rear attacks. Using the *PLAYER'S OPTION: Spells & Magic* spell point system, this creature possesses 105 spell points (15 spell points for each of its 7 cannibalized brains), which technically allows it to cast its *acidic spittle* spell 10 times (each 3rd-level fixed slot spell costs 10 spell points; ignore the maximum number of spells per level restriction due to the neh-thalggu's unique mode of spellcasting). The DM has the choice to allow the creature either 7 spells (one per stolen brain) or 10 spells (as permitted by its spell point total). In either case, all its spells will be *acidic spittle*.

Neh-thalggu (1): AC 2; MV 18; HD 10, hp 51; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg 1d10 (bite); SA spells (*acidic spittle*); SZ L (10-foot tall); ML elite (14); Int very (12); AL CE; XP 2,000.

99. Empty Hall

Whatever purpose this long, wide hallway once served, it has been relegated to the stomping ground of some particularly messy beast. Greenish-brown resin has seeped from a breach in the western wall, coating most of the central and southern portions of this room. A small archway in the southern portion of the east wall provides passage into an area where the resin seems to be particularly thick.

This large chamber holds nothing of any immediate interest to the PCs. The neh-thalggu described in room 98 uses this room to travel to and from its resting place in room 100. The northwestern portion of the chamber once connected to room 97, but a rockfall has permanently closed off this connection.



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100. Lair of the Neh-thalggu

This domed, circular room looks as if it were built to concentrate a viewer's attention on a display which might once have occupied the raised stone platform in the center of the area. Unfortunately, thick globs of mucous-colored resin coat almost every surface, saturating the room with an acidic stench. The central platform holds a bed of broad yellow leaves. Their arrangement suggests that some large creature regularly reclines upon them; however, nothing living seems to be present in the chamber currently.

This is where the neh-thalggu described in room 98 reclines during its rest periods. It has gathered a pile of leaves from the growths in room 97, using them as bedding. The leaves have for the most part discharged all of their acidic spores. However, if the PCs search through the bedding they still have a 5% chance of bruising a leaf hard enough to cause a residual spore discharge (see the entry for room 97 for details). Neh-thalggu have no interest in acquiring any items other than the living brains of their victims; thus the bedding contains nothing of much interest to the PCs.

101. Display Chamber

This large, domed chamber is open to the resin-layered hall to the west. The room looks as if it originally was meant to display some large art piece or statue in its center, but now it holds only a grayish sludge. The sludge is pooled in the center of the chamber, occupying the hollow were the attraction of the room may have once been situated. The sludge pool seems to be turbid; bubbles rise to the surface and slowly break with a gassy pop, liberating an unfamiliar but nauseous smell into the air.

The gray sludge in the center of the room is the amoebic stage of a creature from the Far Realm which has just recently been summoned by Madreus. It has not yet made enough sense of this realm to take on a solid form, but it can sense the movement of nearby creatures. When it senses the PCs enter the room, it bubbles with increased agitation, releasing yet more stink into the air. This is the extent of its capabilities, however, and nothing more will come of this encounter, as it cannot attack or communicate with the characters and there is little that they can do to harm it, short of *disintegration*.

102. Display Chamber

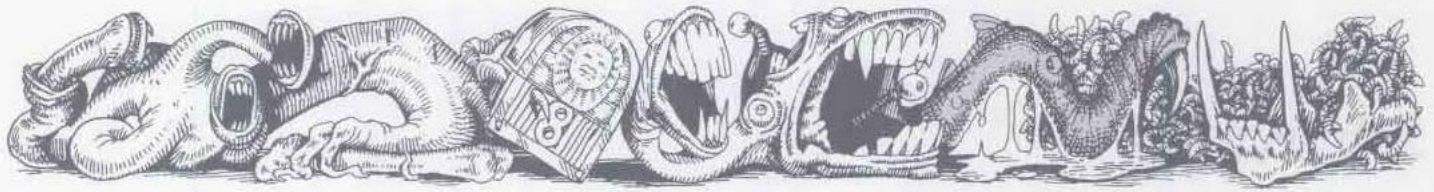
This room appears to be another circular display chamber, built so that it divides two sides of a wide hallway. The room seems bare of alien infestation. However, on the central display dais there stands a stone statue. The statue appears to be carved of an odd, highly reflective blue stone, and it depicts what appears to be the climbing head of a quickly growing thunderhead stormcloud.

This room is clear of alien manifestation due to the dharculus to the north, whose hunger is great. Unless the party makes a prodigious amount of noise while investigating this display chamber, the dharculus stays in room 103. The statue on the display dais was retrieved by an Elder away-team from one of the gates opened to a nearby crystal sphere. It is exactly what it appears to be: a thunderhead cloud carved in blue stone. It is of such craftsmanship that it would be worth over 5,000 gp to the appropriate art collector, if a way could be found to tote its 2-ton weight.

103. Hall of Contemplation

This chamber appears to have once served as a wide hall, being 20 feet from east to west and running considerably farther than that towards the north. The strange organisms and vegetative growths which you've noted in previous chambers seem to be absent in this portion of the hall. Severely cracked and crumbled white tile covers the floor in dusty ruin. Small alcoves have been carved into the eastern and western walls at 10-foot intervals. The alcoves are set 3-feet up from the floor and are 4-feet-high, 3-feet-deep, and 3-feet-wide; the perfect placement for displaying decorations or trophies. Unfortunately, it appears that the weight of time has crumbled whatever items once may have graced these tasteful nooks; only dust, rust, and stone debris now seem to occupy the spaces.

The reason this hall is free of invasive growths has to do with the alienoid which particularly enjoys this section of the Sanctum, possibly due to the breadth and width of the corridor. Madreus has labeled it a "dharculus" and avoids it as long as it does not bother him or his work. The dharculus generally remains south of the immediate vicinity of the Vast Gate; so far it and Madreus have not come into direct conflict. Once the



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PCs have traveled approximately midway between the northern and the southern ends of the hall, they will see what appears to them to be a school of six eyeless eels, sweeping through the air from the north, advancing in a hunting frenzy. The dharculus will attack the party, attempting to pull one or more of the PCs into the ethereal plane where it can dine in peace. Refer to the dharculus entry on pages 76–77 for full details on this nasty creature.

This hall once served the Elder Elves as an impressive thoroughfare, being decorated with beautiful tilework on the floors and walls. The alcoves held small trophies or items of interest retrieved from many of the Elders' earlier gate-opening attempts, before they constructed the Vast Gate. Many of the items which once graced these walls have been destroyed by time itself. The few items that survived the onslaught of the centuries have been for the most part gathered up by Madreus and his minions and may be found in their quarters closer to the Vast Gate. However, if the party searches each and every display nook, they find one item which still holds a recognizable form.

The item appears to be a fist-sized metallic statue of a dragon of unrecognizable type, very crudely rendered. The dragon appears to be rearing up, and affixed to its head is a glinting crystal. On the back of the statue's head is what appears to be a thumbprint. This item is mostly hidden under dust and stone debris and was therefore missed by the Sanctum's current residents. Long ago the away-team of Elder Elves sent through a gate to a nearby crystal sphere found a world similar to many they had already visited. The statuette was as a gift from the primitive group of tribal humans whom the Elders contacted. If magic is tested for, the statue is found to emanate a faint glimmer of alteration dweomer. The statue's energy is depleted, however, and can only be recharged by daylight. If the dragon statue is placed in sunlight for a full day, the statue absorbs enough solar energy to allow it to function. Holding the dragon statue in one hand and pressing the thumbprint of the back of the head causes the dragon's maw to emit a fan of flames, an effect similar in all ways to a *burning hands* spell cast at 10th level (1d3+20 hp, save for half damage). Each full day of sunlight so absorbed by the statue allows it to cast this spell once. A maximum of 5 charges can safely be stored in this way without being used. However, if left in sunlight and allowed to absorb solar energy beyond that limit, the statue has a 33% cumulative chance per day to overload, exploding in a *fireblast*

with a 20-foot radius for every charge the statue currently holds, inflicting 10d6 points of damage to all in the blast radius (save for half damage). The statue itself must make an item saving throw vs. disintegration to survive the overload explosion.

- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** Even though the mawed tentacles appear small to the party, the fact that they are merely appendages on a size-H creature indicates that the tentacle attacks occur in the slow phase of the combat round. The tentacles are too small to deliver a knockdown die, but while some of them may attack their target head on, one or two can get in attacks from above for a +1 bonus to attack rolls, and one or two mawed tentacles may be able to get in behind the prey for a +2 bonus to attack rolls. Each tentacle has 8 hp; if three or more fasten on a single victim, he or she will be drawn into the Border Ethereal in the very fast phase of the next round (saving throw vs. death magic to resist).

Dharculus (1): AC 2; MV fly 9; HD 10; hp 80; THAC0 11; #AT 6 (tentacles) or 1 (ethereal maw); Dmg 1d4 + adhesion x6 (tentacles) or 2d10 (maw); SA adhesion; SD ethereal; SZ H (30-foot long); ML elite (14); Int very (11); AL CN; XP 3,000.

104. Crossroads

This large 20-foot-square chamber appears to be a crossroads. 10-foot-wide archways lead off in all four of the cardinal directions. Growing upon the floor is what appears to be a thick lawn of silvery grass. The blades of the grass rise 3 feet from the ground, slowly swaying and rippling to an unseen wind. The silvery growths seems thin in the southern portion of the room but becomes quite thick to the north, almost obscuring the archway in the northern wall.

The silvery grasslike growth seems completely harmless, although its subtle rustlings may serve to unnerve the party. It is possible to pull up single blades of grass with considerable effort; the root system of each blade seems deep and impossible to get at under the stone floor. These blades of grass are actually the edges of an alien creature which resides in the chamber to the north. The PCs can move easily through it, although they will be slowed down in the areas of thicker growth. This strange lawn grows over most of this room, spilling out

Dharculus

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Special
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Carnivorous
INTELLIGENCE:	Very (11-12)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	2
MOVEMENT:	9
HIT DICE:	10
THACO:	11
NO. OF ATTACKS:	6 or 1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d4 + adhesion (tentacles) or 2d10 (primary maw)
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Adhesion
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Ethereal
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	H (30-foot long)
MORALE:	Elite (14)
XP VALUE:	3,000

The dharculus is a creature native to the Far Realm. The Vast Gate has provided access to the Prime Material Plane for these dread entities, and some few now hunt in the environs of Firestorm Peak. These particularly deadly creatures hunt all other creatures that cross their paths without regard to rank or hierarchy. They possess little fear, being well protected from its prey.

The dharculus are swimmers of the Border Ethereal; however, they have a singular ability to insert their mawed tentacle ends into the Prime Material Plane. These tentacles appear as a swarm of blind eel-like creatures sliding through the very air in a deadly school. To those who can see into the Ethereal, the "eels" are merely the protruding tentacle tips of the dharculus. Following the multiple tentacles back, one would see that they come together in a fused braid, a thick and ridged wormlike tube forming the main body of the creature. The posterior end of the cylindrical body loops back towards the front like a question mark, ending in an huge, drooling maw filled with razor-sharp teeth. Five of the dharculus' tentacles end in eyes instead of manipulator maws; the entity keeps these safely tucked into the Ethereal Plane to search through the mists for its next victim.



Combat: A dharculus feeds by dipping its mawed tentacle ends into the Prime Material Plane to attack and draw prey into reach of the horrible maw on the Ethereal, much as a bear scoops trout out of their normal watery environment into the alien realm (to the fish) of air. In addition to the 1d4 points of damage each tentacle tip inflicts upon a successful attack, each maw also attaches itself to the prey where it hit. It takes a successful Strength/Muscle check (with a -2 penalty to the roll) to rip the tentacle off, causing another 1d4 points of damage as the teeth tear free. If a dharculus can fasten three or more tentacles onto a single victim, he or she must make a successful saving throw vs. death magic or be drawn into the Ethereal Plane in the very fast phase of the next round. Here the dharculus can bring its horrible primary maw to bear on the victim

Dharculus

for 2d10 points of damage. While the dharculus continues to have hold of a victim with at least three tentacles, it will continue attempting to draw the reluctant prey into the Ethereal once per round, possibly necessitating multiple saves.

A dharculus normally hunts with all six of its mawed tentacles inserted into the Prime Material Plane. Each tentacle tip attacks as a 10-HD creature with the following stats: AC 3; MV fly 9; HD 2, hp 8; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4; SA adhesion; SZ S (2-foot long). Tentacles which take the full 8 hp of damage are severed and fall upon the floor, looking for all the world like a dead eel-creature. On the Ethereal Plane a dharculus regenerates a damaged or severed tentacle at a rate of 2 hp every 12 hours; it will never insert an only partially regrown tentacle into the Prime Material. A hit with a magical weapon has a 20% chance per magical plus to knock the appendage fully back into the Ethereal plane, where it takes the dharculus 4 rounds to "insert" it back through the veil to our plane of existence.

A dharculus will attack individuals or groups of creatures with its mawed tentacles, attempting to draw its chosen meal into the Ethereal Plane where it can snack in safety. A victim who is drawn through the veil has an opportunity to attack the dharculus as it attempts to quickly kill the prey with its devastating bite. A PC may get lucky by defeating the dharculus in its home ground; however, this then leaves the PC drifting in the Border Ethereal, able to see his or her companions through the gray mist but unable to contact them. Unless the PC has extraordinary resources, he or she is faced with being marooned, but a quick-thinking PC has a single chance: the mawed tentacles which are still inserted into the Prime Material plane. The tentacles of a freshly killed dharculus slowly recede into the Ethereal, but a character has 4 rounds to grab one of the tentacles like a lifeline and physically pull himself or herself back into the Prime Material, as a man pulling himself free of sucking quicksand. A successful Strength/Muscle check with a +2 bonus on the PC's roll indicates that the PC has successfully emerged fully into the Prime Material Plane.

Habitat/Society: These creatures have an utterly alien psychology. Their intentions and motivations have been forged in the Far Realm, where human minds are at peril in attempting to understand. However, regardless of other considerations, the basic motivator which drives these creatures is easily understood by beings of

the Prime Material: hunger. Dharculus never pass up an easy meal. In fact, the creature is not above dragging creatures across the Ethereal veil just to save for later snacking.

Only one or perhaps two of these creatures are even known to have crossed over into our reality, and these exist only within Firestorm Peak. That is not to say that more do not exist within the Far Realm. As time passes, it seems inevitable that more will arrive, hunting the beaches of the Prime Material in relative safety from the shallow sea of the Border Ethereal.

Ecology: It is not known if these creatures mate or merely asexually bud or fission. If the latter of these options is true, even a single such creature could rapidly populate a new area. However, these creatures seem to congregate near the point of their entry into this reality. This may be because they are somehow dependent upon some particular element of their own Far Realm and need to stay near the point where leakage of this influence occurs. If this is true, only creatures near the point of entry are in peril. However, in the case of Firestorm Peak, this zone of influence is slowly expanding further into the Prime Material Plane.

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into the rooms to the west, east, and north, but thinning to nothingness through the southern archway (the dharculus keeps the stuff pruned away).

The archway to the west leads through to the original wide hall which pierces Firestorm Peak, but after only 40 feet the rockfall which blocked this passage is visible. The rockfall is utterly impassible by any easy means. This hallway is filled with the silver grass as well. The archway to the east leads to Madreus' lair and the Vast Gate itself.

105. Display Chamber

The silvery grass which filled the crossroads to the south has slowly thickened in both density and height, until by this point the vegetative leaves of silver brush the ceiling of the domed chamber 25 feet above; you suddenly realize that this has the appearance of another display chamber. If anything is still on display near the center of the room, it is utterly concealed by thick alien blades of silver which twitch and sway in response to an unknown beat.

The display which the Elders once had here was a statue carved of wood. It withstood the passing aeons quite well, until the silvery grass infested the chamber. What the statue once represented is now hard to say, because this growth from beyond the Vast Gate found the polished wood of the statue the perfect fertilizer for its strange metabolism. In fact, squatting in the center of the display dais where once the statue stood is now a large, mirror-bright bulb 5-feet tall. It slowly thickens, then thins, distorting like quicksilver in slow motion, in time to the swaying of the silvery grass. This reflective pod actually represents the root organism which ties every silver blade of grass into one large organism; when Madreus became aware of the creature he named it a "silver-tongue."

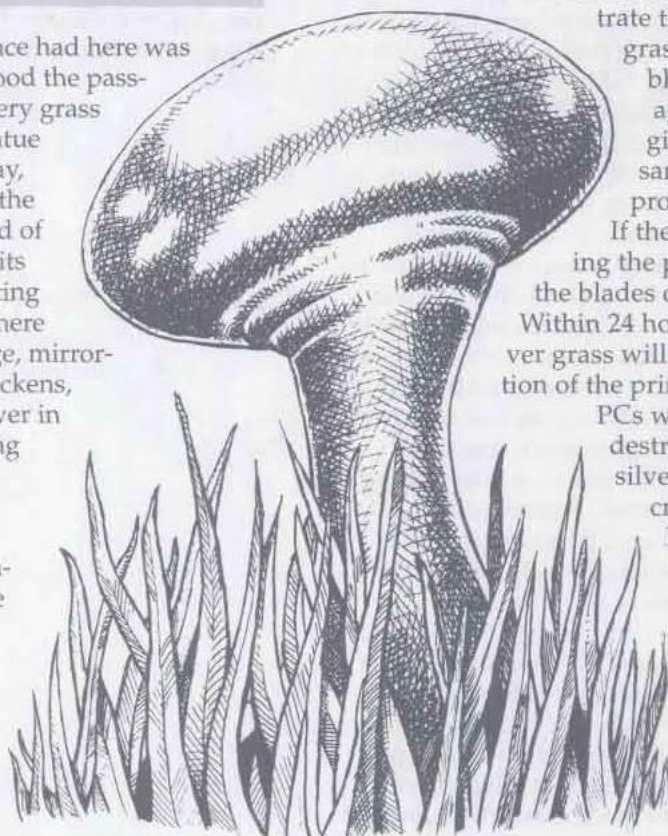
The silver-tongue ignores the party unless they in any way agitate the central reflective pod which acts as the body and mouth of the creature. Those

standing next to the pod while agitating it must make an immediate Dexterity/Balance check or be knocked into the undulating pod itself by the silvery blades of grass! In fact, any creature *anywhere* within the alien lawn is now in danger, as the silver-tongue's blades suddenly begin to work in concentrated unison to force mobile creatures to its central feeding duct, the mirror-bright pod. Every round a PC spends in the silvery grass requires a Strength/Muscle check to move at half his or her normal movement rate away from the central pod. Those who fail this check are moved 10 feet closer to the now wildly agitated silver-tongue. PCs who are thrust into the quicksilver pod are immediately subject to its strongly acidic nature and take 1d10 points of damage per round while so immersed. PCs thus caught can attempt to make a Strength/Muscle check to pull themselves back out of the creature. Normal weapons do no harm to the silver-tongue's main body, and magical weapons only inflict damage equal to their "plus" with each successful attack. PCs must make a successful Strength/Muscle check to free their weapons if they hit the creature. Those who concentrate their attacks upon the

grasslike blades can sever one blade for each point of damage they inflict; however, given the hundreds of thousands of blades present this is probably a losing proposition.

If the party is successful in slaying the primary tongue (the pod), the blades of grass become quiescent. Within 24 hours, a random blade of silver grass will swell and take on the function of the primary tongue. Therefore, PCs would have to sever or destroy each and every blade of silver grass to ensure that this creature did not return. If the PCs manage this (through a well-placed *fireball* or similar method), award them an additional 1,000 XP for their feat.

Inside the semi-liquid body of the silver-tongue there remain a few small items which it could not digest, including 237 cp,



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150 sp, and 321 gp. There is also a brooch and two earrings which together comprise a set worth 500 gp. Finally, there is a normal longsword whose leatherommel has been eaten away, a metal belt-buckle, and a silver ring enruned as "Eyes of Fire" (a ring of *infravision*).

- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** The PCs can only move with half of their regular movement while in the silvery grass. Require them to take their full movement for the round *before* they attempt their Strength/Muscle checks for that round to avoid being swept into the pod. In this way, unlucky characters could find themselves inexorably carried towards the central feeding duct of the silver-tongue.

Silver-tongue (1): AC 10; MV 0; HD 5+5, hp 32; THACO n/a; #AT n/a; SA acid (1d10 points of damage per round of immersion); SD immune to nonmagical weapons, magical weapons cause one point of damage per "plus"; SZ H (1000 sq. ft.); ML fearless (20); Int non- (0); AL N; XP 975.

106. Relic Gate Complex

A locked door of nephelium seals this chamber off from the rest of the Inner Sanctum. If the lock is picked and the party moves into the hallway beyond, read the following text. Even while locked the nephelium doors allow the party to see the light and a blurred image of the hallway beyond the doorway.

The 10-wide and -tall hallway before you runs to the west and is mercifully clear of silver vegetation or any other obvious growths or infestation. A strip of some strange, glowing material runs down the center of the hall, casting a wan illumination on the stark stone. The light cycles from dim to dimmer, in conjunction with a barely audible humming noise.

The lightstrip is enchanted with a variety of *continual light*; however, its magic is being drawn upon by the still-operating inversion engines in room 111, which is causing its cyclic dimming. Any magical light sources the party carries begin to dim and brighten, following the rhythm of the lightstrip in the hall. The source of the humming noise, which rises and falls in pitch with the lights, is not apparent from this point.

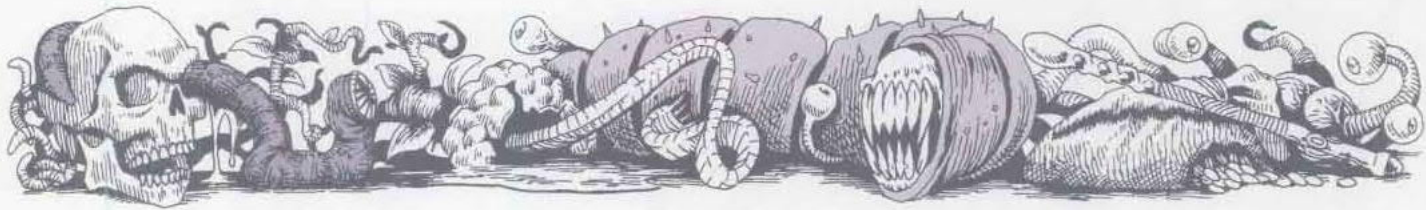
The small complex of rooms beyond this point is the

only remaining gate-complex (other than the Vast Gate itself) surviving from the Elder Elves' researches into the process of Gate-making. All others were cannibalized to create the Vast Gate, and the very chambers that once housed them have either been destroyed or covered under rockfalls over the centuries since the Elders fled this facility. The ancillary rooms found here housed spare equipment, components, personnel, and the gate itself. Because Madreus has an interest only in the Vast Gate, he has never investigated beyond the simply locked door. None of the alien organisms have spread beyond the tightly sealed doorway either.

107. Old Quarters

This 20-foot-square room holds mostly dust. A stone ledge lines the walls 4 feet above the floor, holding little besides stone debris and empty space. There may have once been a set of wooden bunks here, but they have long since rotted away to untidy piles of dry, delicate planks the color of slate. A smaller pile of rotted wood is situated near the door, from which a small glow is just visible.

If a wooden plank of any of the deteriorated furniture is touched, it immediately falls into dust. The wall ledge contains nothing recognizable; anything once here has either been taken or eroded beyond all value. If the party investigates the artificial glow, they uncover a small crystal (nephelium) sphere which once sat upon an end table. This is what the Elders referred to as a memory sphere. If any PC holds it in his or her hand and gazes into it, he or she will activate its magic. A small vision enfolds within the sphere depicting a man, woman, and child whose elegant, clean-cut forms suggest particularly noble elves. The figures stand upon a crystal parapet waving to the viewer. Beyond the parapet is a boundless blue sky, here and there pierced by an upthrust minaret of colored glass. Among these spires move magically propelled craft of metal and light. Just before the crystal dims, the female figure blows a kiss to the viewer. The figures shown within the crystal were Elder Elves standing in the largest city of an Elder empire located in what is now a sunken island chain known as the Lost Realm of Olefin. The figures were the parents and sister of one of the ancient technicians who lived in this room millennia ago, before disaster struck at the opening of the Vast Gate.



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108. Lavatory

This room is a completely empty 10-foot by 20-foot chamber. At the far eastern end is a small pile of rubble surrounding a small hole in the floor.

This long ago served as the lavatory for the personnel working on this particular gate. The hole in the floor leads finally to what was once a cesspool beneath the Sanctum but is now an empty cavern; the waste has long since drained away.

109. Gate Component Repair

The 20-foot by 30-foot room before you contains four stone tables equally spaced about the room. Three of the stone surfaces hold only dust, but the fourth table-top in the southeastern corner of the room contains a strange-looking conglomeration of iron components and crystal cables which form a spherical, cage-like device 2 feet in diameter, hollow in the center. The tubes glow dimly, and pulse in time with the cycling hum which pervades this area. A door of black iron stands closed on the southern wall of the chamber.

This chamber once was filled with tools and spare parts necessary for the upkeep of the bulky devices of the magical gate in room 111. When the Elders began work on the Vast Gate, they cannibalized all the texts, enchantments, and most of the components and magical appurtenances which once cluttered this room. Only a single unconnected inversion engine yet remains in this room.

The inversion engines powered the original world gates created under Firestorm Peak. Their particular enchantment allowed them to siphon the self-renewing energy present in a *light* or *continual light* spell. In this way, a battery of inversion engines could power a world-spanning gate indefinitely. The inversion engines do not have the power to initialize a gate; they can only keep a gate open which has already been formed by some other method.

The lonely engine on the table in this room is broken and thus was never salvaged by the Elders for later use. In normal operation, a *continual light* spell was cast through the cage-like components of the engine onto a mirror-bright globe suspended in the center. This acti-

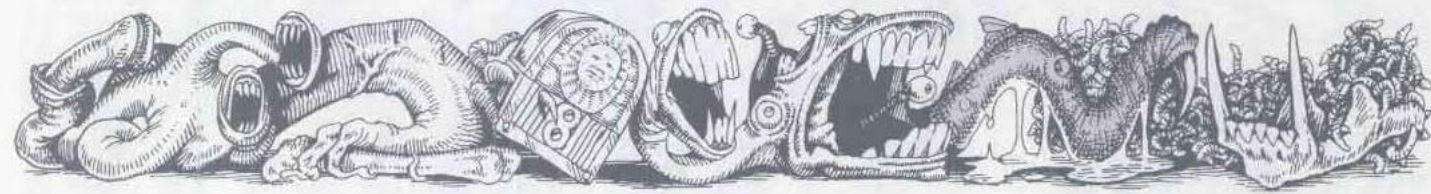
vated the engine, which when in its proper place would siphon energy from the *light* spell and direct it towards the maintenance of a gate. If the party puzzles out the significance of this engine and casts a *light* or *continual light* into the inversion engine, its faulty magical wiring immediately transforms the energy of the spell into a small burst of magical neon-violet-colored fire with a 5-foot radius. *Light* spells deliver 1d4 points of damage to all in the area of effect, and *continual light* spells deliver 2d4 hp (save for half damage in either case). Each time this occurs, the malfunctioning engine has a 20% chance to completely destroy itself, delivering an additional 2d4 points of damage from shrapnel.

110. That Old Black Magic

The iron door to this small storage chamber is locked (-20% to Pick Lock attempts) and trapped with a needle tipped with Class D poison (inflicting 30 points of damage on a failed saving throw vs. poison and 2d6 points even on a successful save). In addition, the door is *wizard locked* at 12th level. If the party manages to get past the door, read aloud the following text.

The interior 10-foot by 10-foot chamber appears to be lined with undecorated lead. Other than a small iron pedestal, the room seems empty. Upon the pedestal there is a small box which looks as if it may be carved of bone.

Before the Elder Elves hit on safer methods of bringing gates to other worlds into existence, they were forced to experiment. One of the less reliable and more dangerous methods they tried lies within the small bone-carved case on the pedestal. If the bone box is opened, a small ring forged of silver is revealed, lying partially wrapped in a piece of red cloth. The ring, enruned "Straygate" in Elder Elyvish (the ancestral language underlying the modern Elvish tongue), is a variant *ring of djinni summoning*. If rubbed, it summons a noble djinni bearing the same name as the ring. The terms of Straygate's service differ from that of a standard djinn contract, however. Straygate has the rare power to open brief magical portals to random Prime Material worlds, a power which she can use once per month. It is this and only this power that she will use for the bearer of the ring. If Straygate is summoned and asked to perform any other service, the djinni has the option of attacking the bearer or simply leaving; she always leaves if herself attacked. In any case,



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Straygate will not respond to the ring being rubbed for another month. If a bearer of the ring summons the djinni and does ask her to open a world gate, Straygate will do so. Any gate opened by the djinni is "close" in ethereal terms to the PCs' current world and thus will not be terribly different. The DM is free to create any setting he or she thinks appropriate to the campaign or may even use a worldline published by TSR. However, any gate so opened has a 50% chance of leading directly into a potentially lethal area, such as into a volcanic vent filled with magma, due to Straygate's inherent resentment to being summoned (although the danger might not be immediately obvious). Any gates opened by Straygate must be physically maintained by her, and she can only keep a gate open for a maximum of one hour. This could be a problem for PCs who are on the other side of the gate when it lapses, because after successfully opening a gate, Straygate cannot be summoned with the ring for another full month.

Straygate the Djinni (1): AC 1; MV 12, fly 36 (A); HD 10+3; hp 81; THAC0 9; #AT 1; Dmg 3d8 (scimitar); SA *whirlwind* (100-foot-high funnel, 3d6 damage, MV 21 (B)), *gust of wind* (at will), *cloudkill* (once per day); SD become *invisible* at will, immune to all air- and gas-based attacks; MR 10%; SZ L (12-foot tall); ML champion (16); Int genius (17); AL CN; XP 10,000. Special abilities: create food, create soft goods, create metal, create illusions, planar travel (at will, throughout Prime Material, Ethereal, Astral, and Elemental Planes), *air-walk* (on seven creatures, once per day), *control weather* (once per week), create portal (once per month), *windtomb** (once per year), grant three *wishes*.

*spell from the *Arabian Adventures* rulebook

111. World Gate Omega

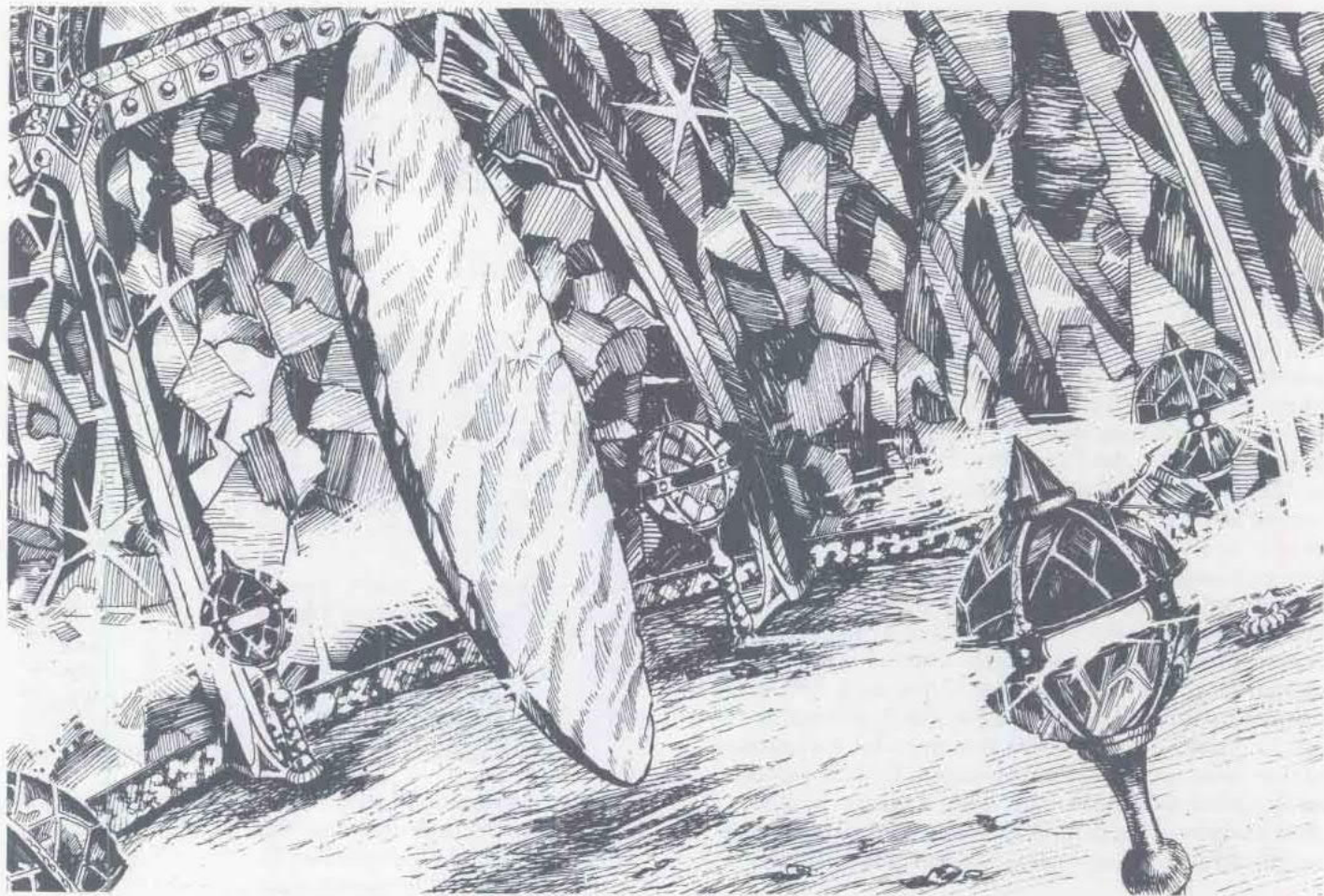
The door to this chamber is of iron, not stone like many of the other doors. A complex locking mechanism securely locks the door with sliding iron bolts. However, the wheel which controls the lock is on the outside of the door; thus the PCs can easily draw back the iron bolts by turning the wheel. It should be obvious to the PCs that the builders of the door were interested in keeping the contents of the room beyond secure for some reason. If the PCs open the door, read the following text aloud to the players:

This chamber's rounded crystal walls rise upwards to form a circular dome 30 feet overhead. The periphery of the circular chamber contains six equidistantly spaced cagelike spheres fashioned of iron stays and crystal cables. The spheres are attached to the floor on short iron mounts. Light dimly pulses from four of the spheres, brightening then dimming in time to the cycling hum which also emanates from these four objects; the remaining two spheres, however, are dark and lifeless. What is most striking about the chamber is the flickering manifestation of an upright pool of rippling quicksilver in the center of the chamber. While visible, the pool slowly rotates about the center of its upright axis, its vertical surface slowly rippling in response to unseen disturbances.

The manifestation of the strange pool in the center of the room is the only still-functioning old-style gate left operating by the Elders within Firestorm Peak. The gate has been slowly breaking down over the years, however, and now only four inversion engines (see area 109, above) remain, attempting the work of six. Because the four engines seek to siphon all energy available, the radius in which artificial *light* spells are affected, as described earlier, has widened over the millennia.

If even one more engine dies, the gate will finally flicker out for good. If the players destroy any of the remaining working inversion engines (physically or by casting a *darkness* spell on one of the interior lights), the gate immediately flickers out and any remaining engines automatically power down as well. The gate is gone for good, and without Elder technology or other powerful magic, it will be impossible to reach the world on the far side of the collapsed gate.

The gate, while technically open, is not safely navigable. The gate is briefly visible at the height of the humming noise generated by the straining inversion engines, and while the lights are dimmest. If any PC tests the rotating aperture (it was once fixed, but with the failure of the two engines, it has begun to spin), he or she must be sure to stay ahead of the slow sweep of the plane of the gate, or risk being inadvertently swept through. An object (or limb) thrust into the surface of the gate and then pulled back has a 50% chance of being cleanly sliced in two (one half on this world, the other on the world of the gate's destination). If an object (or a PC) is thrust through with one continuous motion, the chances of division drop to 15%. Such



abrupt amputation is usually immediately lethal for living beings; consult the Critical Hits tables in *PLAYER'S OPTION: Combat & Tactics* for suggested effects.

Those PCs who do survive a trip through the gate fall 10 feet onto the soft, sandy bottom of a canyon floor. Night rules, but the giant, blind eye of a watery blue moon shines a wan light to illuminate the cracked, dry walls of the canyon's sides, whose considerable heights are difficult to determine in the darkness. The gate manifests on this world as the underside of a turbulent circular pool, hanging suspended 10 feet above the ground. Its connection back to the PCs' original world is tenuous, and the return journey is just as dangerous as the trip here.

Beneath the gate are the scattered bones and other remains of the few previous beings who tried this gate and were unlucky in their passage. A search through the sands uncovers a variety of bones and remnants of belongings, as well as a flat, circular stone 4 feet in diameter. Dislodging the stone reveals a twisting, vertical passage leading downward. The sides of the passage are coated with a spongy growth of moss. Anyone peering down the tunnel easily senses powerful emanations of evil, as well as being treated to the rancidly

sweet odor of rotting corpses. Both of these sensations are telepathic warnings from the creatures who lair below, meant to warn away creatures who might otherwise be tempted to explore further.

The creatures who lair below are meenlocks (detailed in *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® Annual, Volume II*). They placed their lair here precisely because of the strange gate which hangs overhead; they were attracted by its uniqueness. If any group of humanoids open a meenlock lair without killing the monsters or replacing the stone exactly as they found it, they will be tracked, even through the world-gate hanging above! While small in stature, the meenlocks' *dimension door* (60-foot range, usable every other round) and paralyzation abilities could make for a dreadful encounter for a sleeping band of PCs. Tracking meenlocks attempt to paralyze a lone PC without disturbing his or her companions and then drag him or her back to their lair, where they render their victim down to a meenlock with a vile transformative process involving knives and moss. Meenlocks tracking the selected victim broadcast telepathic signals to their prey, mentally harassing him or her so that he or she seems to feel stealthy movement all around. His or

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her companions will probably detect nothing, because meenlocks are 95% undetectable while tracking. Every hour, the victim loses 1 point each of Dexterity, Intelligence, Strength, and Wisdom from the distraction, until each of these ability scores reaches one-half normal. The harassed character suffers a -1 penalty to all attacks, and targets of any spells he or she may cast gain a +2 bonus to their saving throws. When the attack comes during the next rest period, the prey will most likely be in a poor state, able to offer little resistance.

PCs who travel down the 4-foot-diameter twisting tunnel lined with unwholesome moss find a squalid chamber 100 feet below. The meenlocks lairing here fight to the death against anyone penetrating the lair. The chamber is similarly moss-lined and decorated only by a collection of bone, stone, and metal knives hanging upon the walls. One knife seems to be out of place amongst the others: a longsword which gleams dimly. Enruned as "Calris," this is a longsword +3 which shines brightly whenever undead come within 100 feet of it. Calris acts as a *sword of wounding* exclusively against undead; when it strikes an undead creature, a bright light gleams from the wound, inflicting an additional point of damage per round per wound, as described in the DMG entry for a standard *sword of wounding*.

This world could be any world of the DM's choosing—either one of the many worlds detailed by TSR or a new world created specifically for this encounter. However, this gate is not meant to divert the players from their original goals; the DM should take care that this does not occur. To this end, describe the canyon fissure as relatively narrow, with steep walls composed of loose earth that would be extremely difficult to climb. Characters who make it to the canyon top will be greeted by a vast expanse of desolation in all directions, making a journey of exploration overland less attractive.

- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** Meenlocks are size T creatures, and thus all five creatures in this encounter could fit into a single 5-foot by 5-foot combat square without penalty. Similarly, as small creatures, their physical attacks go off in the very fast phase of the combat round, delivering a d4 knockdown die. Their spell-like power of *dimension door* occurs in the fast phase of the combat round.

Meenlocks (5): AC 7; MV 9; HD 4, hp 16, 18, 20, 14; THAC0 17; #AT 2; Dmg 1d4 + special x2 (claw/claw); SA sight causes any intelligent creature of fewer than

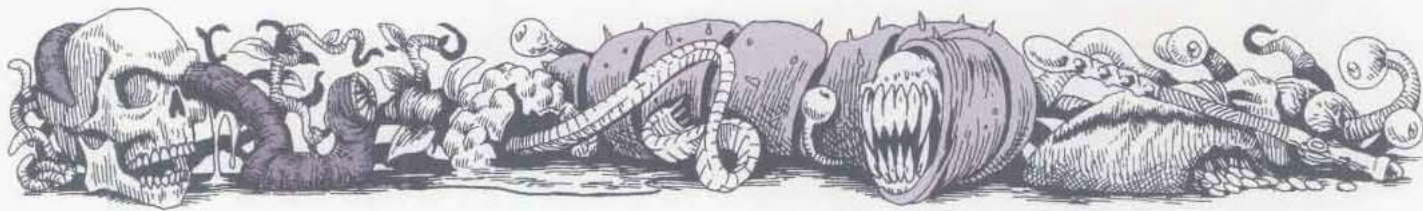
4 HD to collapse from fear for 1d4+4 rounds (save vs. spell for half-duration), anyone hit by claw attack is paralyzed for 1d6 turns (a successful saving throw vs. paralyzation negates this effect), stealth (80% chance to surprise watchful targets, 100% chance to surprise sleeping victim); SD *dimension door* (every other round, 60-foot range), 95% undetectable while tracking chosen victim; SW flee bright light (extinguishing such lights where possible); SZ T (2-foot tall); ML steady (12); Int very (11-12); AL LE; XP 650 each.

112. The Final Leg

The 20-foot-wide by 20-foot-tall hallway continues to the east. The thick, silvery blades of grasslike growth are thicker in the western part of the hallway but quickly thin to nothing at the eastern end of the passage, which ends in a great double door of black stone.

Other than the vestiges of the silver-tongue organism described under the entry for room 105, this hallway is free from danger; it is the doors leading out from it that have the potential to cause harm. The double doors sealing the eastern end of the hallway are carved of a stone named *surk* mined on the world designated Vaeperion by the Elders; it is not familiar to any of the PCs who possess stone-related proficiencies.

The stone is normal in all respects save one; it has the capacity to respond to and store mental energies. Currently it is saturated with the unnatural psychic reverberations of Madreus and his summoned creatures, causing it to appear black. Any PC touching the stone of the door to open it may be surprised to note that the stone area immediately around his or her hand responds by turning a lighter shade of color (such as pink). Unfortunately, the stone of the door reacts to the differential of the PC's psychic energy and immediately attempts to balance the inequality by pumping the poor player full of a portion of its current load of negative vibes. Allow the PC to attempt a saving throw vs. death magic. A successful save allows the PC to jerk his or her hand away before the connection is made. Those who are unsuccessful are plunged into horrible trauma; they will be inflicted with a random insanity as listed under the Alienist entry in *PLAYER'S OPTION: Spells & Magic*. The affliction lasts for 1d100 days. A DM who cannot procure a copy of *PLAYER'S OPTION: Spells & Magic* should feel free to inflict an insanity of his or her choice upon the poor player character.



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113. Vestibule Of The Gate

The flickering light of wall-mounted torches provides light in this very large chamber. Several small, dark figures are engaged in various tasks about the room. Along the southern wall there is a long, low stone table where three dark dwarves seem to be dressing and preparing a very large body of some strange animal for the huge cook pot situated directly to the east of the table. In the center of the room four small figures are apparently engaged in laundering a large pile of garments using a large stone vat filled with a soapy-looking liquid. About the periphery of the room are several more figures sprawled in positions of slumber upon the rocky floor of the chamber.

This chamber is both home and work room to the handful of Duergar servants Madreus keeps employed here. The Duergar who reside in this room have many responsibilities, including the job of preparing food for Madreus and his servants (themselves included). Madreus is also phobically afraid of dirt and therefore demands that his and his servants' clothes are washed daily (thus the soapy basin). The Duergar in this room also are expected to keep alienoid incursion to a minimum in the living areas. Every so often, Madreus organizes a party to head through the Twisted Caverns to the main Duergar colony to trade for needed foodstuffs, clothes, writing materials, etc.

The Duergar in this chamber have been *charmed* by Madreus and are commanded to attack any incursion of creatures or strangers not previously announced by Madreus. Therefore, unless the party can slip by these dark dwarves undetected, the Duergar drop their tasks and attack.

- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** The Duergar attack in the average phase of the combat round and can deliver a d10 knockdown die with their *enlarged* picks.

Duergar (10): AC 4; MV 6 (12 when *enlarged*); HD 1+2; hp 9 (average); THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+1 (footman's pick, no damage bonus when *enlarged*); SA *invisibility, enlargement, stealth* (-2 penalty to opponents' surprise rolls); SD +4 bonus to saving throws vs. spell, immune to paralysis, illusion/phantasm spells, and poison, rarely surprised (1-in-10 chance); SZ S (4-foot tall) or L (7-foot tall); ML elite (13); Int very to exceptional (12-15); AL LE; XP 420 each.

The Support Complexus

The Support Complexus refers to the series of rooms which immediately surround room 123, the chamber of the Vast Gate. The Support Complexus includes rooms 114-122. During the time the Elders lived and worked within Firestorm Peak, these chambers were utilized for a variety of purposes: simple storage, gate research laboratories, a magical planetarium/solarium, a library of esoteric magical knowledge, and living quarters for personnel who needed to be close to the research.

In the huge gulf of time since the departure of the Elders, the majority of items of interest in these rooms have either aged to dust or have been destroyed by the invading alienoid organisms from the Vast Gate. Thus, some of the rooms contain only bare stone walls and dust, while the others now host strange new inhabitants from the Far Realms. However, there are a few rooms in which items of interest still remain, as described in the following entries. Additionally, some of these rooms have been taken over by Madreus, who now uses them for his own purposes.

114. Vacant

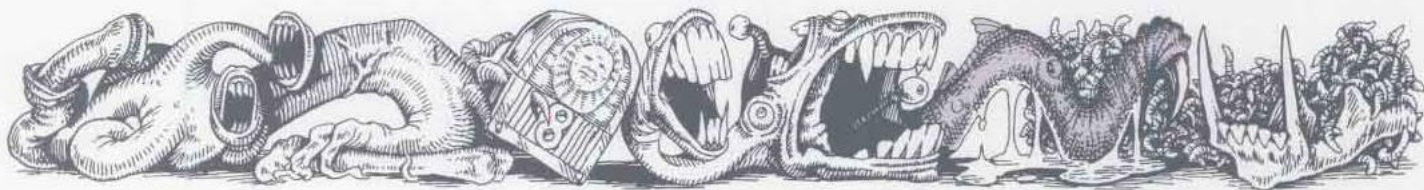
This chamber is bare of all decoration or furnishing, nor does there appear to have been any colonization of alien organisms. The only obvious objects of note are the three doors: one to the north, one to the south, and one to the east.

This chamber has been cleared of alien infestation by Madreus's minions.

115. Storage

This 10-foot by 20-foot chamber contains decrepit shelves of stone fitted to the walls. However, at least half of them have crashed down upon the floor, making the footing uncertain among rocky slabs and debris. The northern wall of the room seems to be supporting a thick growth of thin yellow vines, apparently growing from the very stone of the wall. The vines look like nothing so much as revealed veins and arteries, slowly pulsing with a languid, bloodlike fluid. Small red growths, similar to pods, sprout upon the vines like sickly fruit.

Nothing remains of the items once stored here by the Elders. However, a plantlike alienoid growth has begun



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to penetrate through the wall from area 116 into this chamber. If the immature pods are investigated, they will be found to be leathery in texture. Cutting one open releases a gagging stench (failure to save vs. paralyzation results in a -4 penalty to all actions for one turn due to nausea) and also reveals what appears to be some sort of vestigial organ secured to the interior base of the pod by a coiled organic cord. It will be difficult for characters who have not investigated room 116 to guess that the vestigial organ is really an immature form, although a small mouth filled with needlelike teeth can be discovered if any PC is tenacious enough to dig around the revealed gooey mass with a dagger point or similar tool.

116. Colonized

Almost all the available floor space in this 20-foot by 30-foot room is filled by a tangled growth of thin yellow vines which slowly pulse like the revealed bloodways of a living creature. An odor of copper hangs in the moist, humid air. The veinlike tangle seems to be anchored in the stone floors and walls of the chamber. Fiery red pods grow upon the vines, most of them fist-sized; however, a few have grown to the far larger dimensions of 5-foot-tall and 4-foot-wide. The only other item of note in this vein-choked room is the stone door on the far eastern wall.

The alien growth in this chamber has been dubbed a "blood sipper" by Madreus. The growth shares both animal and plant characteristics. If any of the blood sipper's vines are stepped upon by the PCs attempting to navigate the room to access the far door (it is impossible not to do so, due to the density of the growth), the creature will react with deadly intent.

Three of the pods upon the creature are mature (all the others hold vestigial forms) and disgorge their contents in an attack upon intruders. The contents of the pod resemble huge, blind tadpoles whose mouths are lined with hundreds of needle-sharp teeth. The body of the "tadpole" gradually thins into a long, muscular tether which anchors each head to its own pod. Each of these hungry appendages also contains four clawed arms, equally spaced around the gnashing mouth. During an attack, the blood sipper disgorges its three mature appendages in a swift attack at the nearest PC(s). Successful attacks indicate that a head has anchored itself successfully with the help of its four clawed arms into a fleshy portion of its target. The biting mouth immediately begins to suck the

blood of the target at the prodigious rate of 4 hp a round. The blood sucked is visibly transferred down the tetherlike body of the creature to the pod. Attacks directed against the tether can sever it if a total of 10 points of damage are delivered; however, each head can act independently and continues to attack PCs in the vicinity. It is necessary to kill each head individually in order to end the threat, as the heads are able to propel themselves by their arms alone if they become separated from their pods. This is actually a method of propagation which the blood sipper relies upon to spread its progeny. Once all the heads are destroyed, the remaining veinlike vines and immature pods represent no further threat.

- **PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations:** The tethered heads of the blood sipper threaten 20 feet (4 squares) with their reach. The initial attack by a head springing from a pod delivers a d10 knockdown die with the force of its disgorgement from the pod. All attacks by the heads occur in the fast phase of the combat round.

Blood sipper: AC 1; MV 0 (vine) or 15 (pods); HD 20 (vine) or 4 (pod); hp 120 (vine) or 29 each (pod); THAC0 17 (pod); #AT 3 (one per pod); Dmg 1d8 (bite); SA suck blood (4 hp per round); SD damage to pods does not harm vine & vice versa, severing tether does not harm pods; SW salt; SZ G (600+ sq. ft.); ML fearless (20); Int non- (0); AL N; XP 175 (pod) or 1,000 (vine).

117. Collapsed Passage

The 10-foot passage continues for only 15 feet before being blocked by a rockfall. The rubble utterly blocks the passage to the east; it seems impossible to travel any further in that direction.

The passages and rooms further to the east are indeed collapsed. Nothing can be found down this passage except more rock.

118. Lighted Passage

This stone passage seems clear of the alien infestations so common elsewhere in this complex. At 10-foot intervals, mounted on both the eastern and western walls, are lit candelabras. Large amounts of hardened wax pooled below each candelabra suggest that these candles are constantly kept alight.

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This passage is kept free of contamination and constantly lighted by Madreus's minions.

119. Planetarium

The dimensions of this chamber are not immediately obvious, as your attention is drawn to the thousands of twinkling lights which seem to hang suspended above in the darkness. You are reminded of nothing so much as a clear night sky, where the stars shine down unimpeded by stray wisps of cloud. As you observe this marvel, you notice further that the sparkling lights above seem to be slowly moving, swinging around a central fixed point.

This is the planetarium which was once used by the Elders to locate and utilize the Dragon's Tear comet for the empowerment of the Vast Gate. When Madreus took over the facility recently, he revitalized the planetarium, which had weathered a serious amount of damage. While most of the components of the planetarium have been restored, there are still some functions of this chamber which Madreus has not been able to restore.

If the PCs further investigate the room, they discover low benches of stone arranged in concentric circular rows within the room, except for one clear path into the center of the chamber. The path leads to a central pedestal, the face of which is a solid slab of stone that serves as a control panel. A close look at the panel reveals that much of it is damaged and actually eroded by time; however, there still remain three glowing strips of light embedded in the stone of the pedestal. If the PCs experiment, they discover that the operation of the light strips involves running their hands just above the light, parallel to the strip. The leftmost lightstrip controls the speed of the revolution of the stars above (this varies between motionless and dizzying quickness). The central light strip controls the intensity of the lights (this varies between dim embers and blazing orbs painful to gaze upon). The rightmost strip merely activates or deactivates the entire phenomena. If a PC deactivates the console, the stars above disappear and a bright glow from the apex of the dome illuminates the room fully.

The stars are magically projected, seeming to hang in the air like three-dimensional objects but lacking substance or mass (like holograms, in fact). If the characters take the time to study the stars, they can recognize constellations familiar to them, although they all seem subtly wrong (the stars that comprise them have all shifted slightly in the

thousands of years since the planetarium was constructed). A magical function of the planetarium is to respond to voice commands which ask for identifications or magnifications of a named star, constellation, or celestial phenomena. Thus, if one of the party says, "Let me see the Prometheus Constellation," the stars appropriate to that constellation (assuming such a constellation exists) will blaze much brighter than their companions, so that the Prometheus Constellation can clearly be perceived. In the same way, a further command of "Magnify" (or a similar phrase) zooms the perspective. If this function is discovered, and if any of the PCs think to ask for a view of the Dragon's Tear, they suddenly see a close-up of an orb (their own planet). Above this planetary orb (rendered with great detail) hangs a streaming comet. Suspended directly above the comet are red glyphs hanging in the air, which are constantly changing. Anyone who can read Elder Elvish can quickly determine that the glyphs represent numbers. What the PCs have to puzzle out is that the numbers represent the number of hours, minutes, and seconds in which the Dragon's Tear comet will continue to be close enough to provide power to the Vast Gate. When the numbers run to zero, both the Vast Gate and Outer Gates will close. This could be useful for a party that has lost track of the time. The voice command function of the planetarium is psionic in nature; thus PCs can command the planetarium in any tongue and be understood.

120. Nigel's Chamber

This 20-foot by 30-foot chamber is home to many shelves of bound books—in fact, the entire northern wall is covered by them. Immediately before the shelving is a large table of stone, apparently serving as a desk for the room's occupant, for the table holds sheaves of paper, a quill pen, and an inkwell, as well as a small pile of bound books. The room also contains a mattress upon the floor, a wash-basin and chamber pot, and a stone wardrobe.

The company that Madreus best likes to keep is that of his minion Nigel. Nigel came to him a full cycle ago and has served him well ever since. Nigel had learned about the Gate through his own researches and had gathered the Crystal Components from various Elder ruins with the intention of shutting down the gate. Unfortunately, he was overcome by Madreus's *Lenses of Utter Dominance* and now accompanies Madreus

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almost every waking moment. Madreus periodically renews the *charm* effects of his *Lenses* just to be certain that his control over Nigel never lapses. One of the PC recognizes Nigel at once as his or her own father, even though Nigel appears much older, disheveled, and actually quite mad! Nigel in turn recognizes his son or daughter (although he'll be rather surprised at how much he or she has grown, due to the time-difference between the Inner Sanctum and the outside world; see page 70). However, unless the power of Madreus's charm is broken, Nigel can't be turned back to the good man he once was. In fact, if the charm is broken, there's a 75% chance that Nigel's sanity will snap as his mind attempts to reconcile his actions of the last twenty-seven years with his newly restored sense of right and wrong.

Because Nigel possesses far more of a sage-like personality than does Madreus, it is likely that the thrall actually has more theoretical knowledge of the working of the Vast Gate and the Far Realm than does Madreus himself. Nigel's chamber reflects his constant study; the books here have been garnered from Duer-gar traders (who in turn had them from Drow, illithids, etc.) over the last twenty-seven years. The titles cover a broad range of esoteric topics, including the theory of teleportation, the theory of gate manufacture, studies of the metabolisms of natural creatures, studies of the metabolisms of magical and alien beings, the theory of time, the theory of space, the theory of dimensions, etc. Any PC who puts aside a few years for the purpose of ploughing through these books will have a much broader understanding of the underpinnings of the topics listed above. Unfortunately, much of the literature is speculative and does not provide any hard assistance to the reader. There is a single book of great value hidden amongst the others (each full turn of diligent searching gives the characters a noncumulative 25% chance to find it). Entitled *The Tome of Understanding*, this book functions as the magical book of the same name. Nigel has no spell book because his original was destroyed by Madreus. Therefore he now pulls all his spells from *The Book of the Gate* (see the entry for room 123 for details on the effects of these spells).

Nigel can only be found here if Madreus is taking one of his infrequent rest periods (15% chance). If Nigel is here, he will be sitting behind the desk, reading one of the opened books upon his desk. Nigel has been commanded to do away with any unannounced visitors that he comes upon, although he will hesitate if he recognizes a daughter or son among the PCs. In fact he will go so far as to say the name of the character (or an affectionate diminutive thereof) with an amazed, if a bit unbalanced voice, followed by "You've found me after all this time!" before unloosing an *acidic*

spittle on another party member. If possible, he will seek to capture the child alive for later corruption by Madreus, rather than slay him or her outright.

Nigel's stats and PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations are printed under the entry for room 123, the Chamber of the Vast Gate.

121. The Fountain

This room contains a large, ornately sculpted stone fountain in the center of the room. Above the circular basin squats a disturbingly realistic sculpture of some nameless many-armed mawed horror. The sculpture depicts this monster in the midst of making a gory meal of a dismembered elf. From the mouth and eye-sockets of the elf sprays a clear liquid which arcs high into the air, then falls back down into the waiting basin below. Hanging from the side of the basin are three large iron dippers and one iron bucket.



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This fountain was sculpted by one of Madreus's Duergar minions who had seen more horrors through the Vast Gate than was good for his sanity. The dwarf's mind snapped, but his talent with stone had not left him, so Madreus had him complete the sculpture of the stone fountain before doing away with him.

This fountain provides water for the inhabitants of the Inner Sanctum. For those who live daily within the field of contamination surrounding the Vast Gate, the water is only part and parcel of their daily hopelessness and their evening nightmares. The fluid has been thoroughly saturated with the field of contamination, and if a PC drinks from the basin, he or she stands a 20% chance of immediately experiencing visions of such alien ghastriness that the character must make a successful Wisdom/Willpower check or permanently lose one point from the ability or subability score! This effect only operates once per person. In all other respects the water in the basin is normal.

122. The Chamber of the Alienist

This room is 20-foot by 30-foot. The stone walls are draped with a white cloth, reflecting the light of the dozens of candles burning in various sconces, candle holders, and candelabra which line the walls of this room, providing quite a lot of light. The prodigious amount of melted wax visible on the holders and puddled along the floor underneath indicates that the candles must burn constantly. The center of the chamber is fairly sparse, holding only a mattress, an iron bathtub, a chamber pot, and a large chest of wood. A subtly disturbing statue of a stunningly beautiful woman with a faint smile on her lips, apparently carved entirely of black onyx, stands in one corner. Besides the door you entered, there is only a single other door visible, located on the northern wall.

There is only a 15% chance that Madreus can be found here. If he is here sleeping or bathing, his entourage (as described under the entry for room 123) will also be crammed into this room, standing or lying as space allows along the edges of the room near the candles (excepting Nigel, who will be in his own chamber). The candles are kept constantly lit by Madreus's minions, to ease his fear of darkness.

The bed and tub are ordinary items, and so also is the large chest, which contains some of Madreus's personal treasures. The chest is locked (Madreus holds the key) with a superior lock (-30% to Pick Lock attempts). The lock is also trapped with a particularly hard-to-discover

poison needle (-30% to Find Traps attempts) coated with a type-E poison (a mere pinprick causes death, inflicting 20 points of damage even on a successful saving throw vs. poison). The chest contains 5 spare changes of clothing, 1,567 sp, 3,245 gp, a dozen gem-grade diamonds each worth 400 gp, and 5 bars of platinum each worth 1,000 gp. The chest also holds "The Black Ring of Arista," which appears as a gold band clasping a gleaming egg of onyx. When the ring is placed upon a living being's finger, the wearer feels a painful prick as a small needle extends from the underside of the ring into the fleshy part of the wearer's digit. At this point it becomes impossible for the wearer to remove the ring short of a *wish*, although upon the wearer's death the ring falls off. The needle within the ring initially sucks a single hit point of blood from the wearer when it is put on. This hit point is permanently lost and may not be healed or otherwise recovered. When the hp is lost, the black onyx begins to glow from within with a dim ruby light. A successful Wisdom/Intuition check by the wearer suddenly allows him or her to realize that through the power derived from his or her blood, the Black Ring allows the wearer's touch to transform a single target's blood to onyx, killing the target instantly unless the victim makes a successful saving throw vs. death magic at a -4 penalty. The wearer also realizes that he or she can use this power once per week. What the wearer may not immediately realize that each such use drains 1 hp, which is permanently lost. Further, each use of the power has a 1% cumulative chance of also affecting the wearer of the ring, slaying him or her instantly and transforming the corpse into an onyx statue. Unlike normal petrification, a character who suffers this fate is not just petrified but dead: *stone to flesh* simply transforms the onyx statue into a collapsing corpse. The ring was once worn by one of Madreus's former henchmen; having witnessed her demise, he knows of the dangers of the ring and hence keeps it safely stowed away rather than wearing it, despite its power.

Madreus and his minions' stats are printed below under the entry for room 123. Refer there if necessary for PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations or other personal information.

The single stone door leads into a 10-foot by 10-foot storage room that is literally filled with candles. These are required for the continuous light required by Madreus for this room, the chamber of the Vast Gate, and the intervening passages. Whenever these candles threaten to even resemble running low, Madreus sends an expedition to the Duergar complex to obtain more.

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It is within the chamber of the Vast Gate itself that Madreus spends most of his waking moments discovering alien truths, researching mind-wrenching formulae, and learning spells of horror. The Gate is his altar, and he worships there to gain the attention of uncaring entities who abide on its opposite side. The party is 85% likely to find Madreus here, scribbling furiously in the black book (*The Book of the Gate*) upon the podium (or ready to face the party, if forewarned by a minion of their approach); the Alienist only spends four hours a day sleeping in his chamber (see room 122). He began a month-long Ritual of Communion when the Vast Gate opened. He must spend eight hours every day just maintaining the Ritual, chanting and drawing runes in *The Book of the Gate*. If the PCs are not able to stop the Alienist by the 28th day following the opening of the Gate, there is a real chance that Madreus will succeed in gaining a patron entity in the Far Realm. See the discussion under the Conclusion on page 94 for more details.

Because Madreus is an Alienist, his conjuration and illusion spells exclusively summon and imitate creatures of the Far Realm. For example, when he casts a *summon shadow* spell, the resultant creature, while having the same stats as a shadow normally summoned by the spell, will appear as the shadow of a tentacled horror. The same holds for his *monster summoning* spells; here the DM might allow the spell to summon down-powered versions of gibbering mouthers or deepspawn. What's worse, from a PC perspective, is that during those twenty-eight days of the Bridging, every creature summoned by Madreus remains even after the spell would normally have elapsed. This means that Madreus could summon a veritable army of creatures to serve him, if he so wished. He hasn't done so yet because he trusts that nothing can get past the threats posed by the Duergar, the Twisted Caverns, and the Sanctum to reach him here in the chamber of the Vast Gate. However, during the length of a battle or extended series of conflicts, this advantage will have a

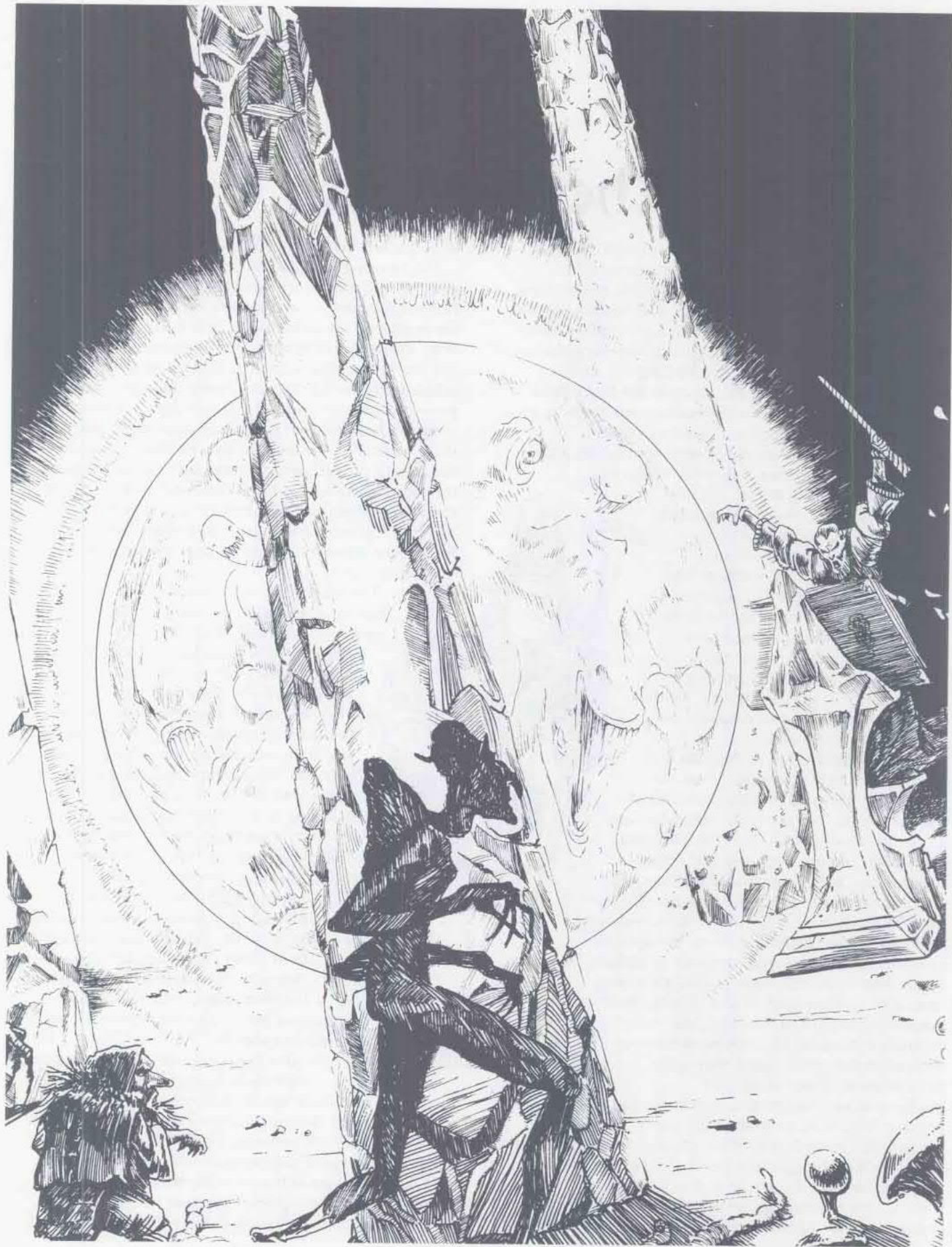
telling effect on the side of the Alienist.

Madreus early in his life became aware of alien energies beyond the perception of most mortals. He used this singular awareness to develop magical lores similar in effect with common sorceries and magics. However, the source of these spells and powers was in fact the Far Realm. The Vast Gate had allowed sufficient influence of the Far Realm to seep into the world to power Madreus's growing knowledge. The magics he commanded conjured forth foul, alien creatures that were wholly inimicable towards all life on this world. Madreus's power seemed great, but still he hungered for more. The Alienist finally tracked the energies to their source here in Firestorm Peak, where he has devoted the subsequent years to researching and perfecting the Ritual necessary to permanently keep the Gate open.



The study of these alien magics is not without its consequences, however. Such stark philosophies can blast the mind of a rational being, and Madreus has incurred a few deviant behaviors as a result of some of the spells he has learned. In addition to the permanent drain on his sanity (his Wisdom is now hovering around 6), he also suffers from monophobia (fear of being alone), scotophobia (fear of the dark), and the occasional hallucination. He is forced to deal with his hallucinations on a case-by-case basis, often blasting his bodyguards to kingdom come in the process, but he controls his phobias by always keeping a light with him and by always remaining in the company of at least one of his minions. The DM is encouraged to make use of these characteristics if possible during interaction with the PCs. For example, if the room were to be suddenly plunged into darkness, Madreus would scream shrilly, "The light! Noooo!" He would then immediately attempt to make more light (with his wand if possible), to the exclusion of all other activities.

Madreus will always have the following entourage with him when encountered by the PCs. Even if the Alienist is sleeping, his minions are nearby (save for Nigel, who retires to his own chamber), *charmed* to maintain constant vigilance for their master. The entourage consists of Nigel, five 4-HD Duergar (hand-



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picked by Wellfast), two brood gibberlings, three full-strength troll mutates, and two myconids. Additionally, Madreus has a 20% chance of having 1d4+2 randomly summoned monsters (see above) which have lingered and are now charmed as well by Madreus's *Lenses of Utter Dominance*.

123. The Chamber of the Vast Gate

Past the metallic door lies a vast quadruple-valved chamber lined with nephelium, the crystal heart of a god hollowed out to contain vast energies. From the central focus of the chamber streams a light of near-blinding intensity from a brilliant sphere. It pulses in time to a heartbeat, forging light-reflections which race across the glassy walls. Strange shapes seem to move with sinuous silhouettes within the walls, now and again skinning the shining skin, but then losing interest and receding before their true forms are revealed.

At the center of the chamber, piercing the air itself, a sphere of pure light 30 feet in diameter hangs only a foot above the crystalline floor. Immediately bracketing this pulsing light are three columns of crystal, equidistantly spaced, rising uninterrupted from floor to ceiling. Directly west of the sphere is what appears to be a podium of crystal firmly mounted to the floor. The podium holds a large book bound in coarse black leather. Seeming out of place about the periphery of the room are three tables of stone spread with parchment and metal tools, a wooden chair, and a stone shelf holding various arcane items.

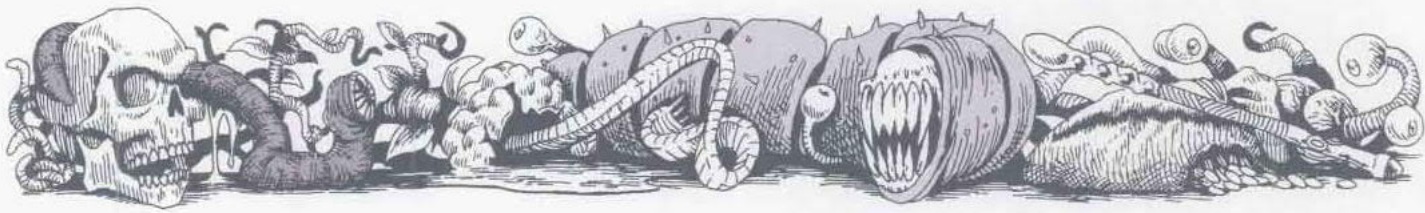
The Elders constructed this chamber to capture, contain, and focus the energy of the Dragon's Tear comet. A solid shaft of nephelium pierces the stone of the mountain, rising from this focusing chamber to the tip of Firestorm Peak. The shaft serves as a magical conduit, drawing energy from the comet down into this chamber of the Vast Gate. The crystal chamber focuses most of the energy; however, a residual amount continually leaks back up the shaft, thereby creating the month-long firestorms at the summit.

The physical manifestation of the opening to the Far Realm appears as the 30-foot-diameter sphere of white light. Creatures in the Far Realm can pass freely through it into this world. The Gate is two-way, and PCs foolish enough could step through to see what lies on the opposite side. Unfortunately, the Far Realm is intensely inimical to biological life as we know it, and the effect would

be like stepping directly into a living amoebic sea. Journeying through the gate goes beyond the scope of this product, but it is recommended that any PCs who do step through have their minds permanently burned away by the visions of madness, even as the life in their bodies is quickly snuffed by the deadly acid of the amoebic sea.

The Book of the Gate is lying atop the "control panel" for the Vast Gate. Beneath the open book, the slightly canted crystal face of the podium holds what appears to be a sphere of smooth black stone which is mostly submerged beneath its crystal setting. The convex portion of the black sphere above the crystal panel face provides enough surface area for the palm of a human- or elf-sized creature to rest upon it easily. In the present configuration of the control panel, the sphere is immobile and will not roll in place to any pressure. Immediately bracketing the dark sphere are three small cylindrical shafts, equidistantly spaced from each other. It should not be lost on an observant party that the layout of the panel seems to mimic the scene before them. The shafts are the perfect size for each to accept a Crystal Component. It does not matter which component goes in which receptacle, although only one component can be inserted at once. Furthermore, it takes 2 full rounds of steady pressure to fully insert each component. This will become important when Madreus and his minions exert themselves in an attempt to deter the party from any such activity. Once a colored component has been fully inserted into a shaft on the panel, one of the large crystal rods bracketing the manifestation of the Vast Gate will turn the same color as the Component rod just inserted. If Madreus is not in the room at the time, he is attuned to the Vast Gate to such an extent that he will know at once that someone is tampering with its focus, and he and all his minions will hasten to room 123 at all possible speed.

Once all three Components are inserted in the panel, the dark stone sphere will begin to glow. If a PC places his or her hand upon the convex surface of the sphere, his or her vision will be superseded by the image of a vast starfield. An immeasurably large number of small illuminated spheres are sprinkled across a curtain of night. Centered in the PC's field of sight is a glare of harsh light, strobing its intensity in a somehow disturbing pattern. This strobing point of light represents the focus of the Vast Gate on the Far Realm. The PC with his or her hand on the sphere will now find that it now seems possible to roll it. If the PC rolls the sphere in any



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direction, he or she will see that the strobing glare begins to slowly recede from his or her vision. If the PC manages to roll the globe for a total of 10 rounds, the strobing light suddenly recedes to nothingness in a heartbeat, and the portal to the Far Realm in this chamber suddenly winks out of existence. The focus of the Vast Gate has successfully been shifted. It is not possible to refocus the Vast Gate on another world or crystal sphere for another twenty-seven years, when next the Dragon's Tear comet appears in the sky.

The laboratory equipment assembled upon the tables and upon the shelf represents Madreus's spell research lab, and any PC wizard will recognize it for such. The PC wizard may elect to ransack the setup if he or she is looking for a particularly rare spell component, with a 35% chance to successfully find a specific item (DMs may find the Spell Component tables in Chapter 5 of *PLAYER'S OPTION: Spells & Powers* a handy listing for typical items likely to lie scattered about). One item which is sure to interest the PCs is the honeystone Crystal Component, the final component necessary to trigger the control panel of the Gate as described above.

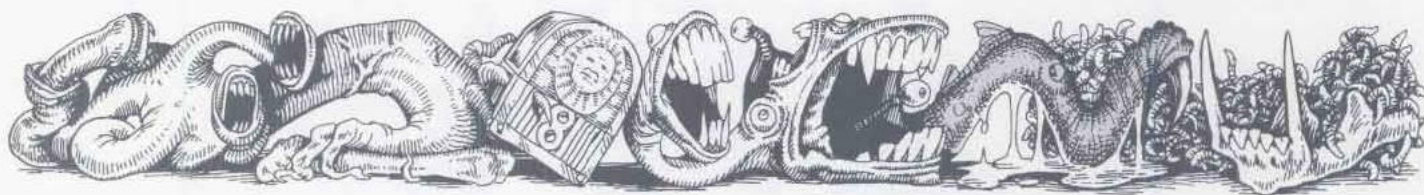
The Book of the Gate is also an interesting find. Written in Madreus's crabbed script, this tome is filled with the secrets he has gained from the Gate. Any PC who peruses the work in its entirety (a month-long project) will permanently lose one full point of Wisdom when faced with the alien truths presented therein. However, that PC will then be able to memorize the spells (assuming he or she is of the proper class) detailed throughout the text (use Madreus's spell selection for the spells found in the book), which are otherwise incomprehensible to those who have not read the whole work. The spells mimic the standard spells of the same name, but the effects of the spells in the book should always show their alien origins. For example, the book's version of *monster summoning III* might summon a dharculus or a blood sipper. The Book also contains the *Ritual of Communion*, which when performed for twenty-eight consecutive days while the Vast Gate remains open has a good chance of gaining the performer a patron entity of deity-like power from the Far Realm. This is *not* a desirable event, and the DM should feel free to discourage any PCs who try to continue Madreus's work.

PLAYER'S OPTION Considerations: Madreus is 85% likely to be encountered in this room; his entourage will always be with him, whatever his current loca-

tion (see the description for room 122). When encountered here, he is standing at the podium deep in the midst of his ritual. If disturbed, he orders the party's destruction by his assembled minions. Three of the Duergar move to protect him from harm (they *enlarge* to their full heights, shielding Madreus from missile attack by their mere bulk) while he casts *phantasmal killer* followed by *Evard's black tentacles*. He then attempts to use his *Lenses of Utter Dominance* in two consecutive rounds, then casts *monster summoning III* and *demishadow monsters*. These spells go off in the average phase, except for the *black tentacles*, which takes one round to cast but then goes off in the very fast phase of the next round. The power of the *Lenses* takes effect in the average phase if successful. Any party member successfully *charmed* will be ordered to turn on his or her companions. If Madreus is ever directly attacked he will first try his *Lenses*; if unsuccessful with these he casts *acidic spittle* (in the fast phase) at the foe. If he receives a serious injury or is reduced to roughly half his hit point total, he uses his *unicorn dagger* to *teleport* to relative safety and downs his *potions of extra healing* before reentering into the battle by use of *dimension door*. He strategically holds his action to the very slow phase to place himself in a position of tactical strength (preferably behind one or more *enlarged* Duergar). Madreus focuses all of his forces' attention at any PC who attempts to change the alignment of the Vast Gate.

Nigel remains near the control panel during any conflict and attempts to directly keep the party members away from it. Initially, this places him at Madreus's side, so he will be similarly protected by the *enlarged* Duergar. Nigel will rely on *Thunderwand* for the most part, firing it in the fast phase of the combat round and delivering a d12 knockdown die.

Any *enlarged* Duergar (see general Duergar *PLAYER'S OPTION* Considerations listed on page 12) who faces the PCs have a 50% chance per attack of simply attempting to grab his target and toss him or her into the Vast Gate. This allows the victim one free attack of opportunity before the Duergar makes his attack against the PC. Apply the PC's Dexterity and shield bonuses to his or her AC, but don't count armor into the final result. A successful attack on the part of the Duergar indicates the PC has been grabbed, arms pinned helplessly to his or her sides, and that he or she will be tossed into the Vast Gate in



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the slow phase of the next combat round. The PC's only chance is for a companion to kill or disable the Duergar before the slow phase of the next round, or for the grabbed PC to make a successful Strength/Muscle check at a -5 penalty. PCs tossed through the gate are gone for good; to underscore the point, allow one horribly acid-burned body to stagger out from the gate, utter a lunatic laugh that segues into a piercing scream, and fall dead.

For **PLAYER'S OPTION** Considerations on the brood gibberlings, troll mutates, and the myconids, see pages 53, 60, and 67, respectively.

Madreus, 10th-level human Alienist: AC 2 (*unicorn dagger*); MV 12, hp 32; THAC0 17 (15 with *unicorn dagger* +2); #AT 1; Dmg 1d12+2 (*unicorn dagger* +2); SA spells, *Lenses of Utter Dominance* (-4 penalty to victim's saving throw due to *robe of the archmagi*); SD spells, 5% Magic Resistance (*robe of the archmagi*); SZ M (6-foot tall); ML elite (13); AL CE; XP 9,000. Str 11, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 18, Wis 6, Chr 12 (subabilities are equal to prime statistics).

Special Equipment: Unifex (*dagger* +2 fashioned from a unicorn horn; wielder gains the AC of a natural unicorn (AC 2), can *teleport* 360 yards once per day, and ages very slowly); *Robe of Madreus (robe of the archmagi)*, *Lenses of Utter Dominance (eyes of humanoid and monster charming)*, *wand of light*, 4 *Draughts of Laduguer's Tears (potions of extra healing)*.

Spells (217 spell points): 1st—*comprehend languages, unseen servant*; 2nd—*acidic spittle (Melf's acid arrow)* x3, *summon swarm*; 3rd—*monster summoning I, slow, vampiric touch*; 4th—*dimension door, Evard's black tentacles, phantasmal killer*; 5th—*create living wall, demishadow monsters, monster summoning III, shadow door, summon shadow*.

Nigel, 6th-level human Alienist: AC 4 (*ring of protection* +2, Dexterity bonus); MV 12; hp 22; THAC0 19 (16 with *staff of striking*); #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+3, +6, or +9 (*staff of striking*); SA spells; SD spells; SZ M (5-foot, 11-inches tall); ML elite (13); AL LE; XP 3,000. Str 8, Dex 18, Con 13, Int 17, Wis 7, Chr 12 (subabilities are equal to prime statistics).

Special Equipment: *Thunderwand (wand of lightning with 13 charges)*, *ring of protection* +2, *staff of striking with 37 charges*.

Spells (81 spell points): three free cantrip slots; 1st—*comprehend languages, unseen servant*; 2nd—*acidic spittle (Melf's acid arrow)* x5; 3rd—*babble, monster summoning I, slow, vampiric touch*.

Duergar (5): AC 4; MV 6 (12 when *enlarged*); HD 4+8; hp 35, 34, 36, 35, 35; THAC0 15 (17 due to glare from the Vast Gate); #AT 1; Dmg 2d4 (*ranseur*), x3.5 when *enlarged*; SA *invisibility, enlargement, stealth* (-2 penalty to opponents' surprise rolls); SD +4 bonus to saving throws vs. spell, immune to paralysis, illusion/phantasm spells, and poison, rarely surprised (1-in-10 chance); SW -2 penalty to all attack rolls due to the Vast Gate's bright light; SZ S (4-foot tall) or H (17-foot tall); ML fanatic (18); Int exceptional to genius (15-18); AL LE; XP 1,400 each.

Brood gibberlings (2): AC 8 (Dexterity bonus); MV 12; HD 4+2, hp 26, 29; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+4 (bite); SA bite injects gibberslug; SZ M (6-foot tall); ML champion (16); Int average (9, 10); AL CN; XP 950 each.

Myconids (2): AC 10; MV 9; HD 5; hp 40, 38; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 5d4 (clapsed fists); SD spores: *distress, reproducer, rapport, pacifier, hallucinator*; SZ L (10-foot tall); ML elite (13); Int average (10); AL LN; XP 420 each.

Healthy troll mutates (3): AC 4; MV 12; HD 6+6, hp 30, 35, 37; THAC0 13; #AT 4; Dmg 1d4+4/1d4+4/1d4+4/1d8+2 (claw/claw/claw/bite); SA severed limbs can attack independently; SD regeneration (3 hp per round); SW cannot regenerate damage from acid or fire; SZ L (8-foot tall); ML fanatic (17); Int low (5-7); AL CE; XP 1,400 each.



Conclusion

If the party makes it to the chamber of the Vast Gate with two of the three Crystal Components, there is the possibility that they can seize the third Component, overcome Madreus and his minions, and then shift the focus of the gate. If this occurs, the field of corruption abruptly blinks off. Creatures dependent upon the field for survival, such as the brood gibberlings and gibberslugs, sicken and die over a period of one month. Outside Firestorm Peak, the change in the air becomes immediately obvious. A new feeling of hope and life seems to infuse the air in the absence of the mind-altering influence of the gate. All the ill affects described in the beginning entries for the nearby region cease (i.e., mood corruption, form corruption, etc.). The concentrated effects of the field inside the Peak also cease; this should bring the party a sigh of relief. They should be rewarded with a bonus of 1,000 XP each for successfully completing a very difficult challenge. If the PCs manage to successfully free Nigel of Madreus's evil charms, award the party an additional 1,000 XP each.

One thing that a successful party should keep in mind is that while the peril may have ended, the Outer Gates on Firestorm Peak will still close right on schedule when the Dragon's Tear comet leaves the sky. If the party has taken most of the 28 days of grace to end this threat, there may be precious little time for them to explore the workings of the Vast Gate before the Outer Gates close; PCs who realize this (perhaps via Intelligence/Reason or Wisdom/Intuition rolls) may find themselves engaged in a frantic race to the exit before it's too late, with every creature they by-passed before throwing obstacles in their way. Characters trapped within the mountain are faced with three basic fates: waiting twenty-seven years for the Outer Gates to reopen, exploring other worlds via World Gate Omega or Straygate's portal powers (see the descriptions of rooms 111 and 110, respectively), or facing the prospect of making a dangerous trek down into the Underdark with the goal of somehow finding an alternate route to the surface. Such a journey may make a perfect campaign hook for a long series of adventures detailing the parties' explorations of the subterranean places of the earth, at the DM's discretion.

Unless some sort of catastrophic magic has destroyed all or part of the workings of the Vast Gate, it is still operational. PCs (or their descendants) who care to return in twenty-seven years could attempt to focus the gate on an entirely new world. Unless they are extremely unlucky, any world so discovered should be no more or less alien than the one they currently inhabit; for example, characters may find themselves travelling from Toril to Oerth, or from Oerth to Mystara or Cerilia, or to a new world of the DM's own creation. Certainly there can be great dangers in any such Bridging, but the nature of the new world itself should not endanger the PCs (e.g., it

should not tap into the heart of a fiery sun or one of the domains of Ravenloft, for example).

It is possible that the PCs may make it to the chamber of the Gate without the Crystal Components. In this case, they can still put an end to Madreus's scheme; however, the gate itself remains focused on the Far Realm of contradictions. The alien influence abates to some degree without Madreus's constantly stirring it, but the effects in the region will slowly grow again to their present proportions. While the Gate is open, there is always the possibility that an extremely powerful entity of the Far Realm will step through into this reality and wreak horrible damage by its mere presence. Since a threat still remains, each PC in this case only receives a 300 XP bonus.

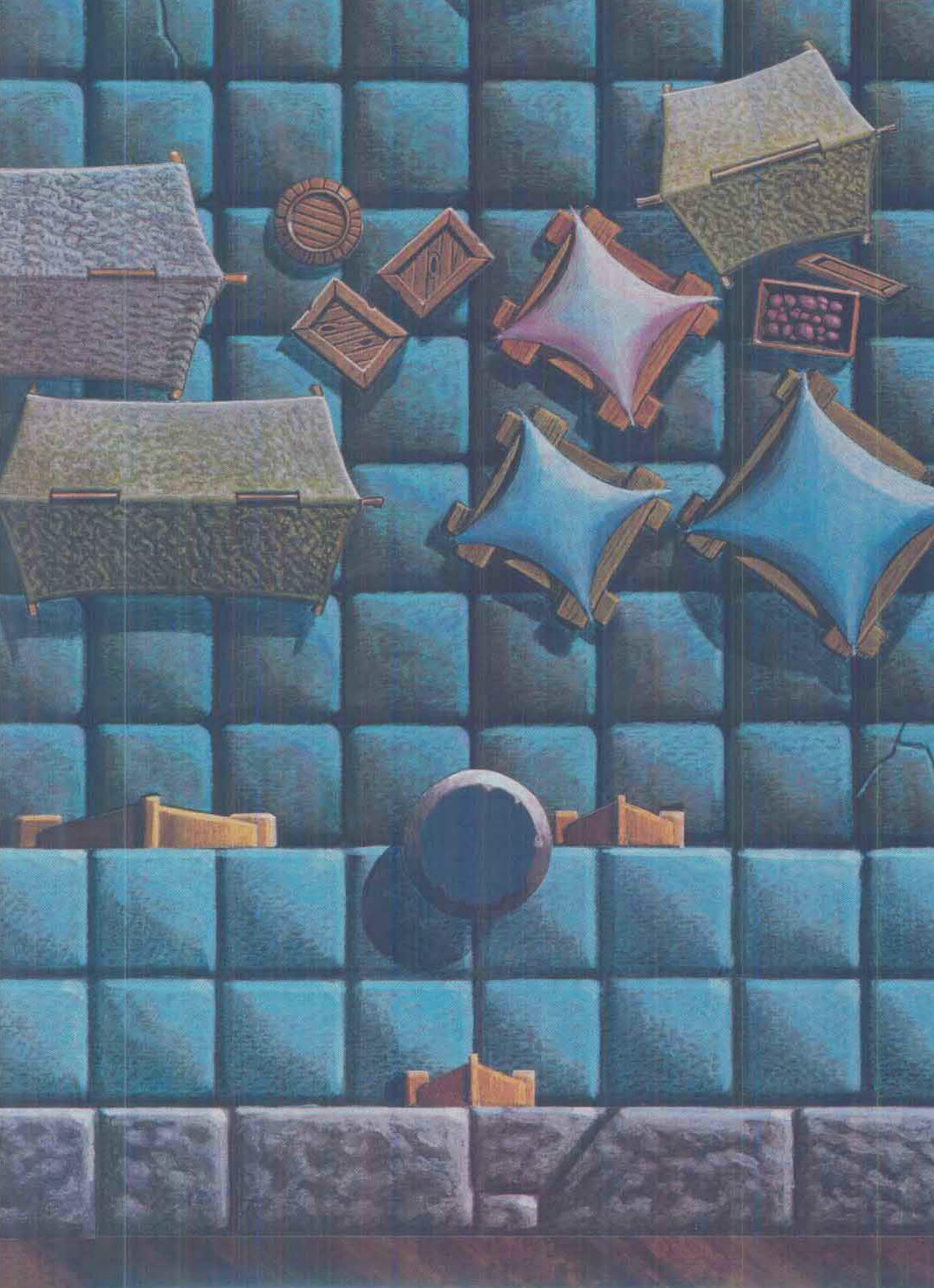
In the event that the PCs are wholly unsuccessful in either stopping Madreus or shifting the focus of the gate, the evil Alienist completes his *Ritual of Communion*. This gives Madreus a flat 75% chance of gaining a patron entity of mad power from beyond the Gate. If this occurs, the power of the Bridging is augmented so that the Vast Gate no longer closes at the departure of the comet. Madreus himself is similarly augmented, and his effective level doubles. In effect, he becomes a proxy of his mad alien power, gaining other powers at the DM's whim. When this occurs, Madreus wastes little time in assembling an army of alien creatures, with which he begins his long quest to subdue the world for his alien master. It is a foregone conclusion that the PCs garner no bonus XP in this dismal scenario.

An Alienist with enhanced powers at his command will be a terrible prospect for the world to face, and a threat beyond the power of the party to face alone. In such a scenario, Madreus becomes a permanent fixture of the campaign world, and the PCs may have many future adventures battling his minions (including, possibly, any of their fellows who fell under his domination) and trying to contain the ever-expanding circle of corruption and alienoid excursions. What's worse, the Alienist has peaked the patron entity's interest in this realm, and the patron itself begins to move toward the PCs' world, arriving in twenty-seven years. Even then the ultimate catastrophe may be escaped if bold adventurers brave Madreus's lair yet again and realign the Vast Gate, but this may be beyond the scope of the DM's campaign timeline.

In any case, the defeat should remain with the PCs as a humbling experience. No matter what their later achievements, their knowledge of the threat facing the world should always haunt their dreams; alien vistas teeming with vile abominations whose very existence claws at the sanity of the dreamer. Such recurring nightmares may spur the PCs to make another attempt to stop Madreus, only to discover that the Outer Gates are and remain shut. Madreus has another generation to refine his hideous plots, unhindered by either compassion or sanity.



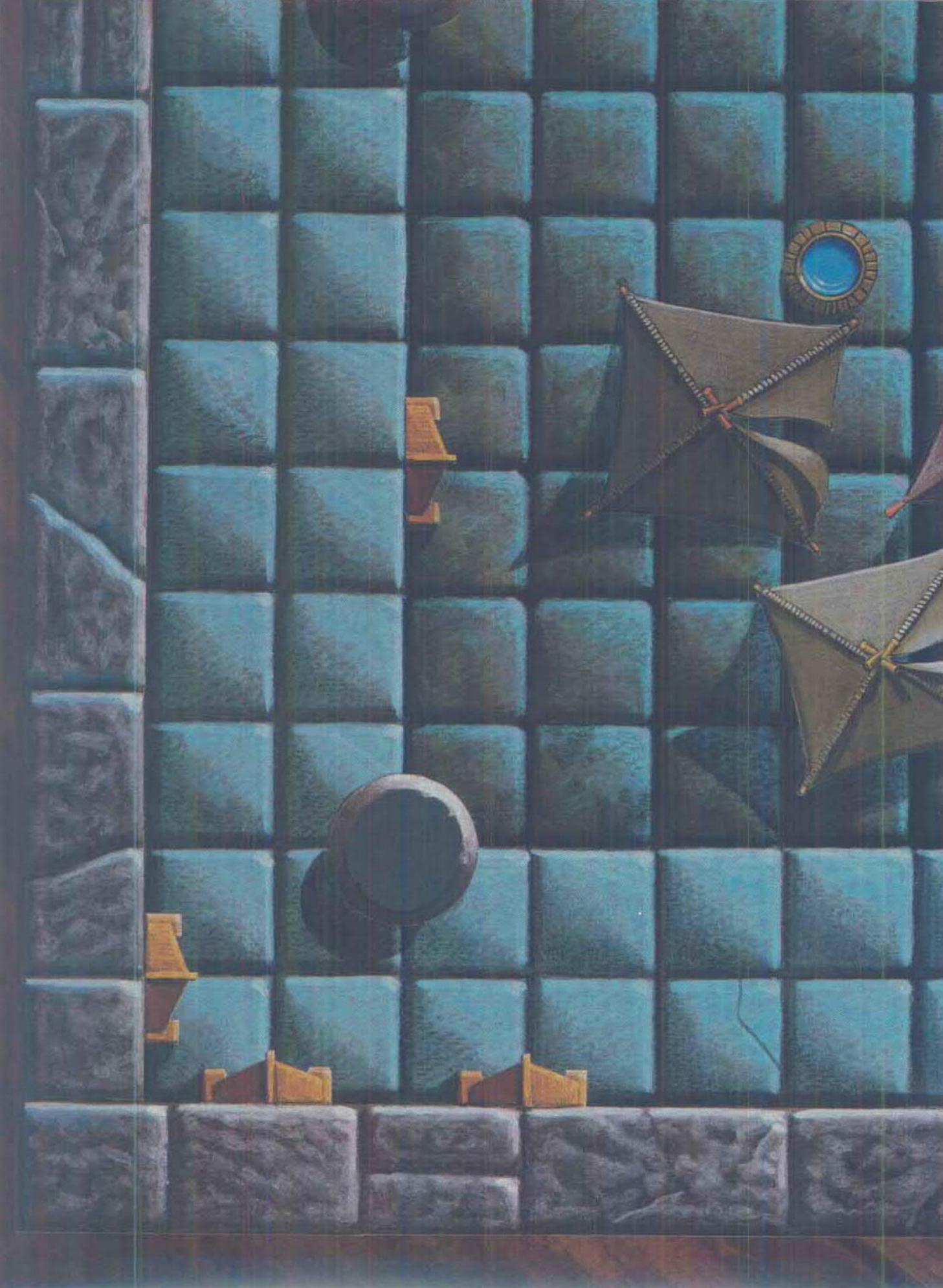


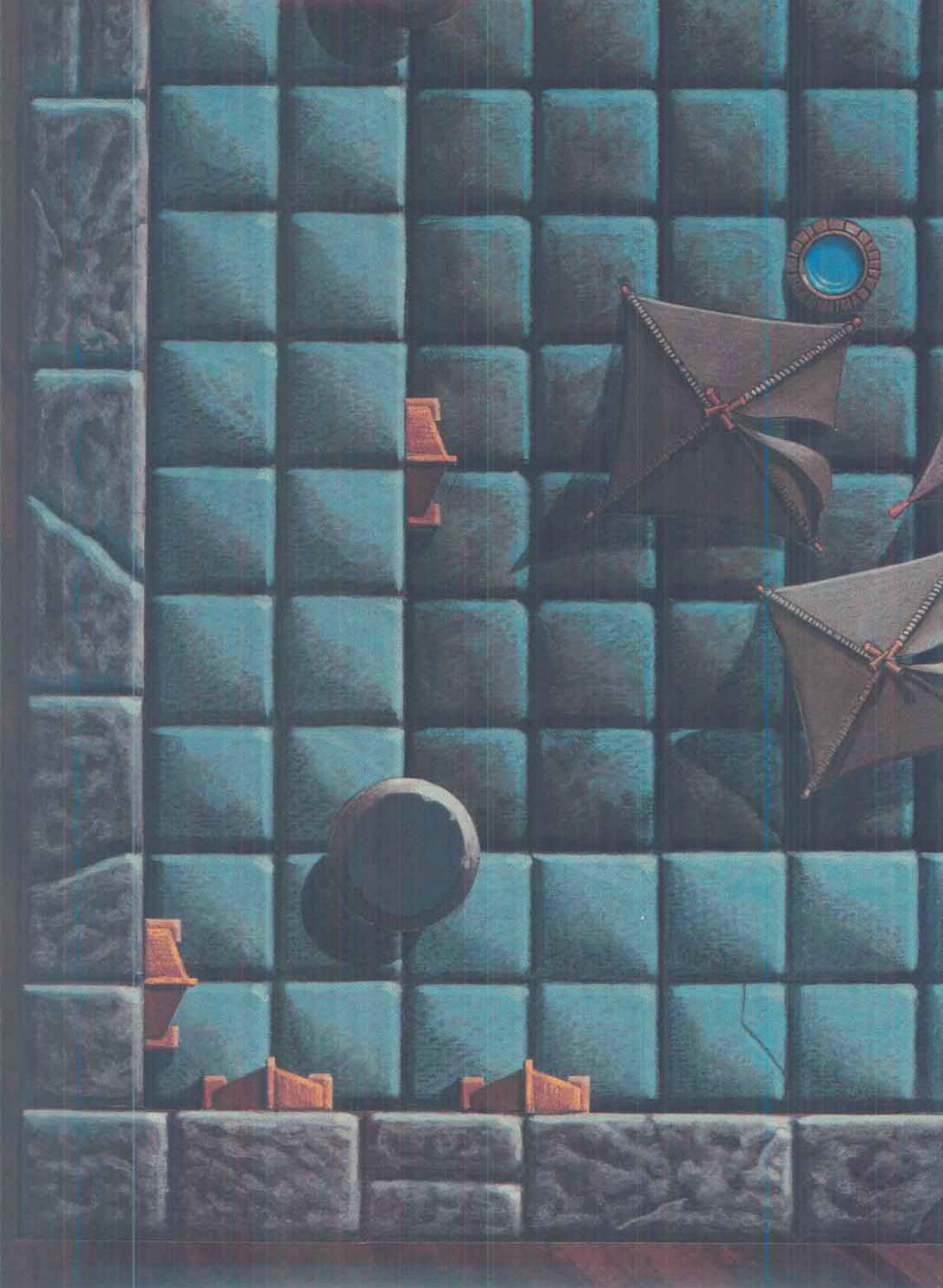




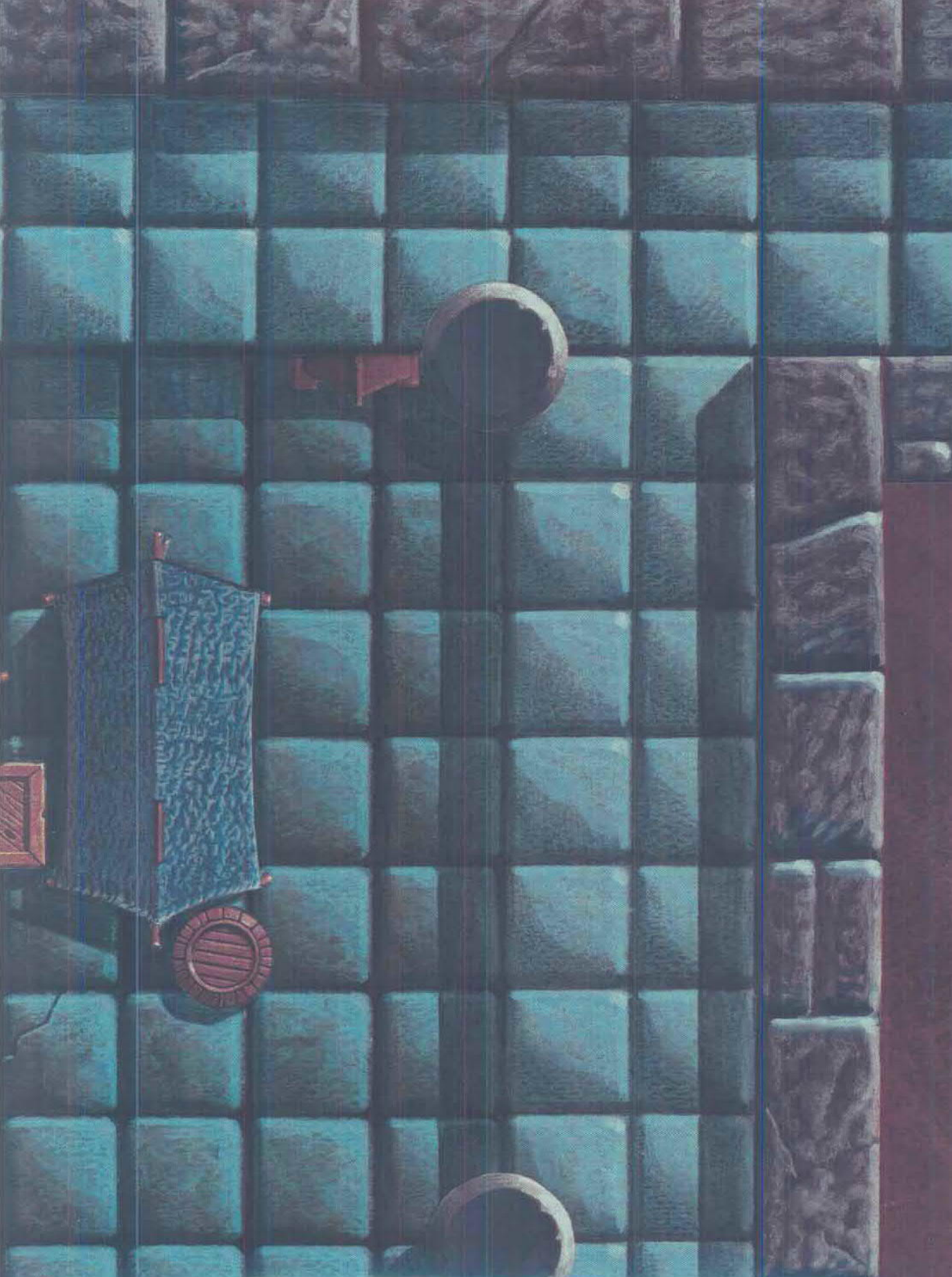


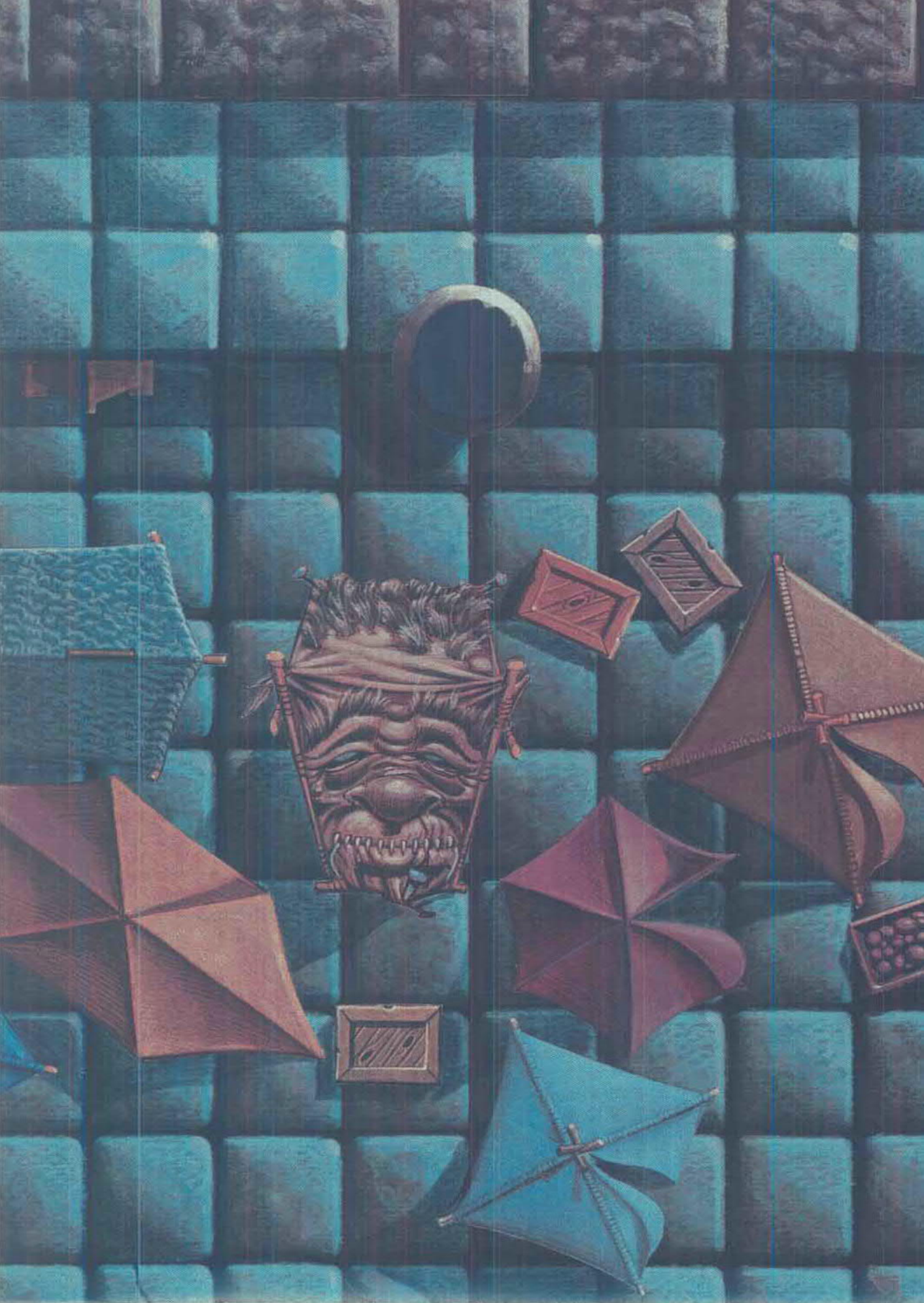








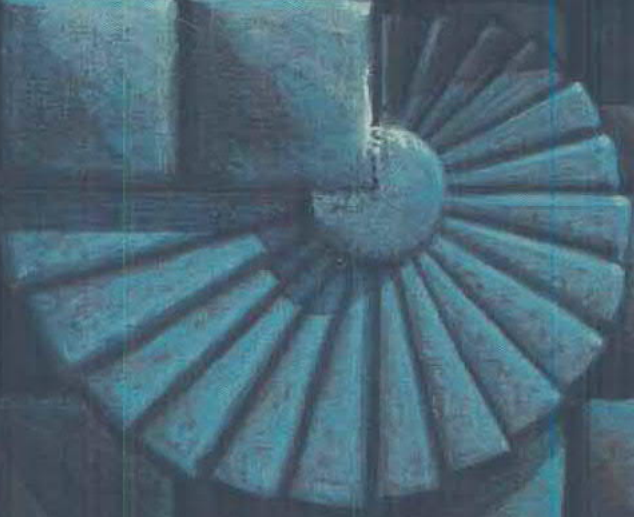




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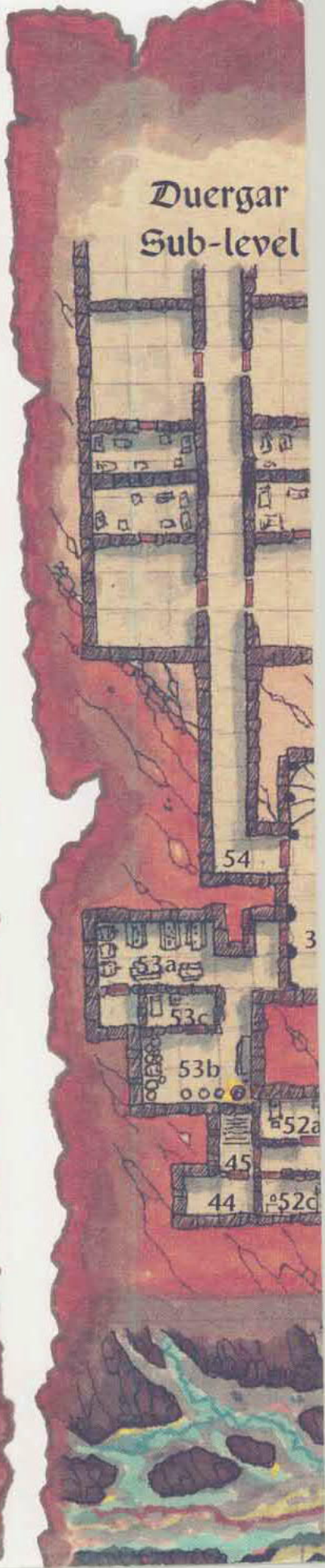


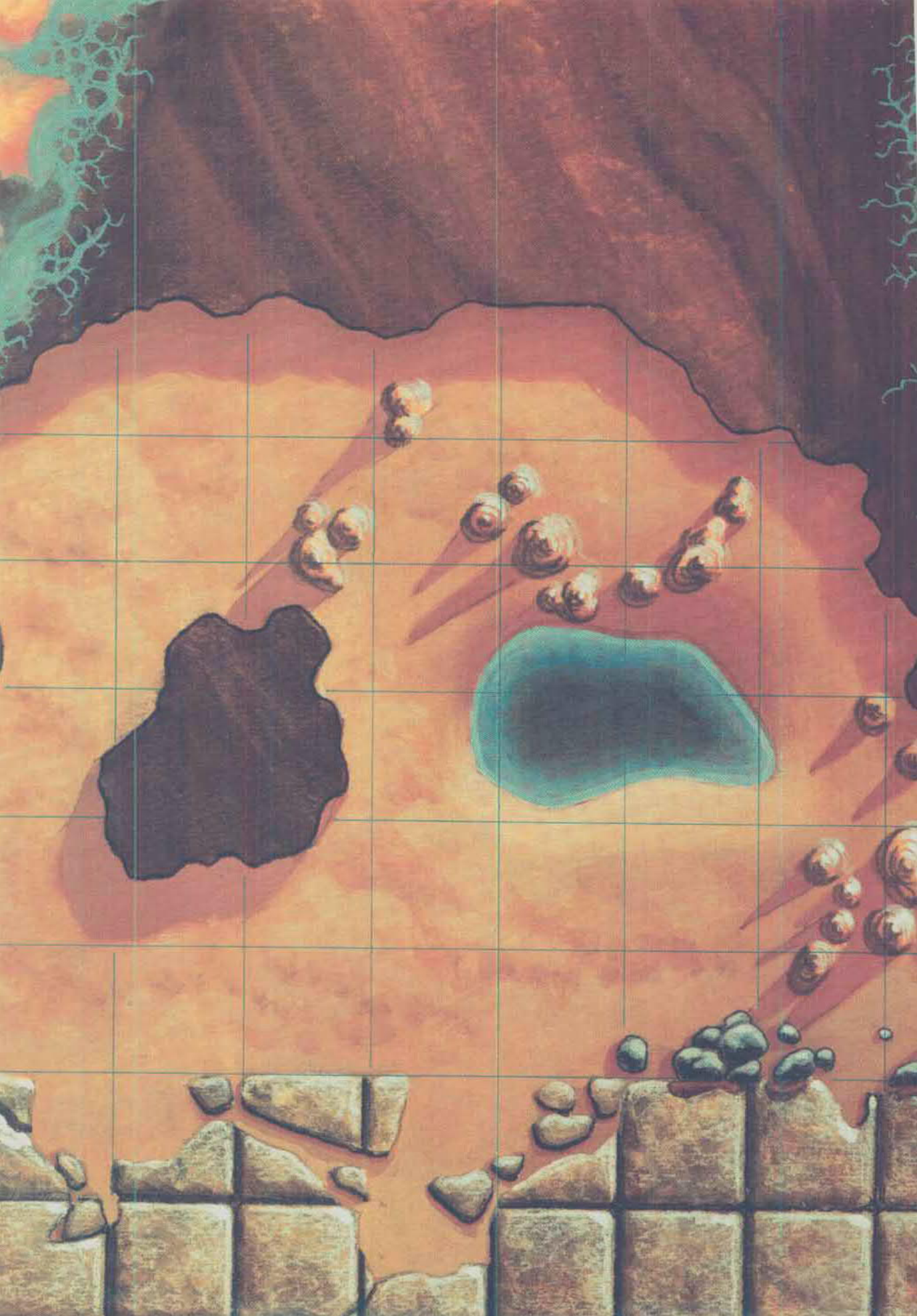
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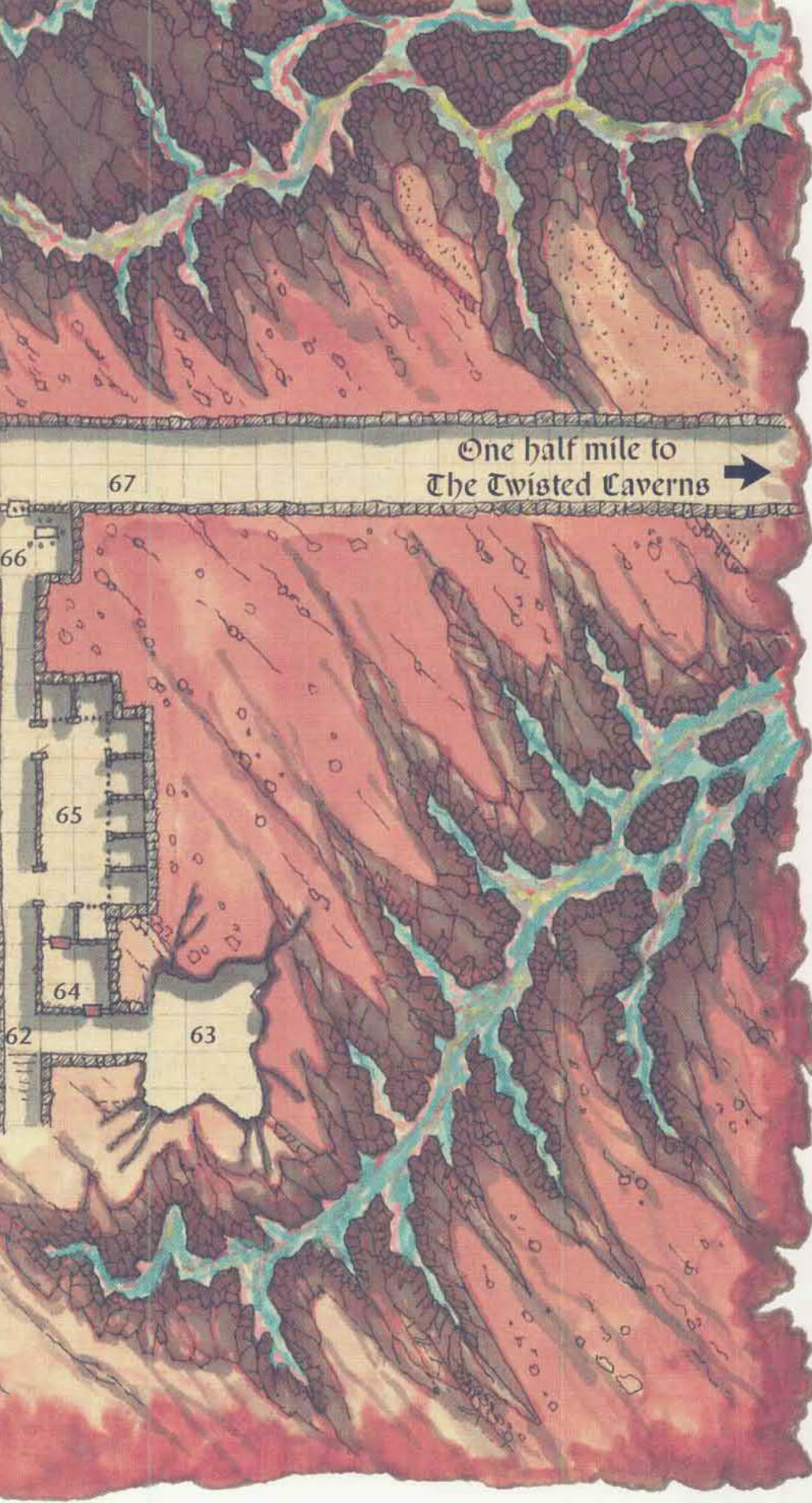


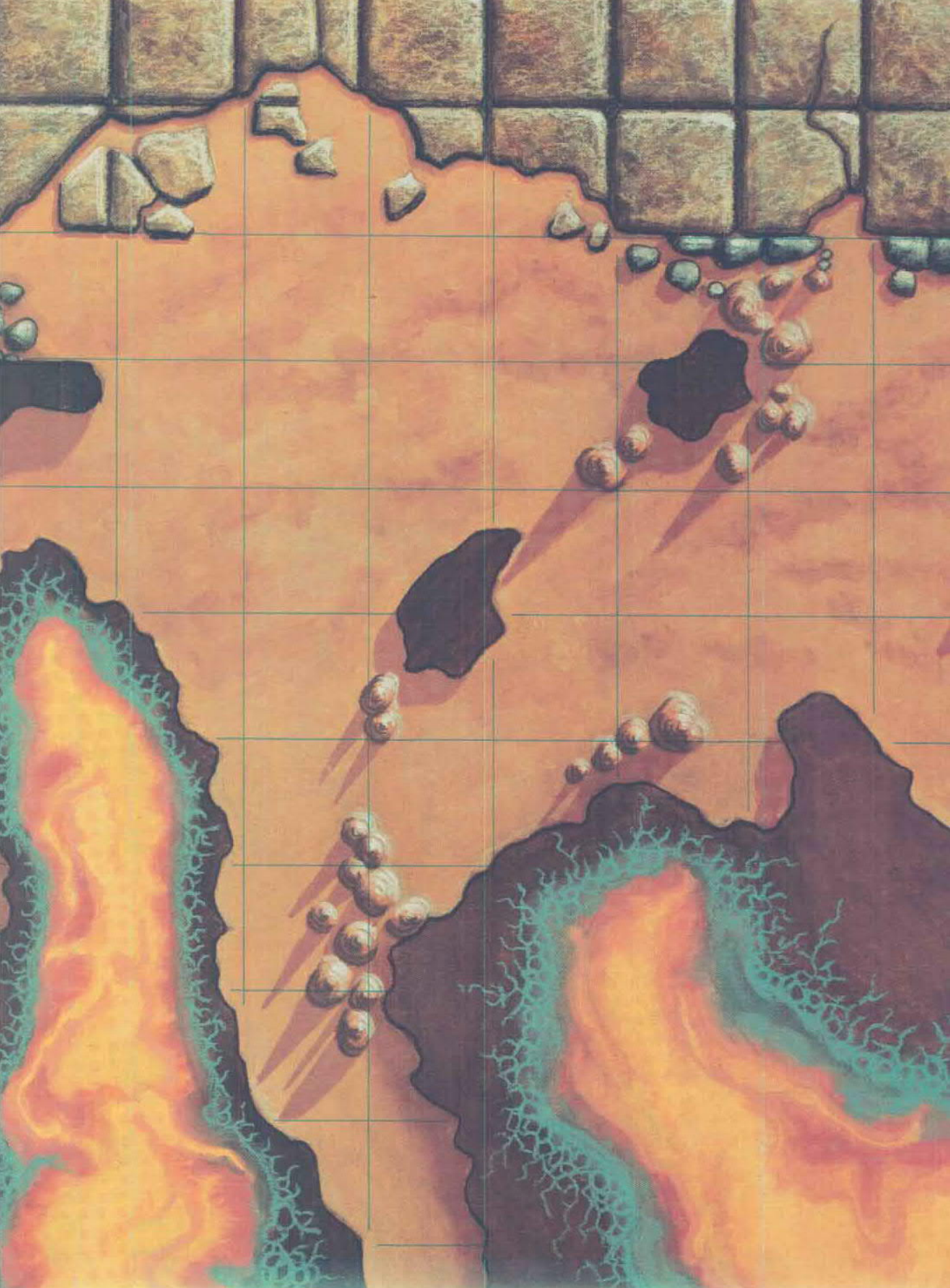








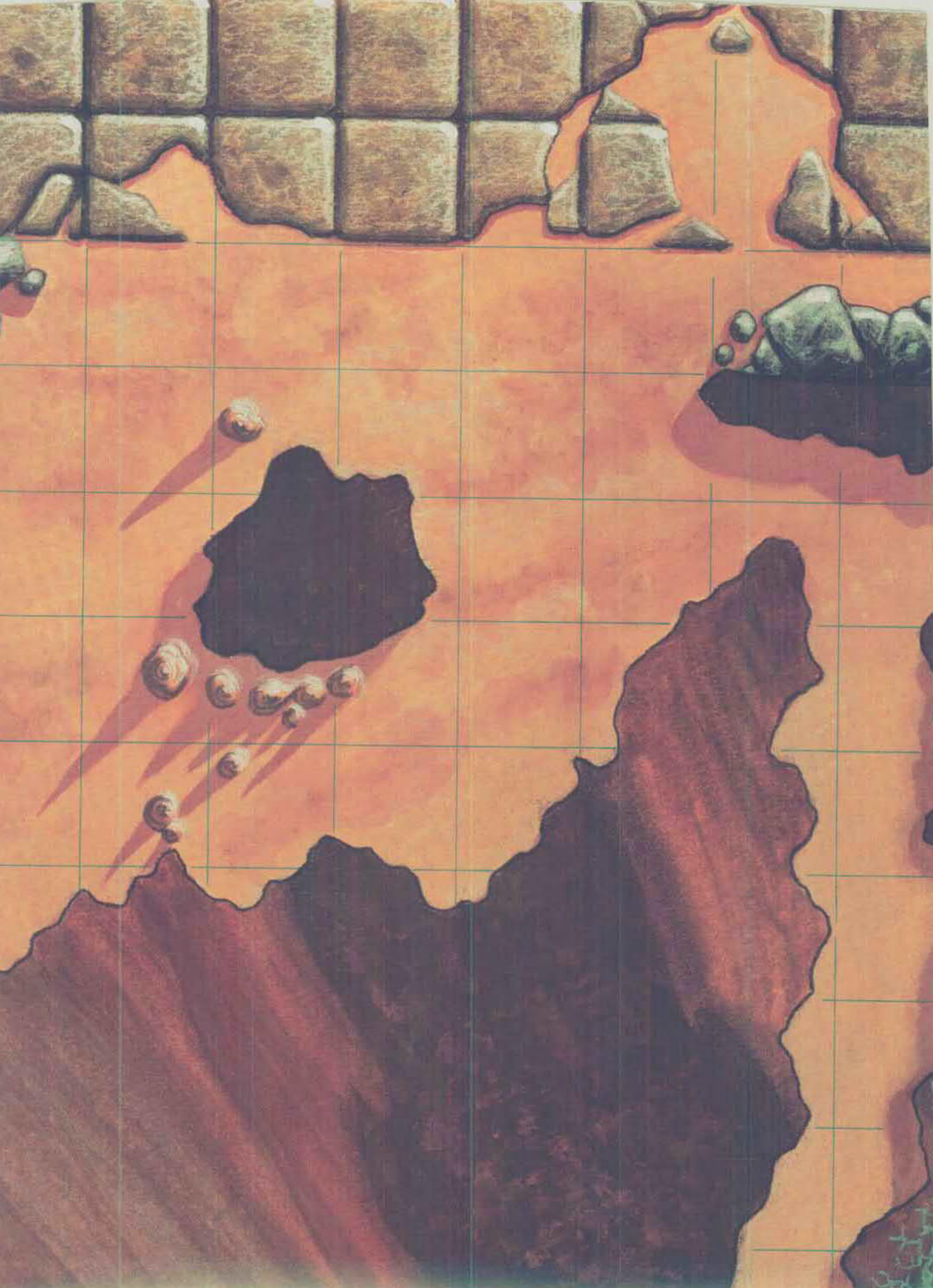


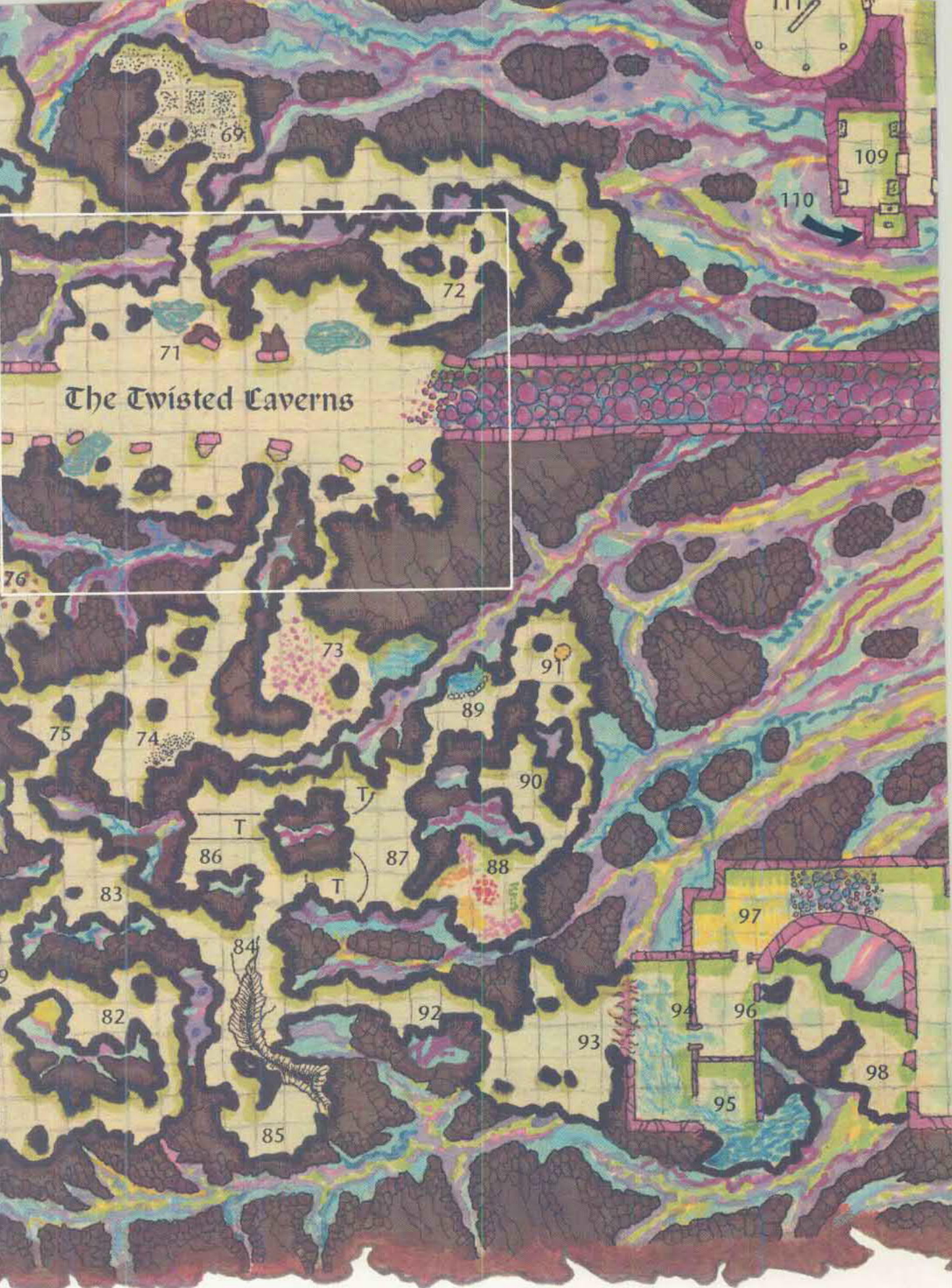












The Twisted Caverns

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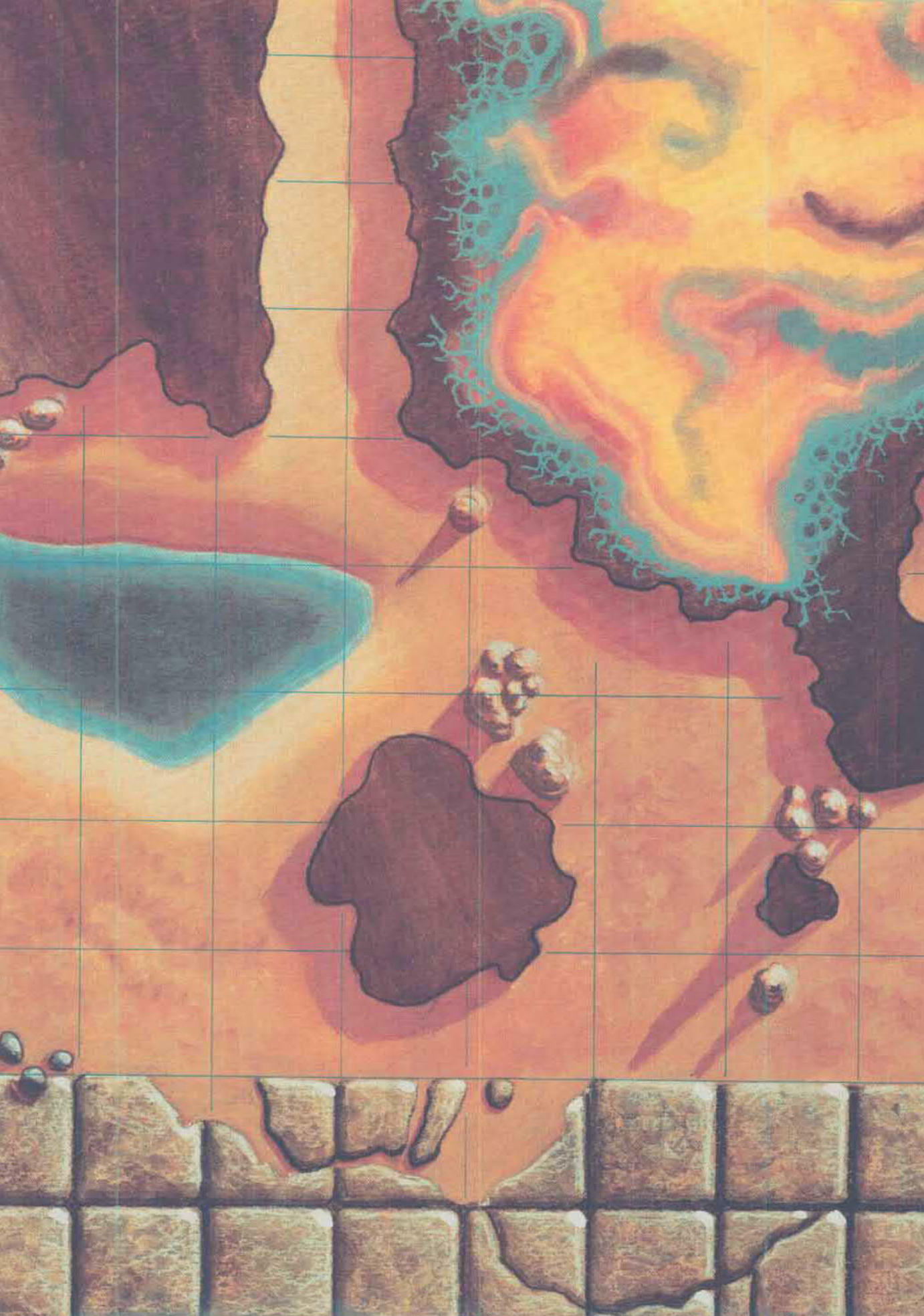
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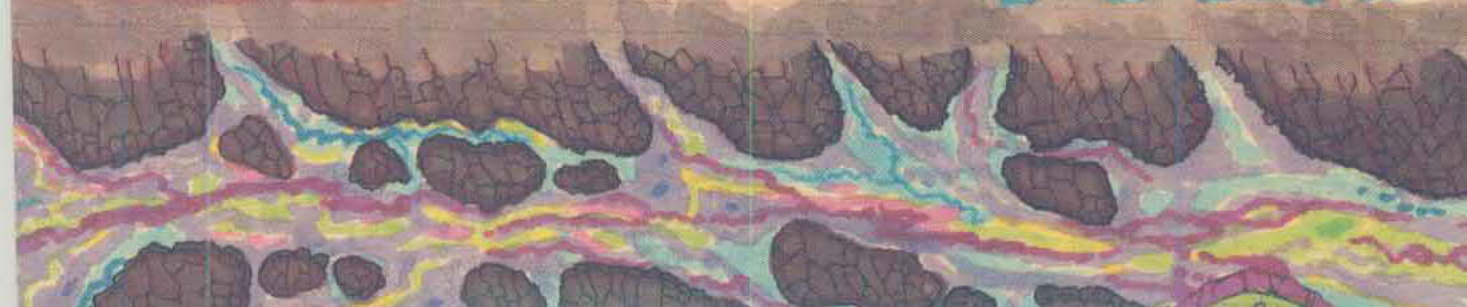
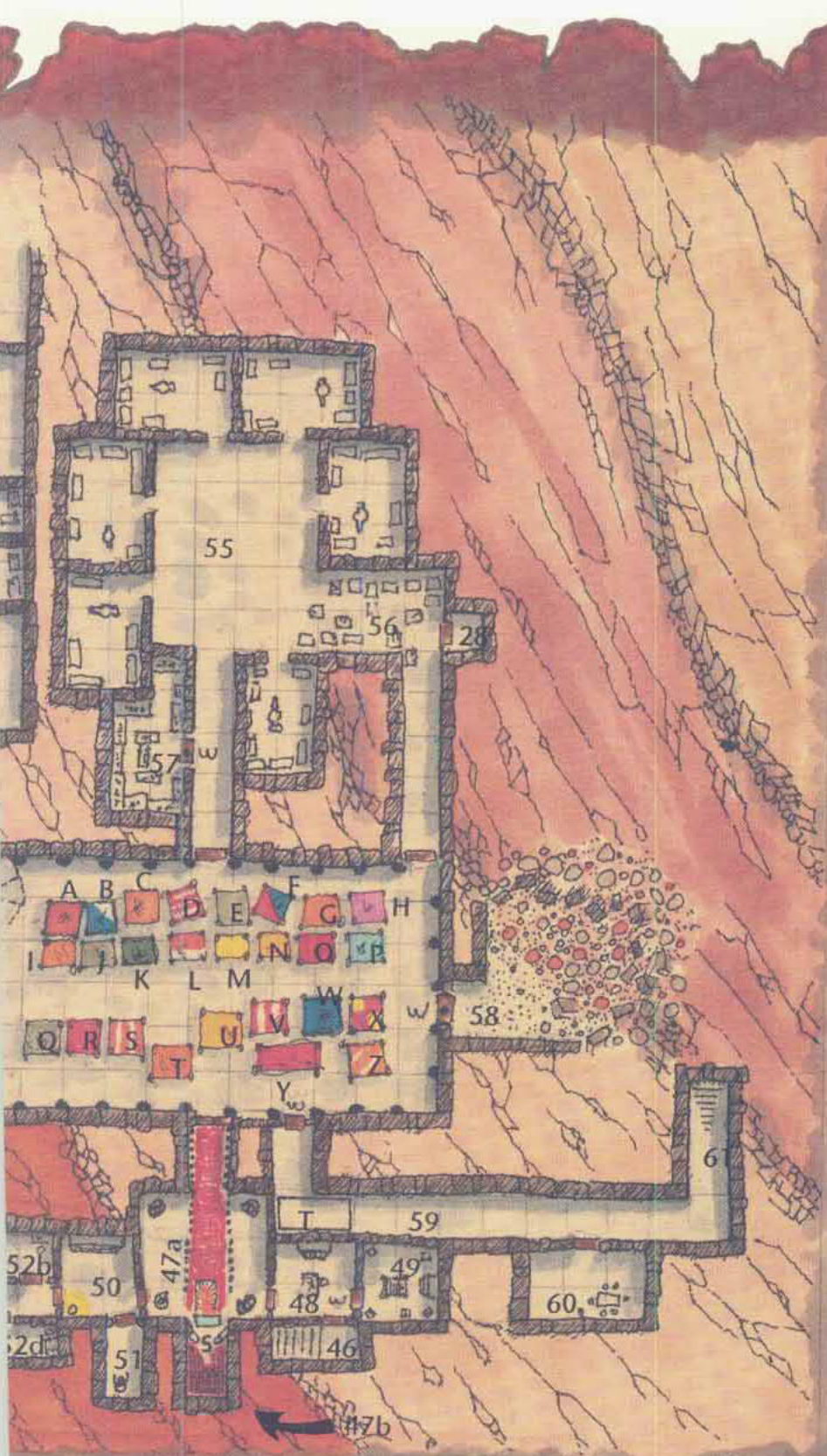
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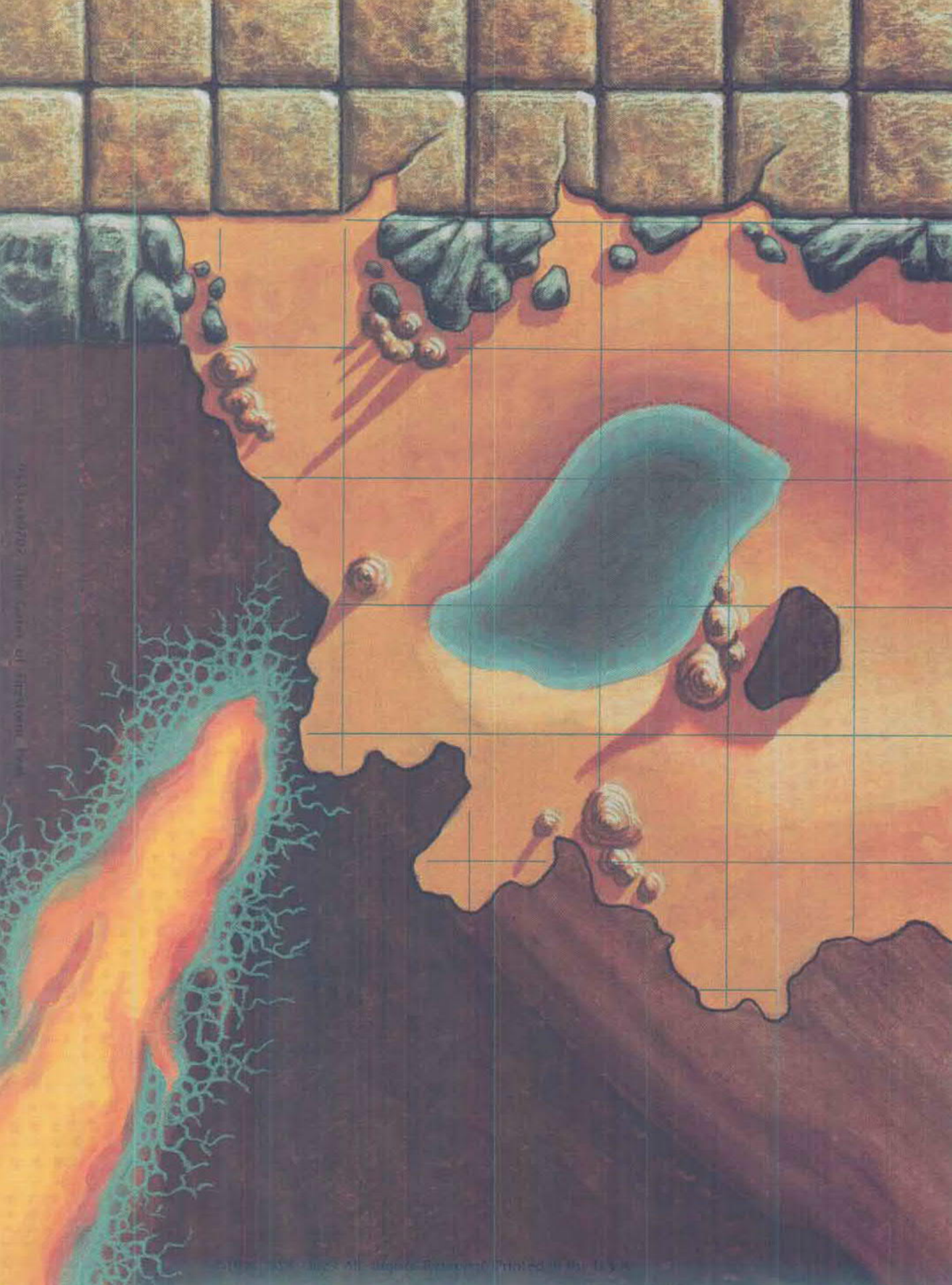
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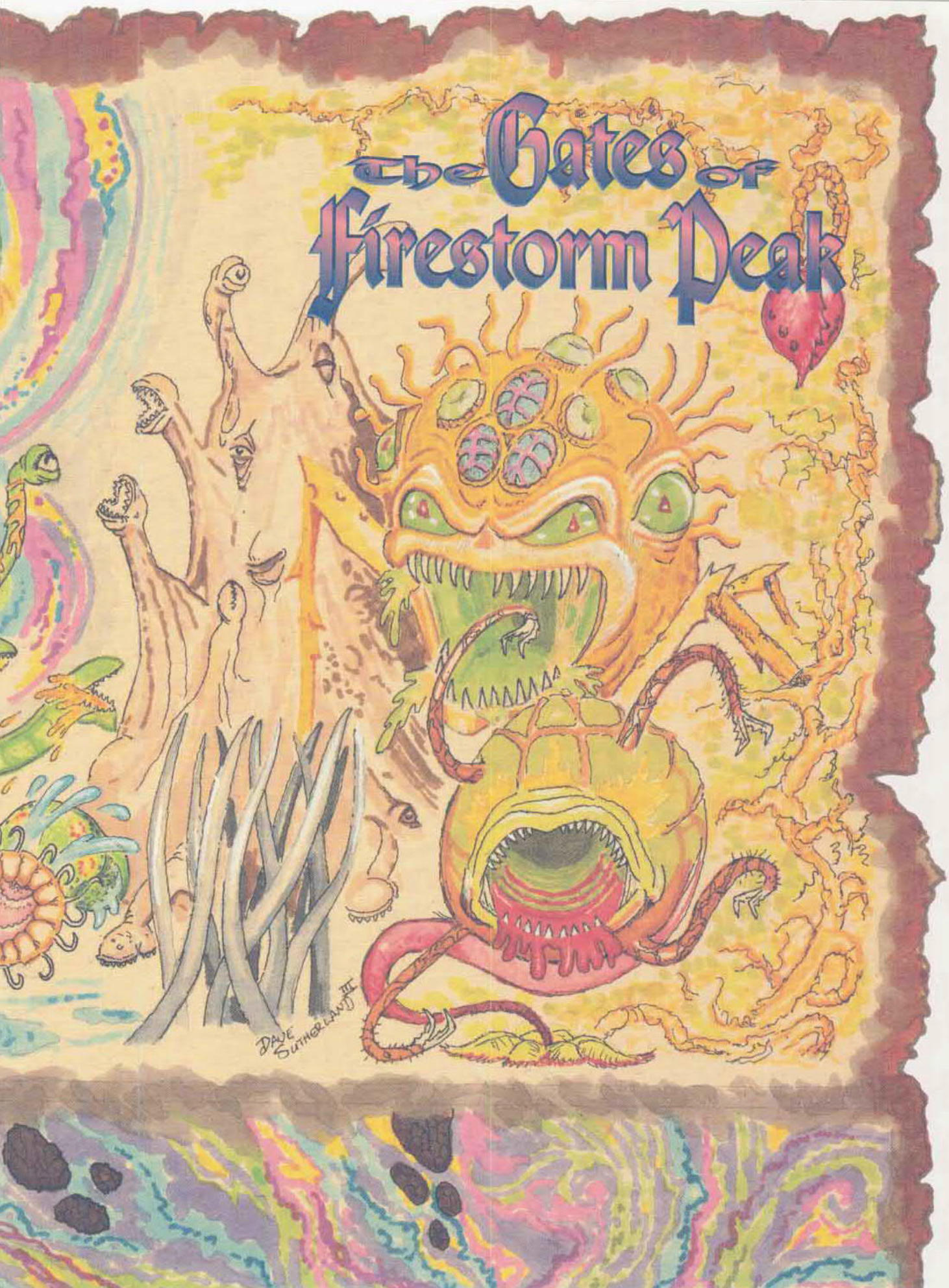


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Tactical Map #3



The Gates of Firestorm Peak



Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®

A PLAYER'S OPTION™ Adventure

For four to six characters of levels 5-8

The Gates of Firestorm Peak

by Bruce Cordell

Once a generation, they say, a strange comet appears in the sky overhead and the gates of Firestorm Peak swing open. Twenty-seven years ago, your father led his band of adventurers into the mysterious mountain, never to return. Now the Dragon's Tear once more flickers in the sky, and the glass gates on the mountainside beckon. Will you pass through to discover the secrets that await beyond the portal none has ever dared and returned?

The Gates of Firestorm Peak is the first adventure designed especially for use with the new rules presented in the three PLAYER'S OPTION™ books: *Combat & Tactics*, *Skills & Powers*, and *Spells & Magic*. While it can also be played using just the AD&D® game core rules (the *Player's Handbook* and the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*), this adventure offers a perfect opportunity to experience all the potential of the optional rules. One of the highlights of this package is the first PLAYER'S OPTION player character record sheet.

To meet the challenges of Firestorm Peak and escape with their lives, heroic adventurers must battle dark dwarves in their underground city, explore the abandoned caverns of the Elder Elves, and deal with weird alien entities from Beyond. Their goal is to stop the Master of the Twisted Caverns and his dark minions from completing his sinister plot before it's too late . . . if they can.

Included in this product are a 96-page adventure book detailing the dungeon that lies beneath Firestorm Peak, four full-color poster maps showing all the important locations in the complex, and a sheet of 56 counters for use with the tactical maps in major combats.

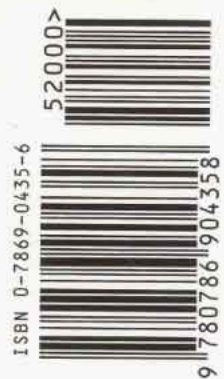
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