

ABERRANT ECHOES

A MINI-ADVENTURE DESIGNED FOR 4 PCs OF 5TH–8TH LEVEL.

DRAWN BY THE PROMISE of rich gemstone veins, a company of mountain dwarves set up an operation in the cavernous regions deep below the earth. Their digging comes to a halt when they stumble upon an ancient ruin—a group went in to investigate and never emerged, the last sign of them a chilling scream heard from the depths.



WRITING JOS VAN EGMOND
COLOR ART SAVAGE MOJO
MAPS DYSON LOGOS
EDITING MIKE MYLER
LAYOUT FRANK MICHIEZI

GM INTRODUCTION

The dwarves dug too deep and stumbled upon an ancient laboratory that once belonged to a race from the mad realm, used to capture and reshape creatures into suitable servants. The complex was abandoned a millennium ago after some specimens mutated, grew too strong, and broke free. All that remains now is the entity responsible for managing all the laboratory's experiments, a slumbering psionic brain called Deep Scream.

BACKGROUND

Three days ago a group of dwarves found the ancient laboratory and woke the slumbering psionic brain inside. The stout folk were captured and enthralled as servants of Deep Scream, enabling the brain to rapidly reactivate the lab and begin the opening of a portal to the mad realm.

When the PCs are near the mining site three days later they see mining chief Glorin Moonhammer taking a short break in the fresh air—she recognizes the party as experienced adventurers and asks for their help investigating in exchange for 500 gold.

OVERVIEW

After accepting Glorin's offer the party descends into the ancient laboratory. There they travel through several rooms in which they may encounter a hostile chair, an 800 year old specimen, various clues, alien machinery, and maddening imagery before reaching the central chamber. Within that room the psionic brain Deep Scream is busy creating a portal

to the mad realm to contact its masters. The party must kill it to free the enthralled dwarves and close the portal.

INTO THE DWARVEN MINE

After introductions Glorin explains the last group of miners reported to have found an artificial structure. They went in to investigate three days ago, but the last anyone heard of them was a tortured scream echoing up the tunnels. The dwarven mining chief has 500 gold worth of gemstones for the party should they find the missing miners or discover what happened, and along the way the adventurers are free to take any valuables they find.

The mineshaft is a large, 2,000-foot deep hole with a wooden elevator suspended above it. A small cavern has been dug out at the bottom revealing various stones of artificial origin. A DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check shows dwarven footprints leading into a crack in the ground exposing a dungeon room, and a DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals many stones have tiny alien markings. Anyone who can read Deep Speech recognizes the symbols but they are too weathered down to read.

DARK LABORATORY

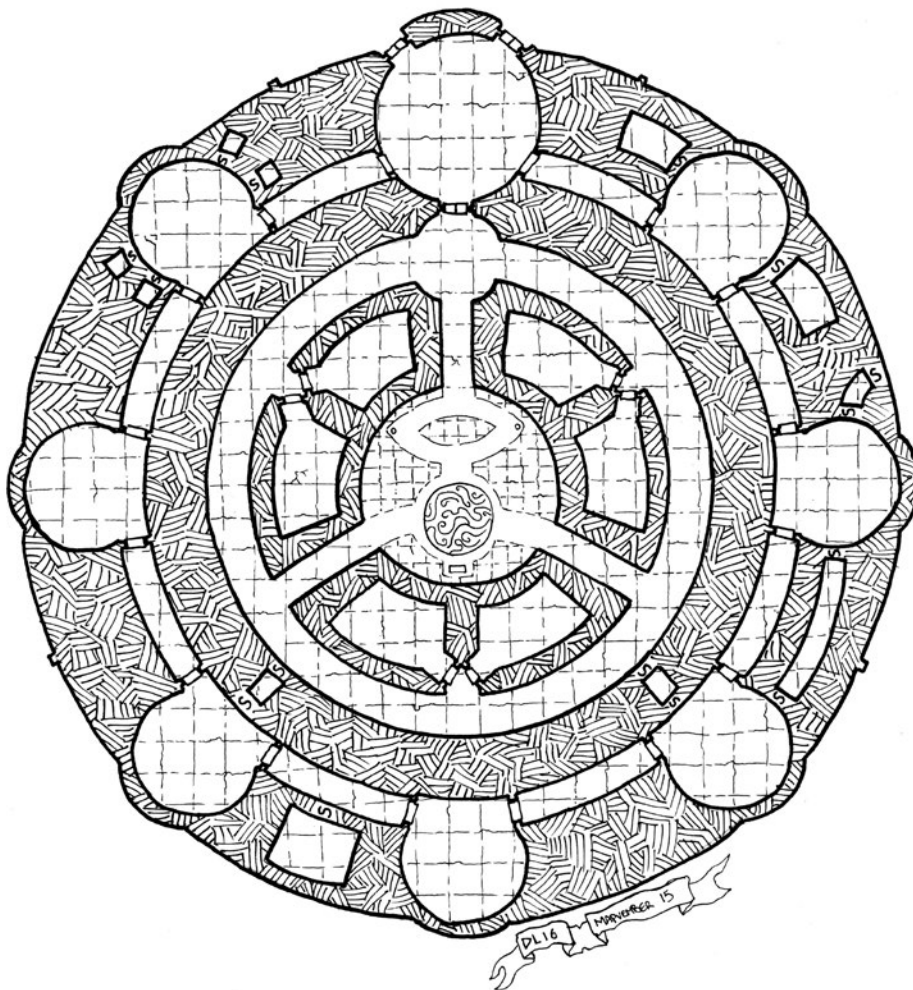
The structure is ancient, revealed to be at least 1,000 years old with a DC 12 Intelligence (History) check. The party enters the laboratory at the southern room. A DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a drawing etched in the floor, hidden under a layer of dirt and dust. It depicts a layout of the laboratory (see the map).

Two stone doors are sunken into the ground, opening the way into the circular corridor. The party can advance clockwise or counter-clockwise, passing several rooms before reaching the northern chamber. Each door in every room is sunken into the ground. To determine which rooms the party pass, pick the rooms in order. For a more challenging and unpredictable game, roll 1d6 to determine the room number.

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Servant Rooms

Several spaces on the map are marked with an 'S'. These are visible in the floor engraving and indicate narrow hallways leading into servant rooms and corridors.

The servant room in the south is littered with remains of food and bones, and even after centuries of decay the stench is still nauseating. A **gibbering moulder** is hiding under the garbage.

The four compartments in the northwest contain bunk beds for servants and their blackened skeletons indicate a fire ended their lives. A DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals one skeleton clutching a molten brass medallion with a ruby worth 25 gold.

There are two servant rooms in the northeast. One contains a cage with a heap of bugbear bones and a whip. The other is a storage room containing cleaning equipment and two oil canisters.

All other entrances are clogged with a yellow mucus. Any creature that touches it takes 10 (3d6) psychic damage, and 1d4 **ochre jellies** crawl out.

Room I: Strange Equipment

You can hear the quiet humming of various machines in this chamber. Blue and green symbols flash on glass panels, the machines and floor are covered in a thick black liquid, and tubes run from all of the contraptions into a device resembling a large oil lamp with a blue crystal glowing inside of it.



2 **black puddings** hide in the liquid. They attack any creature that enters 10 feet into the room. The crystal is a diamond worth 500 gp. When it is removed from the device, all machines power down and **Deep Scream** uses Mind Scream in response.

Room 2: Specimen Storage

This room contains three large glass containers. One is empty, one holds a green liquid with bones drifting through it, and one contains a blue liquid. A gray skinned humanoid with bulbous yellow eyes hovers inside.

The humanoid is a **doppelganger** that has been in suspended animation for over 800 years. It can be released by breaking the glass, or pressing the button on the back of the vat (which drains the fluid and lowers the glass). When released it is unable to speak and clearly afraid. The doppelganger can be

calmed down with a DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check, but if not it changes its appearance into a **bugbear** and runs towards the central chamber. The doppelganger knows the purpose of each room and if befriended it tries to explain with simple gestures. It is scared to enter any of the rooms, and tries to get to the other exit as fast as possible.

Room 3: The Chair

Four tables littered with rusted needles, pliers, and drills line the walls of this room, and a large chair stands in the center. Three metal arms extend from the back, each with a different tool: a grappler, a needle, and a very strange torch.

When the party enters the room the doors close and the **experiment chair's** arms spring to life. Each arm can extend in any direction and reach anywhere within the room. The tables offer half cover (+2 to AC and Dexterity saving throws). A DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals a *frost raygun* on one table. After the chair is destroyed Deep Scream unleashes a Mind Scream before the door sinks back into the floor. A successful DC 14 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check allows the *raygun* to be removed from the destroyed construct's arm, but on a failure it explodes and deals 11 (2d10) fire damage to all creatures and objects in a 10-foot radius.

RAYGUN

Weapon (light crossbow), rare

You have a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon when using it as a crossbow, it automatically reloads itself, and it never runs out of ammunition. While wielding it, you can use your bonus action to change the damage it deals from 1d8 piercing to 2d6 cold, to 2d6 fire, or to switch it back.

EXPERIMENT CHAIR

MEDIUM CONSTRUCT, UNALIGNED

Armor Class 18 (plate armor)

Hit Points 95 (10d8+50)

Speed 0 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)	3 (-4)	11 (+0)	1 (-5)

Damage Resistances Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing from Nonmagical Attacks

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses Passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

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

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The chair makes three attacks, one with each arm.

Needle Arm. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d4+3) piercing damage plus 2 (1d4) poison damage, and the target makes a DC 14 Constitution saving throw. On a failure it is poisoned for 1 hour, or until the poison damage is healed.

Grapple Arm. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6+3) bludgeoning damage, and the target makes a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or it is grappled (escape DC 14).

Raygun Arm. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +6 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) fire damage or 7 (2d6) cold damage..

Room 4: Mad Mnemonics

All the walls of this room are completely covered in paintings of black, red, and purple shapes and lines. One table stands in the back of the room containing some paints and papers.

Any PC that takes their time inspecting the paintings or investigating the room without averting their eyes must make a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or gain a **short-term madness**.

A DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals an incandescent blue sphere stone inside a small iron box: an *ioun stone of insight*. Anyone averting their eyes makes this check with disadvantage.

Room 5: Prisons

This room has four large windows set inside the walls with an empty stone cell behind it. One window has shattered and various humanoid skeletons lay around the chamber.

A DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals the prisoners once held here were elves. They scratched Elvish messages and images in the walls explaining they were driven to insanity by the experiments Deep Scream conducted on them. A few accidentally mutated, became stronger than intended, and escaped.

Room 6: Shrine

A large circular altar in the center of this room hosts a 10-foot tall black monolithic stone. The walls are covered in alien symbols.

Anyone who can read Deep Speech deciphers that this laboratory was made by a race from an alien realm called 'The Aberrant' that came here to test the abilities of lifeforms dwelling on this world. They installed a psionic brain they refer to as 'Deep Scream' to oversee all experiments in the laboratory. Whenever a creature touches the monolith it immediately casts the *contact other plane* spell (DC 15 Intelligence saving throw). On a successful save, the spell contacts a powerful being from the mad realm. It answers five questions in furious madness. After the spell ends, the monolith shatters.

THE CENTRAL CHAMBER

DEEP SCREAM

The psionic brain controlling this laboratory is named Deep Scream, an unstable entity that has been trying to open a gate to the mad realm ever since the trespassing dwarves disturbed it from its slumber. In the ceiling above Deep Scream a vortex of black and purple energy swirls all around—the gate to the mad realm is not open yet, but it is close.

Deep Scream immediately attacks the party when they come within sight. If the **doppelganger** from room 2 is present, it becomes enthralled to the psionic brain. The six chambers around the central chamber each hold 1d4 dwarven **thugs** also enthralled to service by Deep Scream. These servants are the missing miners (see Deep Scream's Enthrall action for details).

DEFEATING DEEP SCREAM

After Deep Scream is defeated any previously enthralled dwarves that remain break free from the spell, remembering everything as a vivid dream. Upon returning the miners to Glorin, she thanks the party profoundly and throws a sumptuous feast in their honor.

DEEP SCREAM

LARGE ABERRATION, CHAOTIC EVIL

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 114 (12d8+60)

Speed 0 ft., fly 20 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (−2)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)

Saving throws Con +6, Wis +6

Damage Immunities psychic

Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, paralyzed, petrified

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages Abyssal, Deep Speech, Undercommon; telepathy 600 ft.

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Assume Control. Deep Scream can control up to 3 enthralled servants on its turn. Unless noted otherwise, these servants use the statistics for **thugs** and they cannot take reactions. An enthralled servant takes only the actions Deep Scream chooses, it does not need to share a language with Deep Scream to understand its directions, and it doesn't do anything that Deep Scream doesn't allow it to do.

ACTIONS

Multiaction. Deep Scream uses two of the following actions.

Enthrall. Deep Scream attempts to enthrall a creature it can see within 30 feet. The target makes a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or it becomes charmed. Deep Scream can immediately use its reaction to use Assume Control on the creature. At the end of each of Deep Scream's turns, an enthralled servant can make another Wisdom saving throw. If it succeeds, the effect ends. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to Deep Scream's Enthrall for the next hour.

Mind Crush. Deep Scream deals a psychic blow to a creature it can sense within 120 feet. The target makes a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or takes 12 (2d6+5) psychic damage, or half as much on a successful save.

Mind Scream (Recharge 5–6). Deep Scream unleashes a telepathic scream in the minds of its enemies. Each creature within 120 feet that is not enthralled by Deep Scream takes 8 (1d6+5) psychic damage.

Static Slash. Deep Scream discharges an electric jolt to a target it can see within 30 feet. The target makes a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw or takes 19 (4d6+5) lightning damage, or half as much on a successful save. ⚡