

SHAPE OF FOLLY



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Introduction: A local dwarven family of miners has rediscovered an old family mine and wish to reclaim it. Rumored to be filled with adamantine ore, it could be worth tens of thousands of gold pieces. The party would receive a substantial cut, should they return with proof of having found and cleared the mine. As they plumb its depths, however, the party discovers that the mine has been reshaped for some unknown end.

An six-hour adventure for three to seven 1st to 4th level characters, with tips for running the module for higher level play

This module may be run as a standalone adventure or may be added to your own campaign. Notes are included providing guidance on how to add this to a campaign that visits Undermountain, in Waterdeep, as well.

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ADVENTURE PRIMER

Welcome to *The Shape of Folly*, a DM's Guild adventure designed for three to seven 1st to 4th level characters, with guidance for parties of higher level.

Though this adventure could be set in a variety of locations as the DM may choose, the default setting for this adventure is the Savage Frontier of the north Sword Coast, in the Forgotten Realms. Specifically, it occurs in the Starmetal Hills, just west of the High Road, half-way between Triboar and Longsaddle.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND: THE TALE OF KARANDOR BLACKHELM

Three centuries ago, a shield dwarf wizard named Karandor Blackhelm was prospecting with a small team of miners in a remote area of the Starmetal Hills, east of Neverwinter Wood. There, he uncovered a deposit of starmetal adamantine, a rare ore found only in fallen meteorites, and after which the region took its name. What he did not know, however, is that this particular piece of starmetal bore an awful enchantment, eventually causing irrationality in any who lingered in its presence, which for him manifested as paranoid greed.

THE PLANAR FISSURE

Deep within the cave, he finally found the source of the adamantine. It had not fallen from the sky but issued from a tiny extraplanar portal – a crack in reality, as it were, gently emanating planar power. This energy suffused the rock around him and gradually resulted in the adamantine deposits found in the cave.

As a wizard, he had studied the planes before, so this find fueled his thoughts anew. Finally, after weeks of experimentation and as he was nearing exhaustion, he conducted a ritual, one that would be his downfall.

He thought it was a marvelous success, however. For, from the portal, Karandor was able to summon and control the perfect workers. They followed orders unerringly, never arguing. They would not speak to others about the find here. And they did not want to be paid. For he had summoned, and corrupted, modrons.

MODRON LABOR

As his new workers began to excavate the mine at a remarkable pace, his mind formed a devious plot. Fabricating lies of an imminent orc invasion, he sent away his fellow dwarves, leaving himself alone in the mine.

Setting This Adventure Beneath Waterdeep, in Undermountain

The default backstory and location for this adventure is provided here, though DMs are invited to alter what they need, as they inevitably will and should do. One suggested alteration, for example, would be to set this adventure in Undermountain. Rather than having the dwarf Karandor Blackhelm journey to the Starmetal Hills, have him instead descend into Undermountain, pursuing rumors of an adamantine vein therein. A few details should be changed, such as Karandor's journal, which mentions the Starmetal Hills.

For years, the small team of biomechanical beings toiled for him, turning the simple caves into a series of chambers. They began with what Karandor requested: a proper welcoming hall for when he would be crowned King of the Starmetal Hills, or so he had hoped. They then built areas for workers, miners, guards, accountants, and a vault, of course, in which he could store his riches. And beyond it was the real secret: the caves containing the adamantine, as well as the planar fissure.

For a time, Karandor was certain, his plan was a complete success. The modrons dutifully constructed his vault to his exacting dwarven specifications. Yet he began to notice erratic behavior in the creatures. They built more than they were asked and, eventually, they began to build eccentric deviations from his careful plans.

NO MOTHERLODE AT ALL

Soon, when he had finally mined all the of the adamantine vein, he felt he was finally ready to reveal his find to the world, so he traveled to Waterdeep to sell his motherlode. Once there, however, he was devastated to learn that the adamantine was impure and thus not well suited for use in metallurgical applications. Something about the energies flowing from the planar fissure rendered the adamantine brittle, so that, when a smith attempted to forge with it, it would shatter into dust. And

when heated, it would burn and smolder. He was able to extract some usable adamantine, but far less than he had envisioned.

Forlorn, he lingered in Waterdeep for a few weeks, drinking heavily. When he finally emerged from his drunken stupor, however, he realized that his head had cleared of more than the drink, for the influence of the mine had passed as well. He sought out his family, then, and told them of his failed mine and his plan to return. He gave them the gold that he was able to get for the tainted adamantine – his nest egg, he called it – and returned to the mine. His relatives took that nest egg and used it to buy the very manor in the village that they live in today, in fact.

KARANDOR'S END

For his part, Karandor returned to the mine, where he discovered two horrible truths. The first was that his modron workforce had somehow become corrupted. Perhaps it was when they were pulled through the portal, or perhaps it was simply being disconnected from Mechanus and the Will of Primus. Regardless, they began to spin out of control, constructing ever stranger and more dangerous rooms full of unnecessary defenses. It was as if the modrons themselves were reflecting Karandor's paranoia and greed, but through their own orderly, geometrical lens.

Second, and more unfortunate for Karandor, is that another creature had found a way to pass through the fissure: a beholder. The creature introduced itself as Gyaximus Arnesondratus and proceeded to disintegrate the poor dwarf.

THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

In the intervening centuries, the Blackhelm family first awaited Karandor's return and then, after a generation, largely forgot about him. In the mine, however, the modrons continued their work, ever more eccentric and paranoid. In the bottom of the mine, Gyax the beholder continued to conduct his magical research, attempting to understand the corrupted adamantine, the fissure, and the modrons themselves. But even he was not immune to the corrupted energies of the fissure.

Whereas Karandor became paranoid and greedy, Gyax became power-hungry and obsessed with immortality. So, the beholder attempted to become a death tyrant, rendering

himself immortal and even more powerful than he already was. The ritual failed, however, and Gyax became nothing more than a beholder zombie, floating around aimlessly in his former laboratory. And it is into this accursed place that our adventurers enter.

ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

The adventure's story follows the three levels of the mine and takes six to eight hours to play.

- ▣ **Call to Action: The Blackhelms' Map.** The Blackhelms hire the adventurers to travel to the lost mine of Karandor, claim it for them, and clear it of threats. The mine lies hidden in the Starmetal Hills.
- ▣ **The First Level: Monsters and a Magical Door.** Karandor's Mine consists of three levels. The top level, open to the elements, resembles an abandoned dwarven mining outpost that has been gradually overrun by natural threats, that have formed an ecosystem, with an ettin and a black pudding eating giants toads and spiders, which in turn eat rats. The top floor also contains a sealed vault which can only be accessed by a magical key. One of each is to be found down each of the two wings of the complex in the lairs of the ettin and black pudding.

The Magical Doors

The doors are perfectly formed iron doors with no handles or any other visible way to open them save for circular indentations on their centers, decorated with intricate geometric designs. These exactly match the two "keys" to be found elsewhere on the level. When these are places within an inch of the indentations, the keys click into place, like magnets being drawn to each other, though this is a magical effect, not magnetic (despite what you may have heard, magnets are not magic). Once all of the indentations on the door are filled with the circular keys, the door opens. It can be manually swung open or closed now. If the doors are swung all the way closed, the coins can be removed from their slots, leaving the door unlocked until magically locked again with the *arcane lock* spell. It is intended that these doors be openable only with these keys, though the DM may allow extraordinary successes to do so as well (for example, a DC 25 Strength check, or over 100 points of damage). The DM may also allow magical solutions, such as the clever placement of a *passwall* spell. Again, though, it is the general purpose of these doors and keys to structure the characters' movement through the various challenges and encounters, so hopefully they will not cleverly bypass all of them!

- ❑ **Second Level: Modron Malfunction.** The second floor has another magical door, but it also exhibits the gradual malfunctioning of the modrons who constructed the areas. The rooms take on a variety of geometric shapes, contain odd tessellated tiles, and are full of traps, a sign of the modrons' descent into irrationality. There is a central room with a door which requires six of the circular keys to open. Characters must move through the side areas, collecting the keys, so that they can open the door to descend to the final level. The rooms are organized around the four elements and the Platonic solids – or, as we might know them, the 4-sided, 6-sided, 8-sided, 12-sided, and 20-sided dice.
- ❑ **Third Level: Beholder's Lair.** The final level is the beholder, now beholder zombie's, lair. It was built by the modrons, who came to revere and obey Gyax before his transformation. To honor him, they built his lair in the shape of a beholder! It is a cylindrical room with seven passages leading off, like eye stalks, to small rooms. In the back room furthest from the entrance, in one of the "eye stalk" rooms, is the fissure, a pencil thin crack out of which strange energies emanate.

ADJUSTING THE ADVENTURE

For each encounter, there are sidebars describing how to adjust the combat challenges to account for larger or smaller groups of characters of higher or lower levels than the optimized size and level. As always, the DM is free to decide to make further adjustments or to disregard these suggestions.

This adventure includes suggestions for scaling encounters to fit the capabilities of the party. To approximate the party strength for the adventure compared to the expected average party level (APL), consult the table below.

Party Composition	Party Strength
3-4 characters below 3rd level	Very weak
3-4 3rd-level characters	Weak
3-4 characters above 3rd level	Average
5 characters below 3rd level	Weak
5 3rd-level characters	Average
5 characters above 3rd level	Strong
6-7 characters below 3rd level	Average
6-7 3rd-level characters with an APL equal to 3	Strong
6-7 characters above 3rd level	Very strong

As for Dungeon Mastering beyond this advice, the standard rules apply, beginning with the Rule of Fun. DMs should feel free to adjust anything in this adventure to enhance the fun had at their table.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The Blackhelms are a local dwarven family of miners who have lived in the village of Longsaddle since its foundation, centuries ago. Recently, when digging a foundation for a new barn, they uncovered an old root cellar that had been buried when the old barn collapsed, a generation ago. Inside, they found a box with some shipping manifests that dated back to when they purchased their land. Among the papers, however, they found a map of the Starmetal Hills with a location included on it: Karandor's Mine.

Gold. The dwarven Blackhelm family has come to the characters to ask them to travel to the mine and explore it. If it does contain a lode of adamantine, then the Blackhelm family promises to split the profits with the party 50/50. The family will also allow the characters to claim whatever other treasure they might find there, but they ask that the characters return anything of family or historical importance to the family. If there truly is a vein of adamantine, it could be worth thousands of gold, depending on its size.

Old man Blackhelm reports that he had heard tales when he was a lad of Karandor. "Twas a mining outpost in the Starmetal Hills," he said, "filled with a vault full of adamantine, the rare and incredibly tough material usually only found in places imbued with magic." It can also be found, at times, in meteorites, for which the Starmetal Hills were famed and named.

Power. If gold is not sufficient to motivate your characters, perhaps the promise of magical lore or power will. Old Man Blackhelm also recalls that Karandor was said to be a wizard of some power and that he had figured out powerful, new magical secrets in the mine.

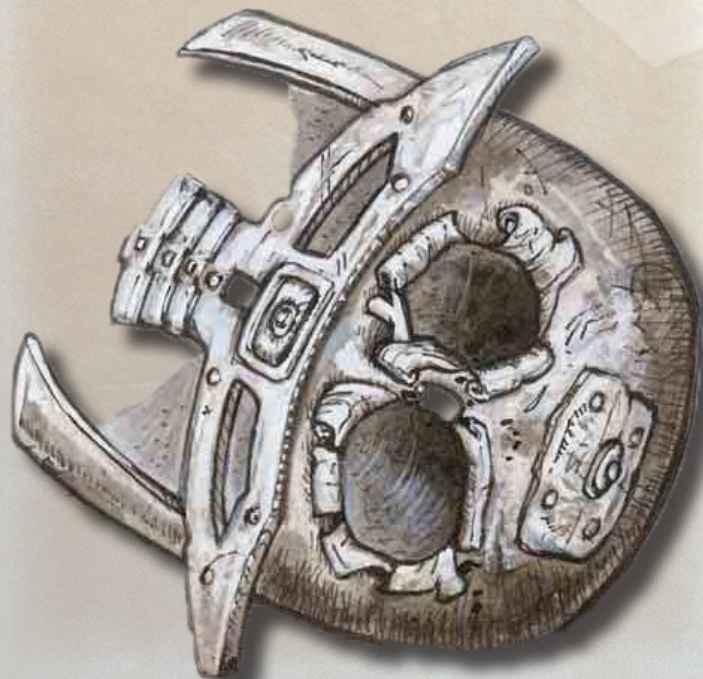
Kindness. Finally, if neither magical power nor gold will motivate, you could explain that the Blackhelm family needs a substantial amount of money to save their failing farm and that this may be a good way to help them save their family. Why not through in a sad child to seal the deal, eh?

CALL TO ACTION: THE BLACKHELMS' MAP

The Blackhelms hire the party to delve the lost mine of Karandor in hopes of discovering a wealth of adamantine and starmetal.

You have traveled to the Starmetal Hills, looking for Karandor's lost mining treasure. With some effort, you find the entrance to Karandor, a dwarven stone-crafted portal nestled half-way up the cliffside of a blind gorge in the back of a dusty vale, deep in the Starmetal Hills. An eroded path winds up the steep hills on the eastern face of the vale. It is traversable and it is a simple, if arduous, task to scramble up to the entrance.

The DM may of course expand upon this introduction as they see fit, drawing from the longer background and introduction above.



SHAPE OF FOLLY

THE FIRST LEVEL: MONSTERS AND A MAGICAL DOOR

The first level consists of a main hall and two symmetrical wings, each with dorms, workrooms, and storerooms – or what is left of them, at any rate. This level has been exposed to centuries of the elements, looters, and beasts lairing here, and little of the old dwarven mining outpost remains. As the characters enter the main hall, however, signs of recent activity are found, including a lit fire and a large pile of chopped wood. There is also signs of damage and decay throughout. Because this area is effectively reverting to a natural wilderness environment, it contains the sorts of things one might find in a mountain cave. But it also contains two keys, which can open the sealed vault door which leads to the mine below.

AREA INFORMATION

Weather. Outside, the weather is cool and rainy. Inside the first level, the air is damp and smells like a natural cave in which decades of creatures have laired. The temperature is more moderate and the air still within, but there is also the distinct smell of wood smoke.

Light and Visibility. There are two light sources in the first level: a bonfire burning in a stone brazier and another in the back room down the northern passage, where an ettin lairs. The rest of the level is dark beyond whatever light the characters might provide.

Terrain. The ground is good dwarven stonework, though in the first level there are several large cracks visible, as though there had been seismic activity in the past. The southern portion of the first level is slightly off-level, enough to allow water to pool in the southern end of the main room. This has no effect on movement, however.

1



12 ft

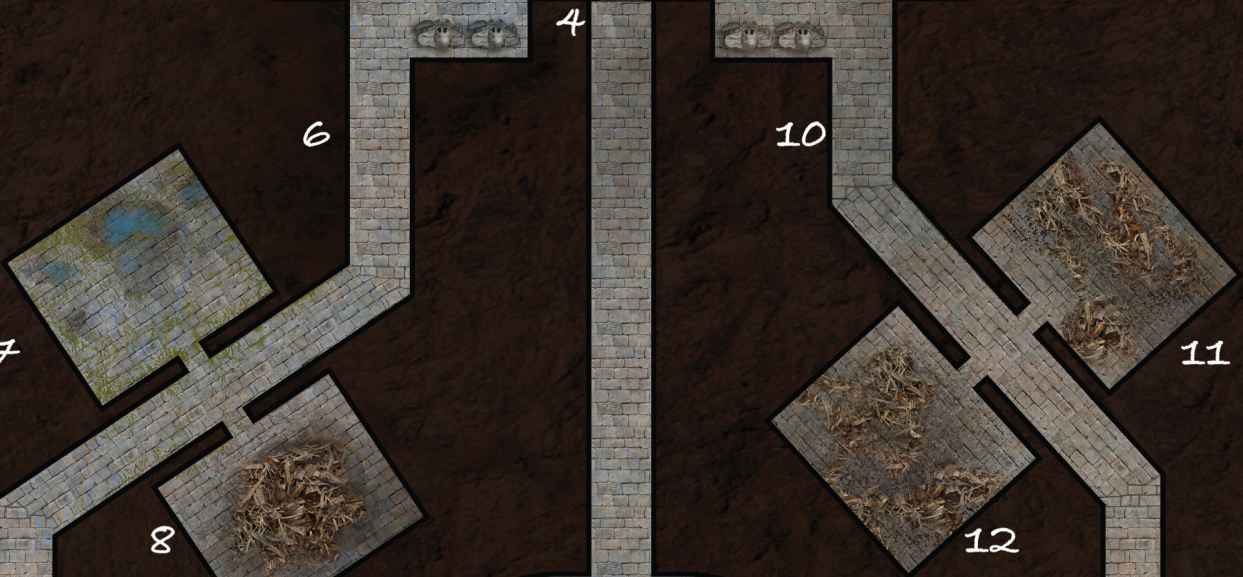
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6

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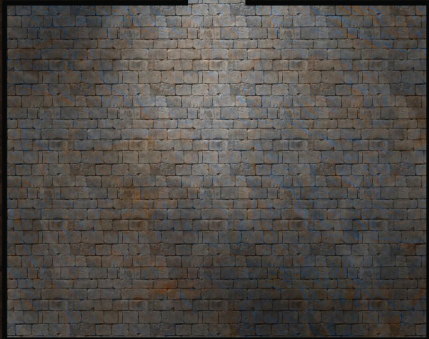
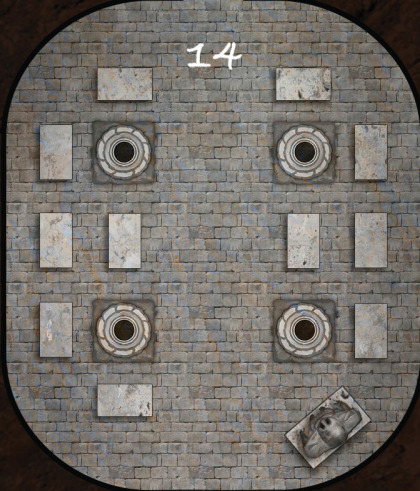
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9

13



THE ENTRANCE

The ancient doorway is a testament to dwarven craftsmanship. The weathered, rutted stone still stands in its original shape, a geometric entrance twenty feet high and nearly as many wide, opening into a small entrance chamber strewn with debris and the ingress of the elements. Weeds poke up between cracks in the flagstones, gravel and dirt litter the floor. In the back corner lies the remains of a huge nest, though it looks as though it has recently been abandoned. In the back of the small foyer a dark tunnel beckons, the light from behind you revealing the top of a stone stair descending down and to the right.

With a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) check, the characters can recognize that it was recently a griffon nest. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds dried blood around the nest, suggesting a fight had occurred here recently.

AREA 1: ENTRANCE

The stairs descend, and descend, and descend. Winding around and ever downwards, deeper into and beneath the heavy stone mountain above and around you. Every so often an unlit sconce can be seen on the side of the walls about four feet above the steps. Finally, the stairs end and open up into a cavernous chamber ahead to the east.

The stairs show signs of centuries of environmental erosion, but are still usable, thanks to the well-crafted dwarven stonework. A character who makes a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check recognizes that there has been regular traffic here, including dried drops of blood. Down the stairs, a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a Large humanoid footprint in the dust.

AREA 2: THE GREAT HALL

The stairs empty into a great rectangular hall of dwarven design. The Hall is 150 feet across, north to south, and 100 feet deep to the east, with a fifty-foot-high ceiling. A dais raised four feet above the floor dominates the middle of the room. On its center stands a single chair - or throne. Behind it stand two stone braziers, one of which is lit with wood burning in it. To the left, or north, a huge stone figure of a dwarf can be glimpsed in the gloom. To the south only rubble is visible.

On closer inspection, as well as another successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check, old blood stains can be seen here, leading off to the northeast. On a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check the character can ascertain that the dried blood is perhaps a month old. The chair on the dais is not exactly royal looking, but certainly official. A character who makes a DC 10 Intelligence (History) check knows that this was the place where the head official for this mine would sit to receive people and to adjudicate matters. Dwarves have Advantage on this check.

The Main Hall and the Two Wings

The Main Hall is, clearly, just that: a hall designed for receiving guests, entertaining, and coming together. It is the only room that appears to have much in the way of decoration, suggesting it was the room where outsiders might ever be received. The southeastern wing likely contained dormitories and storage rooms. The northeastern wing once contained offices and rooms where business was conducted, as well as Karandor's own quarters. Finally, the room behind the sealed door was once the vault where the mined ore was stored. It is through this room as well that the mine itself was accessed.

AREA 3: THE NORTHERN END OF GREAT HALL

A massive dwarven statue stands on a pedestal, wielding a mighty stone hammer, the top of its head shrouded in gloom.

Here a statue of Dumathoin, the dwarven god of mining, can be seen towering thirty feet high. Characters may make a DC 10 Intelligence (Religion) check to identify him, with dwarf characters recognizing him without a roll. Two stout pillars hold up the vault above. At the northeast corner of this room, there is an iron banded, wooden door barely hanging on its hinges. More noticeable blood smears lead into the hallway beyond.

The northwestern corner of the Great Hall has a stout pillar ascending to the ceiling. Along the ceiling and halfway down the pillar, between the northwest pillar and the northern wall, thick webs can be seen. These webs are not visible unless a character comes within 30 feet of the area, as they are partly obscured by the pillar, as well as the gloom in the room. If a character passes to the north of the pillar or dwarven statue, or spends time examining this pillar, two **giant spiders** drop from the web above.

If the character had noticed the webs and was on guard, the character is not Surprised for the first round of combat. Otherwise they are. Characters with passive Perception of 17 or higher (equal to the giant spiders' passive Stealth score) also notice the spiders descending and thus not be Surprised.

Adjusting This Encounter

Very Weak Party: Remove one **giant spider**

Weak Party: Remove one **giant spider**, add one **giant wolf spider**

Strong Party: Add two **giant spiders**

Very Strong Party: Add two **giant spiders** and an **ettercap**

If the party is of a higher level, consider substituting **phase spiders** for the **giant spiders**.

Treasure. If the characters defeat the spiders and burn or cut the webbing, a dwarven skeleton falls out, having been trapped in the webbing for many years. Most of its possessions are destroyed but there is still a fine dwarven silvered dagger, worth 50gp.

AREA 4: THE IRON DOOR IN THE EASTERN SIDE OF THE GREAT HALL

A stalwart iron door stands here, seamlessly attached to the stone around it. The door is constructed from massive, iron slabs and bolts. Adorning its bronze and iron surface is a circular indentation, about human palm sized.

The door is also sealed fast. Should the characters find one of the lodestones down either side passage, they can unlock the door that leads to the Vault.

The Iron Doors

In this mine complex, there are two sets of iron doors with circular indentations in the middle of them, one on this floor and one on the next. The door on the first floor has one circular indentation on it, while the door on the second floor has six such indentations. These doors are masterfully crafted dwarven iron work and are incredibly durable. They also have an *arcane lock* spell cast on them. On a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check, a character identifies that the circular indentation is faintly magnetic.

Breaking down the door would normally have a DC of 20 to break down, but the *arcane lock* makes it 30. The *arcane lock* spell opens the door when one of the circular lodestones found elsewhere in the mine are placed in the indentations. The first door needs one, but the one on the second level needs six. The stones can be reused and removed once they have been used to open a door.

AREA 5: THE SOUTHERN END OF THE GREAT HALL

Broken statues and pillars can be seen in the darkness off to your right, toward the south end of the hall. The floor here is slightly slanted downward, away from the center of the main room, as though it had settled long ago, with a crack running east-west here. Foul, murky water has settled in the corner of the room beyond the crack, reaching a depth of several feet by the back wall. To the left and beyond the standing water is a tunnel heading off to the southeast. There was once a door here, but it has been torn off its hinges long ago.

As the characters approach the edge of the water — just traveling toward the nearby hallway is close enough — two **giant toads** lunge out of the water and strike the nearest person!

Adjusting the Encounter

Weak or Very Weak Party: Remove one **giant toad**

Strong or Very Strong Party: Add two **giant toads**

If the party is of a higher level, consider substituting **giant constrictor snakes**

Treasure. If the characters defeat the toads and search the filthy, murky water, they must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be Poisoned for one hour. With a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check, however, they find a rusted sword. The sword is worthless, but its pommel contains an easily removable emerald worth 25 gp.

AREA 6: SOUTHEASTERN HALLWAY

This hallway stretches to the southeast and into darkness. Two doors, one per side, can be seen. This area is dank and moist, with the smell of mold and rot in the air.

The hallway has one door on each side and a door at its end. It is littered with rat droppings.

AREA 7: SLIME ROOM

This room is mostly empty, except for some stinking sludge pools. Most are small, perhaps a foot across, with small bones sticking up and out from them.

Unbeknownst to the characters, there is a **green slime** clinging to the ceiling of this room. The strange rot puddles are in fact the remains of rats that had been slimed, draw them in without their looking up at the ceiling. The large



AREA 8: RATS

This 20-by-20-foot room contains two notable things. To the left of the door is a fetid pool of foul-smelling, murky water. To the right is a pile of filth that resembles a combination of rotten wooden furniture, animal droppings, and rotten flesh – which is precisely what it is.

On Not Adjusting this Encounter

There is no need to adjust the encounter with the **swarms of rats**. Not every combat need be of Medium difficulty! Besides, the rats' presence here in this complex accounts for the presence of the **giant toads** and **giant spiders**, which in turn can provide food for such predators as the **black pudding** or the **ettin**. Combine that with the source of (admittedly diseased and stagnant) water, as well as the fact that this complex serves as shelter from the elements, and you have an explanation for the (fictional, fantasy) ecosystem found on this level. The second level, however, lacks a naturally balanced ecosystem due to its unusual builders, as your players will soon discover.

slime covers the ceiling above the door and spreads toward the center of the room in a ten by ten square. It has blindsight out to a range of 30 feet and drops from walls and ceilings when it detects movement below it. Beyond that, it has no ability to move. A creature aware of the slime's presence can avoid being struck by it with a successful DC 10 Dexterity saving throw. Otherwise, the slime can't be avoided as it drops.

A creature that comes into contact with green slime takes 5 (1d10) acid damage. The creature takes the damage again at the start of each of its turns until the slime is scraped off or destroyed. Against wood or metal, green slime deals 11 (2d10) acid damage each round, and any nonmagical wood or metal weapon or tool used to scrape off the slime is effectively destroyed. Sunlight, any effect that cures disease, and any effect that deals cold, fire, or radiant damage destroys a patch of green slime. Beyond the slime, the room is empty.

Adjusting the Encounter

If the characters are level 5 or higher, substitute a **brown mold** for the **green slime** and make the puddles and bones frozen piles of fur. If you opt for the brown mold, don't forget that the room is noticeably cooler than the rest of the area. Even in the hallway, a chill can be felt.

When a creature moves to within 5 feet of the mold for the first time on a turn or starts its turn there, it must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) cold damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much damage on a successful one. Brown mold is immune to fire, and any source of fire brought within 5 feet of a patch causes it to instantly expand outward in the direction of the fire, covering a 10-foot-square area (with the source of the fire at the center of that area). A patch of brown mold exposed to an effect that deals cold damage is instantly destroyed.

A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check or passive score reveals that this was likely a former bunk room or dorm, perhaps where a small number of dwarven miners stayed before heading down into the mines. The water in the fetid pool is murky and foul-smelling. If a character enters the water, they must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or contract *sewer plague*.

When a character enters the room and approaches the pile, two **swarms of rats** emerge from it and attack the character.



Sewer Plague

Sewer plague is a generic term for a broad category of illnesses that incubate in sewers, refuse heaps, and stagnant swamps, and which are sometimes transmitted by creatures that dwell in those areas, such as rats and ottyghs.

When a humanoid creature is bitten by a creature that carries the disease, or when it comes into contact with filth or offal contaminated by the disease, the creature must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or become infected.

It takes 1d4 days for sewer plague's symptoms to manifest in an infected creature. Symptoms include fatigue and cramps. The infected creature suffers one level of exhaustion, and it regains only half the normal number of hit points from spending Hit Dice and no hit points from finishing a long rest.

At the end of each long rest, an infected creature must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the character gains one level of exhaustion. On a successful save, the character's exhaustion level decreases by one level. If a successful saving throw reduces the infected creature's level of exhaustion below 1, the creature recovers from the disease. From Chapter 8 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

AREA 9: THE MINING SUPPLY ROOM

The room at the end of the hallway is a large square room. Unlike the other rooms, however, this one has very little on the floor, though a puddle rest in the corner against the far wall. Something glints inside the puddle.

Perception and Passive Perception

Whether the DM allows a character to detect all traps with a DC below the character's passive Perception is the DM's choice. There are quite a few traps on the second level of this complex and a character with a high enough passive Perception would be able to spot them automatically, unless the DM have such discoveries depend on the characters' actions.

If characters do not declare that they are checking for traps or looking at the ceiling, it is reasonable for a DM not to inform them of the threats, such as the pudding on the ceiling, even if their passive Perception is high enough. The DMs may wish to clarify the way they are using passive Perception with their players before dropping a black pudding on them, however!

Unless the characters bring light of their own, this room is like the others: pitch black. Darkvision only reveals the room in dim light. These shadows are sufficient to conceal the **black pudding** on the ceiling, directly above the door. Unless a character is exceptionally

careful, the black pudding falls after someone has entered the room, cutting them off, and strikes with its pseudopod in a surprise attack.

Adjusting the Encounter

Very Weak Party: Replace the **black pudding** with an **ochre jelly** and place it on the ceiling above the far wall, so it will not Surprise the party

Weak Party: Replace the **black pudding** with an **ochre jelly**

Strong Party: Have the **black pudding** wait until two characters are beneath it before dropping on them

Very Strong Party: Add a second **black pudding**

If the party is of a higher level, have the two puddings each on one side of the door and have them both drop the floor and attack simultaneously.

After having killed the pudding, one of the palm-sized lodestones carved with intricate patterns can be found in the watery corner. Being magical, the lodestones are immune to the pudding's acid.

AREA 10: NORTHEASTERN HALLWAY

The hallway stretches northeast with one door on each side. A source of light illuminates the far end of the hallway, where the hall bends to the right and out of sight. Blood smears here suggest that something large was bleeding, heavily, while being dragged, which characters with a passive Perception of 13 or higher notice.

On a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check, a character can determine that a bleeding, dying, or recently dead creature was dragged here, likely a feathered beast. DMs may also use passive Investigation scores to determine what the characters deduce.

As they characters approach the end of the hallway, they hear a crunching sound. It is the ettin chewing and crushing griffon bones.

AREA 11: CLERKS ROOM

This room is empty, except for some crumbling stone desks and bones, including a large, distinctive skull.

A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check or passive score suggests that this was once some kind of office. Dwarves and those with the Guild Artisan/Merchant or Clan Crafter Backgrounds know that this was likely the room where inventories and payroll were tracked.

A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) or Intelligence (Investigation) check or passive score determines that the skull is from the past few months. It was cracked open, its contents eaten. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) check identifies it as that of a griffon. Probably, this belongs to the creature that was nesting in the entrance and it was killed by something larger and dragged her in the past month, explaining the blood smears in the hallway.

AREA 12: DESTROYED ARCHIVE

Broken stone shelves and a stone desk are strewn across the floor here. Other official trappings can be seen, such as an entirely rusted bronze inkwell and crumbled scroll and map cases, their contents rendered as dust.

A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check or passive score turns up one unbroken scroll case. Opening it reveals three brittle, but still readable, rolled parchments, written in Dwarvish. The first paper is a manifest of mining supplies, along with two letters, which seems to be from one dwarf to another.

Dwarven Letters. If anyone can read Dwarvish, they learn the following. The first of the two letters is written from Otgrim Ironaxe to Hossoc Blackhelm. Otgrim reports on the tenday's inventory, noting, "Our output has quintupled! Karandor's new laborers are amazing."

The second note is from Hossoc to Otgrim. It reports, "Karandor claims that the orcs are pressing further north. He says we'll need to leave soon, and quickly. And it's a good thing, too... we can't give his workers enough to do, so they've taken to their own projects. You should come by and see what they've begun downstairs."

A successful DC 15 Intelligence (History) check will allow a character to remember that there was no orc incursion in in this area at the time of the mine's opening and abandonment, which of course is a curious realization.

AREA 13: ETTIN LAIR

The room at the end of the hall is filthy, with piles of refuse, dead tree branches, and bones heaped here and there. The stench is palpable. Two grumblng voices fill the air.

The **ettin** who lairs here leaves the room to investigate if it hears noise in the hallway. The ettin's passive Perception is 14. If the characters beat that score with the Dexterity (Stealth) checks or passive scores, then they hear the ettin instead as they pass the two side rooms (11-12, above). What they hear is a grumbled argument between the two heads about whether to eat a goat or to save it until it gets more savory.

The room itself contains a massive pile of refuse, which includes broken dwarven stone furniture, dragged here



from the nearby rooms, a pile of bones, some dead tree branches, ripped from their trunks, and a collection of round rocks. All of this is covered in filth and ettin droppings. The ettin itself carries its two weapons, a crude battleaxe and a cruder morningstar, and also has a rough pouch on its belt. The ettin does not like smallfolk and attacks. It is also too stupid to flee.

Adjusting the Encounter

Very Weak Party: Replace the **ettin** with an **ogre** and have the ogre be soundly asleep.

Weak Party: Replace the ettin with an ogre.

Strong Party: Add a **giant goat** that fights with the **ettin**.

Very Strong Party: Add a second giant goat.

If the party is of a higher level, consider using a **hill giant** couple in place of the Ettin and add **giant goats**, too, if necessary.

Treasure. The pouch contained one of the dwarven lodestones, which can be used to open the iron door in the Great Hall, leading to the Vault. There is also a raw emerald worth 50 gp.

AREA 14: THE VAULT

Once the characters have placed one of the lodestone keys in the circular indentation in the iron door in the Great Hall, the two doors creak open toward them, revealing a dark chamber. As the door opens, a puff of dusty air issues, suggesting the place beyond has been sealed for centuries. The room is a vault where the products of the dwarven mining operations below were stored, though now only occasional glint of something dropped or overlooked can be seen.

Beyond the great door is a large oval room, 30 feet wide and 60 feet long, with four pillars and a mixture of stone tables and bins, all empty save some scattered rubble. The ceiling is 20 feet high. At the far end is a crumbling stone statue of a dwarf on a low pedestal, as well as an open door, beyond which is a spiral stair cut into the stone.

Once the characters enter and begin searching the room, the dwarf statue of crumbling stone animates and steps from its pedestal at the far end of the room. The statue is in fact a **crumbling stone golem**, enchanted to defend the vault from interlopers long ago. The trigger occurs the round after one character enters the room.

Adjusting the Encounter

Very Weak Party: Replace the **crumbling stone golem** with two sets of **animated armor**

Weak Party: Replace the **crumbling stone golem** with a **helmed horror**

Strong Party: Add a **flying sword** that aids the golem

Very Strong Party: Add an **animated armor** that aids the golem

If the party is of a higher level, consider making the combat against two crumbling **stone golems**.

Golem Battle Tactics. This is intended to be challenging and is calculated as a Hard or even Deadly encounter. Remember, however, that in the first round probably requires the statue to Dash, so the characters have a round to attack from range if they wish, which should tip the scales to their advantage. The statue also does not leave the room, allowing ranged attacks from beyond the doorway in the Great Hall. If there are no further interlopers in the Vault, however, it Dashes back to its station, which likely takes it behind total cover from the doorway.

Crumbling Stone Golem

Medium construct, neutral

Armor Class 9 Hit Points 93 (11d8 + 44) Speed 30 ft.

STR 19 (+4) DEX 9 (-1) CON 18 (+4)

INT 6 (-2) WIS 10 (+0) CHA 5 (-3)

Damage Resistances Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing from Nonmagical Attacks that aren't adamantite

Damage Immunities Psychic, Poison

Condition Immunities Charmed, Exhaustion, Frightened, Paralyzed, Petrified, Poisoned

Senses Darkvision 120 ft., Passive Perception 10

Languages Understands Dwarvish but can't speak

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Immutable Form. The golem is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

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

Magic Weapons. The golem's weapon attacks are magical.

Actions:

Multiattack. The golem makes two slam attacks.

Slam. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage

Treasure. The room contains scattered coin totaling 300 cp and 200 sp, and 40 gp, as well as 2 gems of various sorts, worth 20 gp each.

This is scattered randomly, as though it were overlooked or dropped as people cleared the vault quickly of a much larger sum.

Once the golem is defeated or disabled, the characters may make their way down the stairs. They are five feet wide with a ten-foot ceiling. The stairs are shallow, fit for dwarves. It winds around to the right and descends thirty feet further into the stone.

SECOND LEVEL: MODRON MALFUNCTION

OVERVIEW

The first level of Karandor was as a dwarven outpost, abandoned and taken over by local fauna. The second level is more complicated. Originally serving some dwarven purpose, someone — or something — has repurposed the level, filling it with bizarre traps, puzzles, and mechanisms. The corrupted modrons that Karandor summoned devised this bizarre place and, since then, fell under the rule of a more sinister master who arrived after the dwarf left, one that the characters meet on the third and final level.

AREA INFORMATION

Gradually Changing Architecture. The walls and floors of Areas 15-16 are mastercrafted stonework, perfectly symmetrical. In Area 17, the orderly stone gradually gives way to erratic and eventually chaotic and mind-bending tessellations, in ever more seemingly impossible configurations. Even when the stonework becomes highly irregular, however, it exhibits the highest level of craftwork.

Light and Sound. Unless otherwise specified, there are no lights save what the characters bring. The rooms and halls are quiet and the air still, though occasionally the muttering and clanking of some distant modron echoes through the complex.

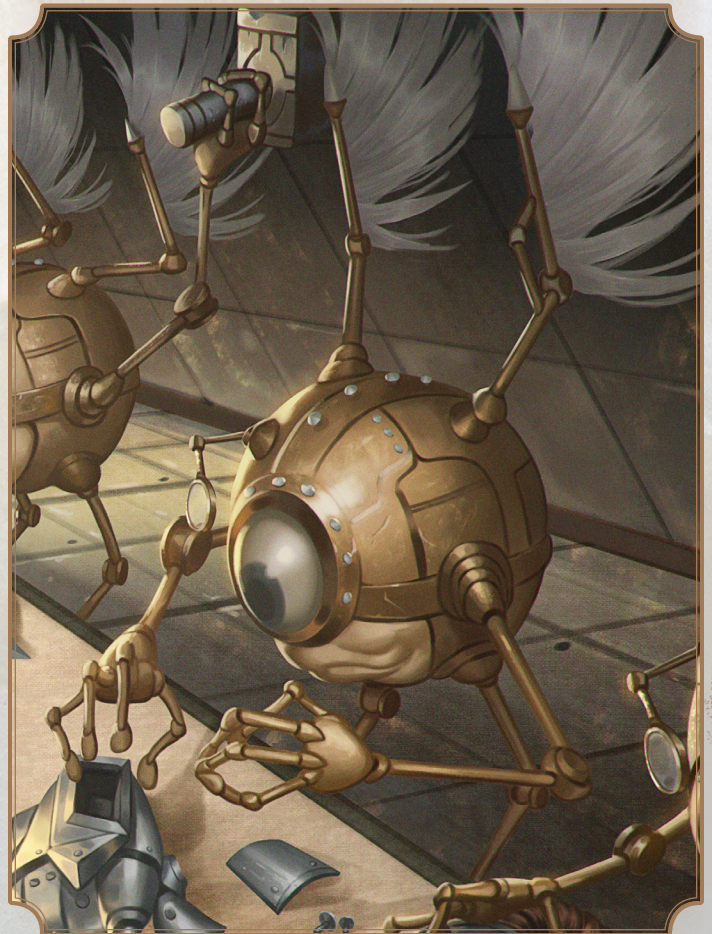
AREA 15: THE SPHERE AND THE PILLAR

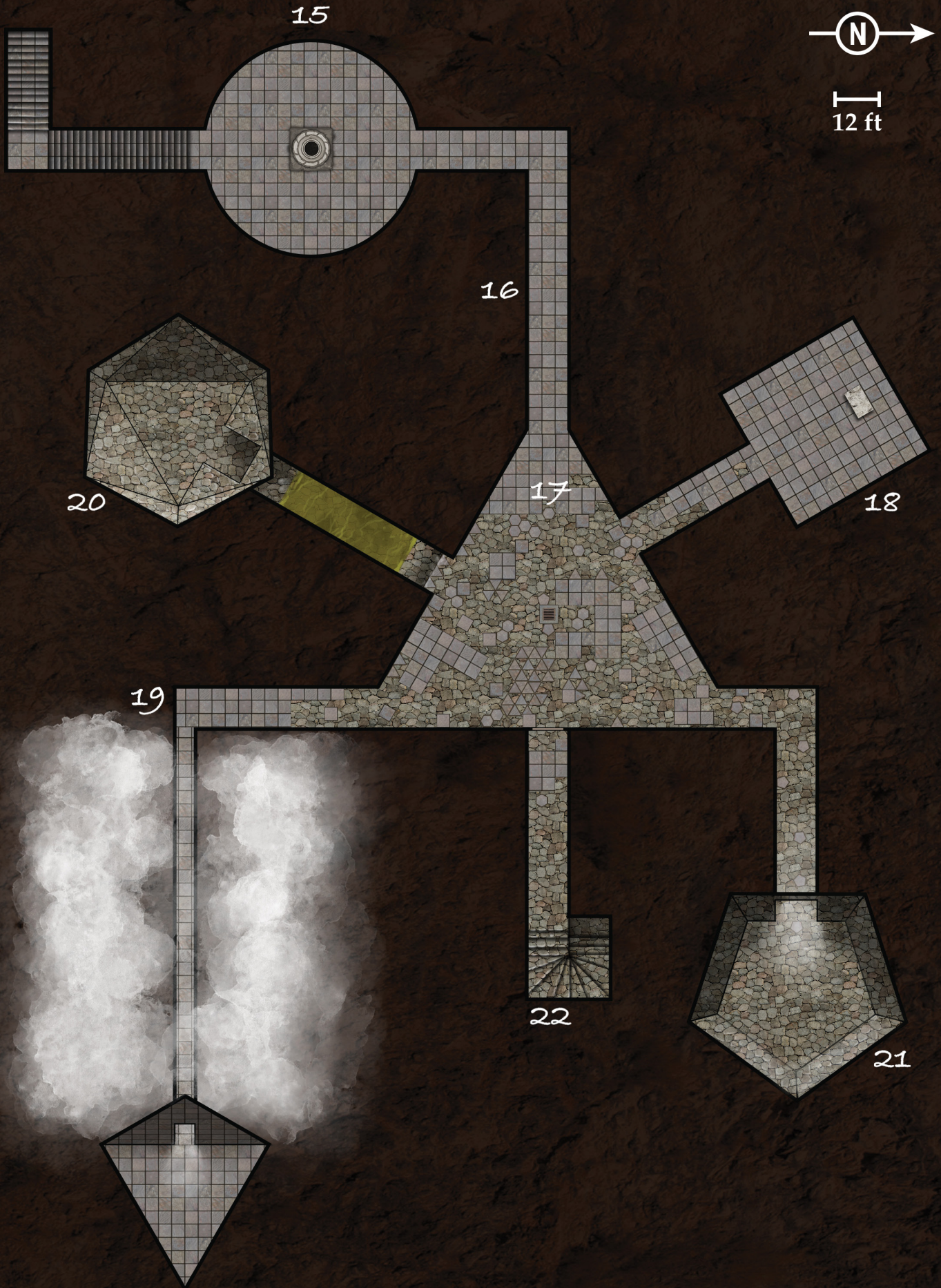
At the bottom of the stairs, there is a short hallway that opens up into a semi-spherical room. The floor is flat, and level with the short hallway, but the walls and ceiling are in the shape of a dome. The room itself is 40 feet to the other side, where another hallway continues. Directly in the center, however, is

a ten-foot tall cylindrical pillar of stone with four grotesque dwarven faces on it at about four feet high – dwarven height. One face points at you as you enter, another on the opposite side, and the other two to the walls left and right. Floating on the far side of the room, a few feet off the ground, is a strange, spherical being with delicate wings and spindly arms and legs. It is made of brass, but has a fleshy face, with eyes, nose, and lips.

The pillar is twenty feet from the entrance of the room. There are pressure plates on the floor in a five-foot wide strip between the pillar and five feet inside the door. The strips are therefore fifteen feet long, five feet wide. There are similar pressure plates beneath the other three faces. Those who circle the room around its perimeter avoid the pressure plates.

This trap is activated when an intruder who weighs over sixty pounds steps on a hidden pressure plate, releasing a magical gout of flame from the strange stone face on the nearby pillar. The flame shoots out in a two-foot wide, fifteen-foot-long column, centered four feet above the pressure plate just stepped on. Each creature in the fire must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 1d10 fire damage on a failed





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

Characters who make a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check spot the pressure plate as well as a faint discoloration on the tiles in front of the faces. The *detect magic* spell reveals an aura of evocation magic around the pillar.

A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check delivers the observation that wedging an iron spike or other object under the pressure plate would prevent the trap from activating. A *dispel magic* spell cast on the pillar destroys the trap.

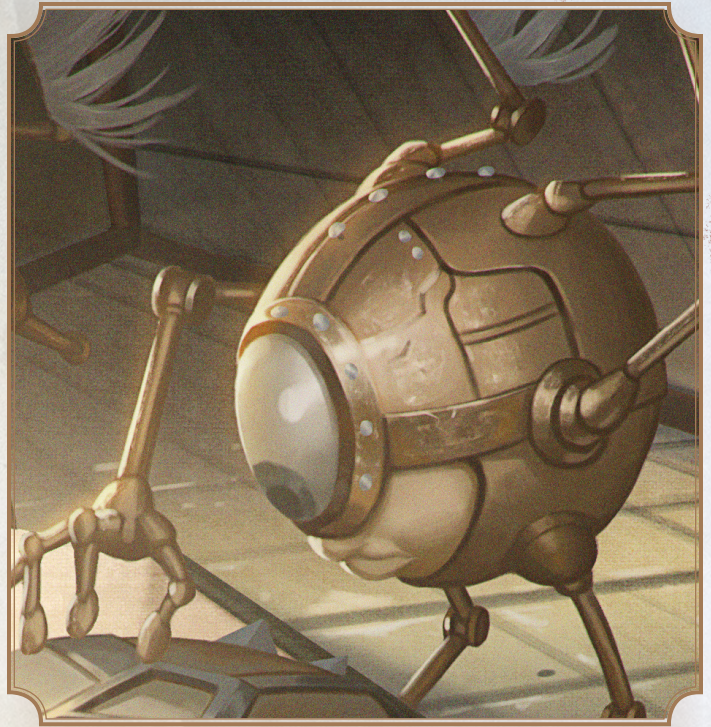
Modron! The strange creature is a **monodrone**, one of several on this level. Like the others, this modron is corrupted beyond repair. It hovers, flapping its wings slowly, staring sadly at an oily stain on the wall. Its sole task is to keep the room clean, but it has no means to remove the stain.

Like the other modrons here, this monodrone speaks both Modron and Dwarvish, so that it could serve its former master. If the characters approach, they hear it talking to itself in Modron. If they speak to it in Dwarvish, it begins repeating itself in Dwarvish. In either language, it says, "Primus deduces... Bzzt... But Master Gyax compels... Beep boop. Must keep the heavenly solids clean.... Crrrrack... ever more perfect shapes.... Buzz..." This is all it says, no matter what the characters do. Should the characters clean the stain, the modron smiles and then begins to patrol the room, looking for dirt to clean.

AREA 16: THE HALLWAY BEYOND THE SPHERICAL ROOM

The hallway beyond resembles all the other halls here in this complex. There is a one-inch lip at the threshold into and out of this hallway, which marks the limit of the gelatinous cube's patrol zone. Characters who make a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check or have a high enough passive score notice the lip, as well as the acidic pitting on its hallway side.

The hallway extends fifty feet before it opens up into a large room. Half-way down the hallway is a **gelatinous cube**. The characters notice the cube only on with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check or passive score. The cube waits, motionless, hoping to surprise the party. There is no way to pass the cube without destroying it. There is another one-inch lip at



the other end of the hallway, where it meets the next room.

AREA 17: A TETRAHEDRON

Once the party makes its way through the hall, they find themselves in a large room.

You are struck by two things, one successively weirder than the next. The first is that the room you have entered is a massive triangular chamber, like a hollowed-out pyramid. The second thing is that there is a creature here who is also shaped like a pyramid! The room is shaped like a pyramid that has the floor as its base, however, whereas the creature is shaped like an inverted pyramid, with three faces, three arms, and six legs. The strange being wheels on its heel and charges you, muttering something in an unknown language.

This is a corrupted, **tridrone**, which fights to the death. If the tridrone drops to zero hit points, it and its weapons disintegrate with a look of relief.

Like the other modrons here, this modron cannot be healed or helped; it wants only to clear the pyramid room, which includes removing the characters.

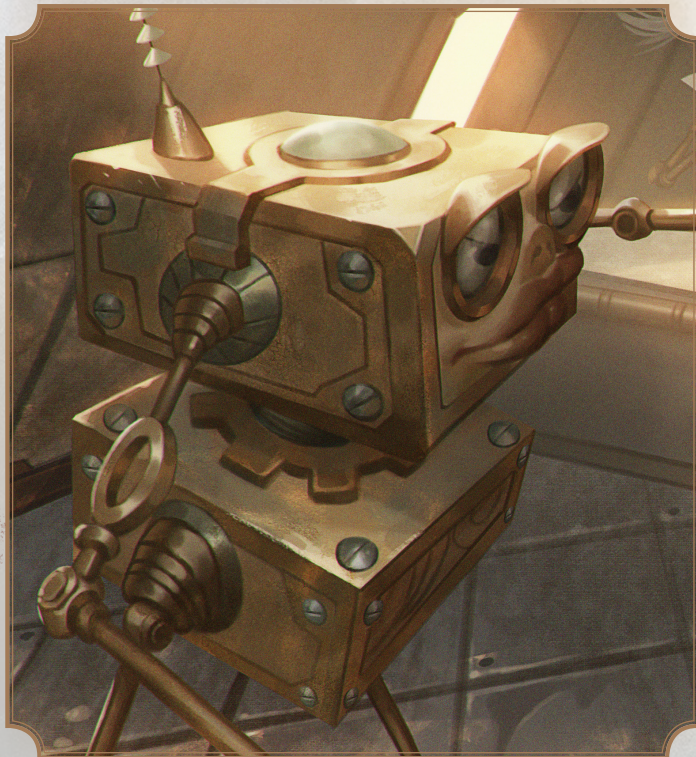
The Modrons

The modrons inhabiting this place are all malfunctioning, long since corrupted by the necrotic energies emanating from the portal below, as well as their extended time away from Mechanus. Except for the tridrone the characters encounter (and those that might be flying around the bridge in Area 19), they are not hostile, but also not at all communicative. They understand Modron and Dwarvish but only mutter about heavenly shapes, the master, cleanliness, and satisfying their old and new masters. If one dies, it gets a look of relief on its face before turning to dust, knowing it returns to Mechanus. There is no way to cure them of their malfunction except by this means – unless the DM decides that the party should have a rogue modron companion, of course!

Once the modron is dealt with, the characters see that they have entered from one corner of an equilateral tetrahedron – the shape of a four-sided die. The three walls around them slant upwards to a single apex above.

There are four hallways leaving this room, two at the opposite corners, and two in the middle of the two side walls. The far wall has a large door in the middle of it. It looks much like the iron door above with the indentation that was opened by the magical lodestone, but this one has six such indentations arranged in a circle.

Alien Architecture. Unlike the obviously dwarven architecture above, this area is a mixture of dwarven styles and bizarre, tessellating, geometric patterns, repeating without purpose. Indeed, as your eye traces



the tiles, they begin to find a pattern, only to have it quickly disrupted. It is a somewhat disconcerting experience, suggesting the creator was not entirely sane.

Drain. In the center of the room is a narrow drain, about a foot in diameter and 50 feet deep. At the bottom, those with darkvision can just discern what looks to be a lodestone, similar to the lodestone used to open the door above. How the characters might retrieve the stone is an exercise in creative problem-solving. Note that the lodestone keys are all magnetic, so a clever player might use a rope and one key to retrieve the other.

How Many Stones?

There are four rooms branching off of the tetrahedron room and the iron door has six indentations. The characters should have access to one or two lodestones from the previous floor already and there is a stone at the bottom of the drain in the middle of the tetrahedron room. Thus, there are seven total stones in the first two levels, allowing players to skip one of the challenges of their choice.

The Magical Door. The characters may place the lodestones into the indentations on the iron door whenever they like, though nothing happens until the sixth is installed. Once all six lodestones are placed into the iron door, it opens up exactly as the iron door on the first floor did. The lodestones can be removed once the door has been opened. The door remains unlocked until the *arcane lock* spell is cast on it again.

AREA 18: THE CUBE OF EARTH

The first hallway on the left as the characters enter the tetrahedral room extends twenty feet to a cube shaped room. There is a **quadrone** sitting in the hallway.

The hallway here is ten-by-ten feet and made of orderly dwarven stone tiles. Half-way down the hall, a strange, cube-shaped biomechanical figure sits on the ground, a set of tinker's tools arrayed before him.

The Quadrone Tinker. The quadrone is working on a tiny, wind-up, clockwork monodrone with an open hatch on its back. Within the open hatch, dozens of tiny gears can be seen. As the characters approach, the quadrone ignores them, focusing intently on trying to slot a final cog into the complex mechanism. The cog keeps popping back out,

frustrating the quadrone. It tries and fails repeatedly.

If the characters attempt to assist the quadrone, it allows them, watching intently. More than one character may make the attempt. If a character succeeds on a DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check to slip the tiny cog into the delicate mechanism, the quadrone gazes up in amazement and claps its hands. It thereafter winds up the monodrone and releases it. The wind-up toy walks around, making a whirring sound, the wings on its back flapping. The quadrone claps and dances in joy.

The wind-up monodrone toy ceases to walk after 1 minute, at which time the quadrone offers it to the character that succeeded on the Sleight of Hand check. The quadrone then burps up a pile of tiny cogs and gears and sits down once again, intent on building another one, a task that takes it days of labor. The quadrone is otherwise unresponsive, though it defends itself if attacked. The wind-up monodrone toy is a tiny inanimate object worth 100 gp.

The Hexahedral Room. Beyond the quadrone is a 30-foot hexahedral, or cube, shaped room. At the opposite side of the room is a stone pedestal with a heavy stone box atop it, closed with a latch. If a character specifically indicates that they are examining the ceiling, then, on a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, they might notice seams on the ceiling, suggesting trapdoors. If they do not specifically examine the ceiling, they may notice a few grains of sand on the floor instead.

Sand Trap. The box is not trapped, but the lid weighs 25 lbs and thus cannot be opened with a *mage hand*. Within is a lodestone for the iron door. There is a glyph beneath the lodestone that is only detectable once the lid is open by a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check or passive score. If the stone is lifted, the glyph activates, opening compartments in the ceiling, allowing thousands of pounds of sand to fall into the room. If the trap is triggered, anyone in the room must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 1d6 bludgeoning damage and be knocked Prone. Anyone prone beneath the falling sand is Restrained. The sand all falls in the round in which the trap is triggered, after which time those beneath it are Blinded and Deafened as well.

Suffocating

After a number of minutes equal to 1 + their Constitution modifier (minimum of 30 seconds), any buried character begins suffocating. When a creature runs out of breath or is choking, it can survive for a number of rounds equal to its Constitution modifier (minimum of 1 round). At the start of its next turn, it drops to 0 hit points and is dying, and it can't regain hit points or be stabilized until it can breathe again. For example, a creature with a Constitution of 14 can hold its breath for 3 minutes. If it starts suffocating, it has 2 rounds to reach air before it drops to 0 hit points.

Escaping the Sand. A character who is buried under the sand may attempt to escape. With a successful DC 15 Strength check, a character extricates themselves from the sand. A character can also try to dig out an ally, which requires a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check.

Once the characters have retrieved the lodestone, there is nothing else in this room for them. After one hour, the trap resets, the sand magically returning to the ceiling, and the trapdoors close. The chambers where the sand is kept are ten-foot cubes and are otherwise empty.

AREA 19: THE OCTAHEDRAL ROOM OF AIR

You leave the pyramid room, following the hallway at one corner to a stone archway. Beyond, a narrow bridge spans a massive, open space filled with swirling fog and illuminated with a diffuse, indirect light. Neither floor nor wall nor ceiling is visible in any direction. Winds blow here and there across the bridge. Through the mists, you glimpse a lighted archway at the far end of the bridge.

Unbeknownst to the characters, the archway is a portal to a demiplane stolen from the Elemental Plane of Air. The only walls visible within this space are the endless, sheer stone faces with the stone archways in them, between which the bridge stretches.

The Bridge. The narrow stone bridge is five feet wide and 150 feet long. There is no railing. All around the bridge are rushing, swirling clouds of fog and mist, though the characters can still see fairly clearly at least 60 feet, thanks to an ambient, indirect light diffuse throughout this place. The winds blow and buffet the characters as they stand on the narrow 'bridge,' though not enough to knock them off.

If a character moves out on the bridge, they feel the wind but are in no danger of falling just yet. After they have traveled fifty feet, however, a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a distinct form moving within the clouds of mist and fog.

The Shoving Rules

Instead of making an attack roll, you make a Strength (Athletics) check contested by the target's Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check (the target chooses the ability to use). If you win the contest, you either knock the target prone or push it 5 feet away from you.

The air elemental has a Strength of 14, so it rolls a 1d20+2 contested by the character's Dexterity (Acrobatics) or Strength (Athletics) check.

The Elemental. The shape is an **air elemental** and it attacks! If the character did not notice the shape, then the elemental gets advantage on its first attempt to shove. It charges any character on the bridge and attempts to knock them off. This is no normal air elemental, however. On each of its turns, the air elemental uses its action to try to shove its targets off the bridge, rather than damage them.

This air elemental is weakened from being trapped in this Demiplane for centuries. It only has half as many hit points as a normal air elemental, leaving it with 45 Hit Points. If the air elemental has successfully knocked a character off the bridge, it thereafter ignores them, focusing on the other characters on the bridge, until all on the bridge have been knocked off. Once all the visible characters are falling, the air elemental retreats and does not return for 1 hour. The air elemental does not pursue the characters through either stone arch.

Adjusting the Encounter

Very Weak Party: Replace the **air elemental** with four **monodrones**. They too will opt to attempt to Shove the characters off the bridge rather than do damage.

Weak Party: Replace the **air elemental** with two **monodrones** and a **quadrone**. They too will opt to attempt to Shove the characters off the bridge rather than do damage.

Strong Party: The **air elemental** has all of its Hit Points.

Very Strong Party: The **air elemental** has all of its Hit Points and also uses its *Whirlwind* Action on any characters standing on the bridge first.

If the party is of a higher level, consider making the combat against two **air elementals** at full Hit Points.

Note that the goal of this encounter is not to do damage, but to present the players with the twin challenges of eliminating the foes and getting back onto the bridge after falling.

Falling from the Bridge. It is likely that one or more characters will be knocked from the bridge. They fall away at normal falling speed, the bridge receding from sight, disappearing into the fog and mist above them. As they fall, they see a bridge below them and on the bridge are their companions! The rest of the characters see a figure falling out of the sky above them a few feet away from the bridge. It is their fallen friend!

If left unattended, they fall past the bridge indefinitely at 500 feet/round. If they are pulled above the bridge and hit it, they sustain 10d6 falling damage, rather than 20d6, due to the lower gravity of this demiplane. If a falling person strikes another creature, the faller and creature struck split the damage. A character may make a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw to avoid getting hit by a faller.



Solving the Gravity Problem

So, you've fallen off a bridge. What to do?

Characters could try to throw a rope to the character. They could tie one end to the bridge, perhaps, causing the falling person to pendulum swing under the bridge and back up the other side. If they let go as they are heading up, they will fly all the way back up to the previous bridge and hover there for a second, where they can grab a rope or a hand. Another solution might be to cast *feather fall* on the falling creatures, or *fly*, or *levitate*, or *gaseous cloud*, etc.

This situation invites players to come up with creative solutions. Some tables might use rope work and calculate force and vectors. Others might use magic creatively. Still others might have a Fly speed and simply go out and grab the falling person. Still, some players dislike this sort of puzzle solving element in their game and others simply struggle to come up with a way to solve the problem. In such cases, the DM can opt to allow the players to make Intelligence checks, DC 15 (or even as low as 10 if the DM would like to move things along). On a success, the DM could offer one or more of the above ideas toward solving the problem.

At the end of the bridge, there is another stone arch. Beyond is a room shaped like an octahedron, recognizable by gamers as an eight-sided die. On the floor beyond the arch is a small stone pedestal with another of the distinctive lodestones hovering on a cloud of air.

AREA 20: THE ICOSAHEDRON OF WATER

The first hallway on the right as the characters enter the tetrahedral room extends straight for 60 feet before reaching a doorway. Along the length of the hallway the floor drops ten feet and the space is filled with a pool of acid, though it looks like water.

Five feet into the hallway, the floor drops ten feet and stays there for the length of the hallway. There is a clear liquid filling the lower area of the hallway up to a level about two feet below the floor, making it eight feet deep.

Acid Pool. The liquid looks like water but is in fact a scentless and colorless acid. If a creature touches the acid, they take 1d4 acid damage. Partial immersion in the acid causes 2d6 acid damage per round and total immersion causes 2d10 acid per round.

How the characters decide to traverse this obstacle is up to them. Flying, floating on a makeshift raft, using pitons and rope to climb above the acid along the wall, or sending a familiar are all viable options.

At the end of the acid pool, the hallway enters a large room with twenty equally sided walls. In the middle is a stone pedestal, atop of which sits a bowl of water in which one can find a lodestone. A **monodrone** is here listing prime numbers in Dwarvish. It ignores the party members, unless there are 1, 3, 5, or 7 of them, in which case it begins hopping excitedly and repeating the number over and over. The monodrone loves anything to do with primes but is otherwise uncommunicative.

AREA 21: THE DODECAHEDRON OF FIRE

You pass through the archway at the back-right corner of the tetrahedron, walking down a hallway for sixty feet to a right turn. After the turn, forty feet down, the hallway ends at a doorway. There is a thin coat of slippery oil on the floor of the hallway between you and the door, making the passage difficult.

Upon stepping into the area covered in oil, characters must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or fall prone. Scraping the oil before stepping into it reveals a subtle glyph carved in the stone. Unless the oil is removed, however, only a character using the *detect magic* spell or similar effect can see the glyph.

Fire Trap. Once a character steps onto the oiled floor, they trigger the glyph concealed beneath the thin coating of oil, which causes a wall of flame to erupt from the wall directly behind the characters, where the hallway made the right turn. The flame immediately begins to move down the hallway of oil.

The wall of flame stretches floor to ceiling, wall to wall, and moves down the hallway through the oiled area. Characters who have not yet entered the oiled hallway can attempt a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. On a success, they jump back down the hallway toward the tetrahedral room and avoid the fire damage entirely. On a failure, they take 1d10 fire damage as the thin wall of flame passes over them and down the hall.

The wall of flame then moves down the hallway at a speed of forty feet per round. If a character in the hallway attempt escape the fire through the open doorway, they must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw to run to the doorway in time to avoid the fire. If they fail, they fall prone and end their movement for the round. If the thin wall of flame reaches them, the characters take 1d10 fire damage.

Once the fire wall reaches the wall at the end of the hallway, the fire goes out. For one round, fresh oil oozes out of the stone as the trap resets. At the beginning of the subsequent round, if there are still characters in the oiled hallway, the wall of fire reappears back at the beginning of the hall and moves down the hall again. This repeats every other round, for as long as there are characters in the oiled hallway.

Dodecahedron Room. Through the doorway is a room with twelve equally sized panels for walls, floor, and ceiling, forming a 12-sided space. The hallway enters at the bottom of this strangely shaped room and faces a plain stone pedestal, atop of which is a lodestone.

Sitting behind the pedestal is a **duodrone** carrying a jug of oil and a cloth bearing a geometric pattern. The jug of oil is a *decanter of endless oil*, which it uses periodically to refill an oil reservoir for the hallway trap. The cloth is a *cloth of oil absorption*, which is used to clean any oil that ends up in the dodecahedron room. When someone enters, it attempts to wipe any oil from them using the cloth. If spoken to, the duodrone speaks in Modron and Dwarvish saying, "Oil the hallway and keep the dodecahedron clean...oil the hallway and keep the dodecahedron clean..." It becomes distressed if the party prevent it from cleaning them or the dodecahedron, but does not attack, instead cleaning up after them.

The character or characters who have made it to this room must now figure out how to get back without activating the trap, or they must simply weather the thin wall of flame. Once the last character leaves the hallway, the duodrone remains in the room and pours the decanter into a small slot in the wall, refilling the trap's reservoir.

AREA 22: THE STAIRS DOWN

Once the characters have acquired six lodestones, they can open the magically sealed door in the tetrahedron room. Beyond is a landing and another stone stair descending once more. The stair is identical to the one that brought the characters to this floor.

LEVEL THREE: THE BEHOLDER'S LAIR

This level is, effectively, one large chamber with seven small side chambers branching off of it. The modrons built it, or rebuilt it, to resemble their second master on this plane, one who arrived after the dwarves departed, and who was drawn by the prospect of tireless, perfectly obedient workers in the modrons. It was a beholder by the name of Gyaximus Arnesondratus.

The Planar Portal. The central, topmost "tentacle" of the chamber contains the tiny extraplanar portal – a crack in reality, as it were, gently emanating planar power – that generated the adamantine in the first place. And it was the deposit of this adamantine that brought the dwarven wizard Karandor to this place. It also allowed him to summon the modrons, but the corrupt nature of this fissure also explains why the modrons went haywire. Finally, the corrupting influence of the fissure also was too much even for the beholder, eventually leading it to attempt to gain the power of undeath and failing, leaving it as an undead shadow of its former self.

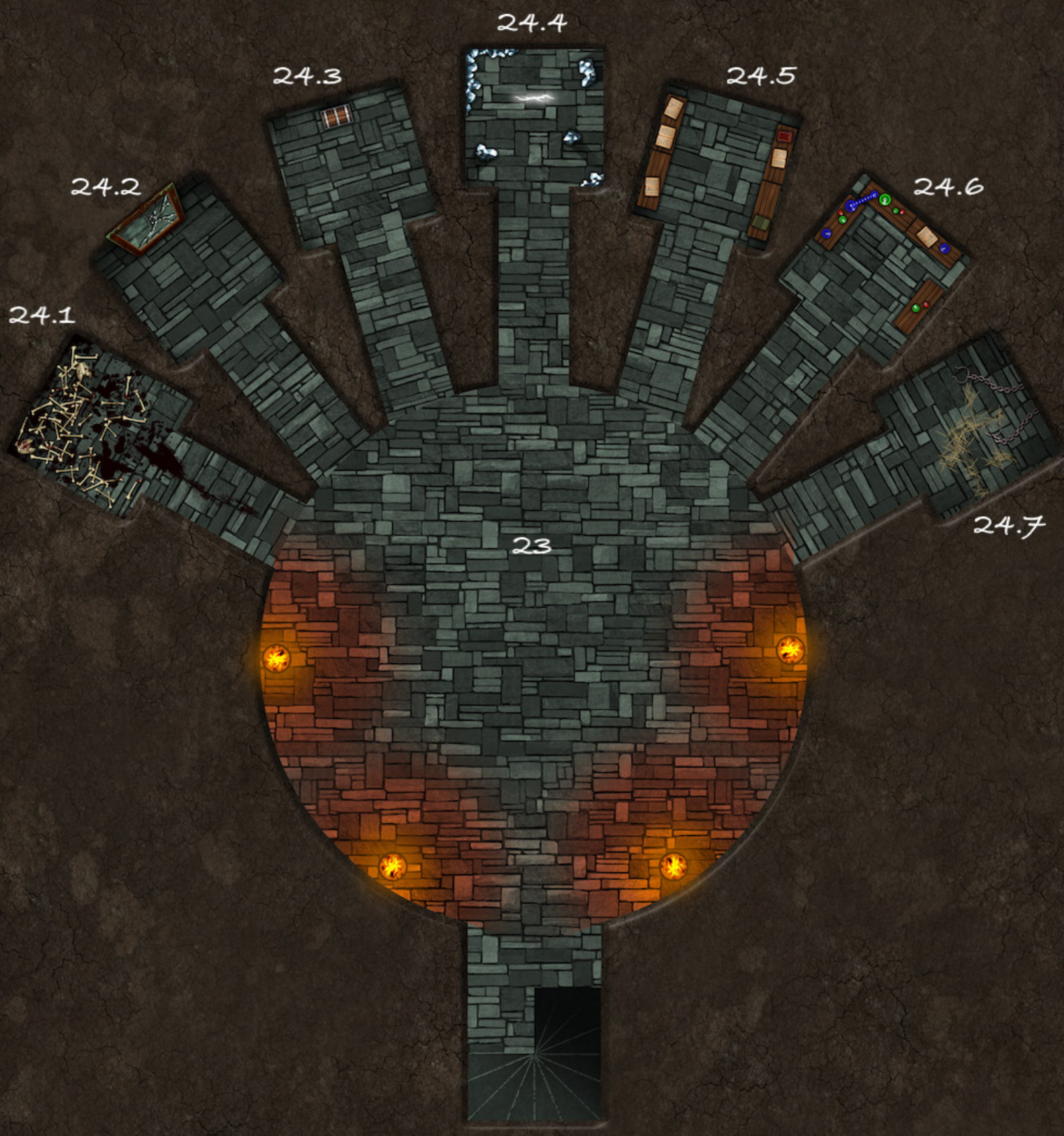
The tale of this place and these creatures is available via documents the characters can find after the combat, should they choose to search for and examine such things.

AREA 23: THE BEHOLDER'S CENTRAL EYE

At the bottom of the stairs, there is a doorway that opens up into a large cylindrical room with a fifty-foot high ceiling. Around the perimeter of the room, 20 feet up in the air, are 7 hallways, each 10-by-10 feet, extending to what look to be small rooms beyond. There are stacks of crates here and there in the room, as well as several ladders. An awful odor of rotting flesh fills the air here.

The entrance to each of these hallways is 20 feet above the floor of the chamber, ten feet tall. The ceiling of the main room is a further 20 feet beyond the hallways' ceilings.

Scattered on the ground of the cylindrical chamber are stacks of various crates, most likely supplies scavenged by the modrons from the levels above and given to their new master. There are also old ladders that reach up to each of the hallways, installed for the sake



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of the non-flying **tridrones** that once served the beholder. These crates and ladders could allow characters to be on the same level as the beholder, at least, and perhaps lead one of them to attempt to jump and grab the creature!

Adjusting the Encounter

Very Weak Party: Replace the **beholder zombie** with a **spectator**.

Weak Party: Replace the **beholder zombie** with a **spectator** and a dwarven **zombie** that rises from beneath some crates when combat begins.

Strong Party: Add a dwarven **zombie** that rises from beneath some crates when combat begins.

Very Strong Party: Add three dwarven **zombies** that rise from beneath some crates when combat begins.

If the party is of a higher level or is very large, consider using a **beholder** rather than a **beholder zombie**. Perhaps it hadn't conducted the ritual to attempt to attain the Undeath it seeks just yet!

If the DM would prefer to have a mad, monologuing big bad guy, feel free to substitute a **gauth** for the beholder zombie, though do recognize that the **gauth** is suited only for parties evaluated as Strong or stronger, according to the APL level chart. The **gauth** would have been drawn by the energies emanating from the fissure, which it consumes for food, as a substitute for the magical energies it most prefers.

If the party has one or more clerics, the DM might also opt to substitute the **gauth**, so as not to have the big boss battle largely trumped by a successful Turn Undead use.

Once one or more of the characters have entered the chamber and have begun to look around, the occupant and former master of this level arrives, floating out of the furthest passage from the entryway. It is a **beholder zombie!** It is spherical, five feet across, with seven tentacular appendages, though only four of the eye stalks seem active. Its one large eye is opaque and sunken in. Its teeth are decayed, with a rotten tongue lolling out of its mouth loosely. It enters the cylindrical chamber and remains at the same altitude, which puts its underside about 22 feet off of the floor of the cylindrical room.

Once it has entered the main room, the beholder zombie attacks immediately and fights until it is destroyed. Once the threat or threats have been eliminated, the danger here is effectively over. The characters are now free to search the side rooms in this, the final area of this complex.

Some suggested strategies for DMs in this fight

Though once a brilliant mind and threatening strategist, the **beholder zombie** is now a shadow of its former self. As such, it does not take a particularly complex strategy toward the combat with the characters. It will, however, remain at its current altitude, a bit over 20 feet off of the floor of the cylindrical room, sending the occasional eye ray down at the characters on its turn.

If the characters become overly frustrated with the **beholder zombie's** inaccessibility to melee combat, the DM might decide to bring the **beholder zombie** down for a Bite attack. Recognize, however, that a group of adventurers can easily overcome even the toughest of foes when those foes are alone and surrounded.

If DMs recognize in advance that the environment will prove a frustration for the characters, the DM could always lower the hallways, so that the **beholder zombie** hovers only, say, ten feet up.

If, on the other hand, the characters are making quick work of the **beholder zombie**, the DM should feel free to have a few dwarven zombies, simply to spice up the combat. If you do introduce some of these zombies and are worried that they might overwhelm the party, have them shamble out of the side passages and fall 20 feet, thus suffering 2d6 falling damage, before they engage in combat.

AREA 25 (ROOMS 1-7): THE EYE CHAMBERS

The rooms are described left to right as one enters, moving clockwise. These rooms are 20' cubes. The hallways enter these small rooms five feet above the floor of the room.

ROOM ONE

The dining room, where once the modrons would bring dead rats and other creatures harvested from above for the beholder to eat. Now, however, there is nothing but bones and the trace of rotting flesh here.

ROOM TWO

A room containing a floor to ceiling glass mirror, in a bronze frame. It is 10 ft wide, 20 ft tall. It appears to be very old and is now badly cracked, as if something had struck it, hard. In reality, the normally vain Gyaximus destroyed it in anger once its lich ritual went astray and the creep of undeath began to spread across its form.



DENTON
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ROOM THREE

Empty save for a sturdy wooden and iron banded chest here. It is unlocked and untrapped.

The chest. It contains 5 large rubies worth 50 gp each, for a total of 250 gp, and 200 gp in coin, as well as a magic helm. It is a *helm of comprehend languages*.

ROOM FOUR

As you enter, they see an empty room of dressed stone, with clumps of silvery crystalline deposits the size of a fist forming in places across the floor, wall, and ceiling.

This is the room that contains the source and cause of all of this: the extraplanar fissure. These deposits are new formations of adamantite, the ore used to forge adamantine weapons and armor. Prior to the arrival of the dwarves, this fissure slowly grew adamantite deposits for centuries. The dwarves seemed to have mined it all, however, though the fissure has begun creating deposits anew.

The Planar Fissure. The fissure itself is a thin ribbon, a foot long and an inch across, floating in the air about three feet off of the floor here. It is faintly glowing with a sickly, pale gray light. The energies are a mix of negative energy from the Negative Plane of Existence and raw planar aether ebbing and flowing from the Astral Sea. These energies leaking into the Material plane interact with the stone around the fissure to grow adamantite deposits.

The fissure itself is too small for the characters to enter and of a nature that the characters can do little to affect it. The *dispel magic* spell has no effect on this portal, for example. What the characters decide to do about the slowly leaking portal is up to them.

The characters can scrape the few crystalline deposits from the stone walls and bring them with them. Alas, this is not pure adamantine ore, so it is worth 10gp per lb. To calculate how much adamantine ore can be recovered here, use this formula: 10 lbs x the number of characters. Thus, if there are five characters, they would be able to recover 50 lbs of the ore here, which is worth 500 gp in total, or 100 gp per character.

What to do with a planar fissure?

This adventure does not dictate what can or should be done with the portal. DMs should feel free to use it as a hook for later stories, or perhaps tie it into larger goings on in their world. Alternatively, the characters can ignore it completely and leave.

Here are some ways in which the fissure could be used. First of all, arcane casters could use some of the texts the beholder left behind to conduct dangerous rituals with the energies of the fissure, to whatever end the players and DM might find interesting. Or divine magic users or warlocks could use the fissure as a means of contacting their higher powers. Alternatively, with the presence of living beings nearby once again, the portal could begin to grow and even become large enough for characters to pass into the Astral Plane – or for something to pass into the Material Plane.

ROOM FIVE

This room contains the beholder's library. The dozen or so tomes herein concern ancient lore, much on alchemy, some on dwarven history, mostly in indecipherable tongues. Four books in particular lay open, suggesting that Gyaximus the beholder was studying them together, before his transformation. They are in Abyssal, Infernal, and Deep Speech, and all concern lichdom and becoming a death tyrant. The DM may decide to include volumes and tomes of a particular nature that serve a larger story or the lore of their own campaign.

One of the volumes was written by Karandor Blackhelm himself and has not aged at all. It is in fact an *enduring spellbook*. In addition to some spells, it includes his notes and research. Below are some relevant excerpts, all written in a cramped Dwarvish hand.

"...while prospecting in the Starmetal Hills, I found what I'd been looking for! The largest deposit of adamant I've ever seen. There must be thousands of pounds of the stuff, in crystalline deposits... I'll be rich! I'll have to hire a few good dwarves to help, but I don't want knowledge of the location to get around..."

"...My brother Hossoc brought his muleheaded friend Otgrim to help, gods be damned... He wouldn't know adamant from copper, the dolt... What's more, we've mined enough of the adamant crystals to find... something. The source of the deposit, I think. I must study it..."

"..This is amazing! This is some kind of planar fissure. And the energies leaking out of it are what stimulate the adamant crystal deposits



to grow! I can **feel** the power emanating from it... I must find some way to harness it. To my books..."

At this point, the handwriting becomes much more of an erratic scrawl.

"...They keep looking at my discoveries, at **my** adamant. They shan't have them. I must send them away. But... who will continue the work on the mine? I cannot do it by myself..."

"I HAVE DONE IT! I have summoned the perfect workers to serve me. I can build my empire here. My new servants need neither pay nor sleep. And they will never, ever betray me. Oh such things I shall accomplish... Hossoc and Otgrim are already suspicious, however. I must send them away... I shall tell them a lie, that the orcs are marching north. The idiots will believe it..."

The last entry is written with a wildly erratic hand.

"Those fools in Waterdeep gave me a pittance for my motherlode! THEY said my adamant was impure, too brittle. Well... THEY will pay. Pay, I say! I shall return to the mine and direct my servants to make the place into a fortress! And I shall devise a way to summon more powerful creatures to me, to aid me in my plan to get revenge on those fools!"

This is the final entry. Nothing more was written here.

Another of the volumes, however, is Gyax's research, written mostly in Deep Speech. If characters read this (perhaps with the help of a *comprehend languages* spell), they learn the tale of the beholder. They are written in some

kind of cypher or shorthand, but the characters able to read Deep Speech are able to discern the following:

"...stupid shortling challenged the great Gyaximus Arnesondratus! His last mistake..."

"...these rogue modrons are able workers. They have created a suitably magnificent living space for me, at least. Too bad they don't taste good."

"This extraplanar anomaly is fascinating! I believe it connects to the Negative Plane of Existence. I could channel a huge amount of Negative Energy here..."

"Lichdom! I shall ascend and become unto a god!"

"Ritual failed...Mind....slipping...."

ROOM SIX

This room served as an alchemy lab in which Gyax conducted his research. There are three *potions of healing* and a jar of *Keoghtom's ointment* with 4 doses. A duodrone stands here overseeing a monodrone, who carefully cleans and organizes the various alchemical substances. The monodrone ignores anyone who enters, focusing on its task, while the duodrone mutters to itself, in Dwarvish, "Supervise the lesser, then polish the mirror.... Supervise the lesser, then polish the mirror..." It is badly injured, appearing to have taken a fall at some point. It has 1 hit point.

ROOM SEVEN

This room is empty save for a set of rusted shackles and manacles, suggesting this was once a room the beholder kept prisoners.

REWARDS

This section collects all of the rewards characters can gain in this adventure.

COMBAT EXPERIENCE

Giant Spiders: 400 xp
Giant Toads: 400 xp
Swarm of Rats: 100 xp
Black Pudding: 1100 xp
Ettin: 1100 xp
Crumbling Stone Golem: 1800 xp
Gelatinous Cube: 450 xp
Tridrone: 100 xp
Air Elemental: 1800 xp
Beholder Zombie: 1800 xp
Total combat xp: 9050 xp

NON-COMBAT EXPERIENCE

In this adventure, xp awards are suggested for overcoming the many environmental challenges and traps.

Suggested awards are as follows:

Green Slime: 25 xp
Dome room fire trap: 50 xp
Tetrahedral room drain challenge: 50 xp
Cubic earth room sand challenge: 200 xp
Octahedral air room challenge: 200 xp
Dodecahedral fire room challenge: 200 xp
Icosahedral acid hall challenge: 200 xp.

Putting together the story of Karandor Blackhelm and his mine: 125 xp
Total non-combat xp: 1050 xp

Total xp available: 10,100xp

TREASURE

Total value of all coin and gems: 828 gp, plus the adamantine ore, the value of which is calculated as follows: The ore is worth 10 gp per lb. To calculate how much adamantine ore can be recovered here, use this formula: 10 x the number of characters. Thus, if there are five characters, they would be able to recover 50 lbs of the ore here, which is worth 500 gp in total, or 100 gp per character.

Magic items include an *enduring spellbook*, a *helm of comprehend languages*, as well as three *potions of healing* and a jar of *Keoghtom's ointment* with four doses.

Cloth of Oil Absorption

Wondrous Item, uncommon

This one-foot-square gray cloth is a mundane cloth in all ways but one; it can absorb an endless amount of oil without becoming oily. The cloth is highly flammable.

Clockwork Modron

Wondrous Item, common

This tiny clockwork toy resembles a monodrone. When wound up and placed on the ground, the toy moves 10 feet across the ground on each of your turns in a direction you choose. Its wing flap and it makes clicking and whirring noises as it moves.

Decanter of Endless Oil

Wondrous Item, uncommon

This stoppered flask sloshes when shaken, as if it contains oil. The decanter weighs 2 pounds. You can use an action to remove the stopper and speak the command word, which causes 1 gallon of oil to pour out of the flask. The oil stops pouring out at the start of your next turn.

Enduring Spellbook

Wondrous Item, common

This spellbook, once belong to the dwarven wizard Karandor Blackhelm, along with anything written on its pages, can't be damaged by fire or immersion in water. In addition, the spellbook doesn't deteriorate with age.

Karandor's spellbook contains the following spells: *identify*, *detect magic*, *tenser's floating disk*, *alarm*, *arcane lock*, *knock*, *locate object*, and *conjure minor elementals*.

Helm of Comprehending Languages

Wondrous Item, uncommon

While wearing this helm, you can use an action to cast the *comprehend languages* spell from it at will.

Keoghtom's Ointment

Wondrous Item, uncommon

This glass jar, 3 inches in diameter, contains $1d4 + 1$ doses of a thick mixture that smells faintly of aloe. The jar and its contents weigh $1/2$ pound.

As an action, one dose of the ointment can be swallowed or applied to the skin. The creature that receives it regains $2d8 + 2$ hit points, ceases to be poisoned, and is cured of any disease.

APPENDIX: MONSTER STATISTICS

Crumbling Stone Golem

Medium construct, neutral

Armor Class 9 **Hit Points** 93 ($11d8 + 44$)

Speed 30 ft.

STR 19 (+4) **DEX** 9 (-1) **CON** 18 (+4)

INT 6 (-2) **WIS** 10 (+0) **CHA** 5 (-3)

Damage Immunities Psychic, Poison; Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing from Nonmagical Attacks that aren't adamantite

Condition Immunities Charmed, Exhaustion, Frightened, Paralyzed, Petrified, Poisoned

Senses Darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Understands Dwarvish but can't speak

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Immutable Form. The golem is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

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

Magic Weapons. The golem's weapon attacks are magical.

Actions:

Multiattack. The golem makes two slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 13 ($2d8 + 4$) bludgeoning damage

