

LEVEL 3 ADVENTURE MODULE

FIFTH EDITION FANTASY #16

THE CAVE OF THE UNKNOWN

BY MICHAEL CURTIS



THE CAVE OF THE UNKNOWN

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THE CAVE OF THE UNKNOWN



The Cave of the Unknown is an old-fashioned dungeon crawl designed for modern fifth-edition game mechanics. It is intended for a party of four to six 3rd-level PCs. The adventure can be easily inserted into any campaign or used as part of the *Into the Borderlands* reprint. In this adventure, the party explores the eponymous Cave, a network of natural caverns housing the Primor-

dial Spring, a font of primeval power. The Spring was previously used by the alchemist Zoorl looking to complete his magnum opus, the *Azoth Stone*, an object capable of bestowing immense wealth and longevity on its owner. If the adventurers are lucky, they might be able to capitalize on the alchemist's life's work.

BACKGROUND



ons ago, when the gods fashioned the world, they called upon potent cosmic forces. Most of that divine power was expended as the world took shape, but some of it, like drops from a full tankard, spilled out and collected in overlooked crevices of the Material Plane. Some of those drops pooled in the rock deep beneath the surface, creating the Primordial Spring. There it waited, brimming with creative possibility untapped by mortals.

Millennia passed. Natural erosion carved a series of caverns out of the ancient stone and eventually uncovered this reservoir of cosmic power. The Primordial Spring, exposed to the world above, occasionally leaked portions of its potent energy, causing strange phenomenon nearby.

The Spring's existence was otherwise unknown to the world at large. From time to time, a subterranean wanderer or brave explorer stumbled upon it, but they quickly fled from the effects of the cosmic fountain. Legends grew up around the cave and found their way to eager ears. One such individual was the alchemist and artificer Zoorl of the Seven Runes.

Zoorl, already well-versed in the alchemical, metallurgical, and scientific arts, suspected the Cave possessed po-

tent powers that would help him complete his life's work: the fashioning of an *Azoth Stone*. This *Stone* is the goal of many alchemists and is said to grant eternal life and wealth. Zoorl hired mercenaries and workers and set about claiming the Cave. He had living quarters, storerooms, and a laboratory hewn from the rock along with pens for test subjects. Soon Zoorl's gold began to run low, and despite his promises of rich reward when the work was complete, his servants abandoned the alchemist's employ. The obsessed scholar became the Cave's sole occupant, working on both the *Azoth Stone* and his other alchemical experiments in solitude.

Zoorl's work was cut short when an accident claimed his life. The Cave was forgotten for decades. A few of his test subjects claimed the Cave for themselves, and the normal subterranean creatures returned. In time, wandering monsters and other things that shun the light occupied the cavern system, but few remained for long, unnerved by the Spring-birthing phenomenon in the caverns.

The Cave of the Unknown has stood forlorn and forgotten for nearly a century, but newly unearthed clues have revived its legend. A group of adventurers draw close to the Cave's dark opening near the crown of a bald hill in the borderlands...

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

The *Cave of the Unknown* is a classic dungeon crawl: a subterranean expedition in search of loot and magic. Although wandering monsters come and go, Zoorl's experiments lay in waiting, and the PCs can explore the Cave at their leisure. At the conclusion, the adventurers will have uncovered Zoorl's unfinished *Azoth Stone* and may attempt the final challenge of the Cave in order to complete it.

The game master can draw the party to the Cave of the Unknown in several ways. The following suggestions are but a few possibilities:

- While exploring another location, the party discovers a simple map carved into a stone surface. The map shows the location of the Cave's entrance and has the Dwarvish word for "treasure" inscribed beneath the entrance. This map was made by one of Zoorl's disgruntled workers who carved it hoping that treasure-seekers would pester his tight-fisted former employer.
- A scholarly PC uncovers a written account of the Primordial Springs, residual reservoirs of divine creative power left behind after the formation of the world. The notes indicate that these Springs possess great magical energy, especially when used to create magical objects. Some of the greatest legendary items, like the *staff of the magi*, were believed to have been crafted using the power of Primordial Springs. A footnote to the account, written in another hand, describes the location of the Cave of the Unknown as a possible Primordial Spring.
- If the game master is using this adventure as part of her *Into the Borderlands* campaign, the party might hear rumors of the Cave of the Unknown at the Keep. Some of the locals know stories about a "mad alchemist" who conducted experiments somewhere beneath the hill between the Keep and the Caves of Chaos. It's rumored that the alchemist uncovered the secret of turning lead into gold, but died suddenly, leaving a fortune in precious metals behind.

GENERAL FEATURES OF THE CAVE OF THE UNKNOWN

Construction: The Cave of the Unknown is largely composed of natural stone. Walls, floors, and ceilings are rough, and there are little common dimensions to their size. The lowest level of the Cave has dwarven-built chambers and halls. These are of smooth worked stone with 8-foot-high ceilings. Doors are either wood or iron and may still be locked as noted in the text.

Illumination: Zoorl created an alchemical solution he called "breathfire." This oily green fluid reacts with the exhalations of living creatures within 30 feet, causing it to glow with a lambent emerald light. Many of the caverns in the Cave have shallow basins carved into their walls containing breathfire. Areas with breathfire are initially dark, but 1 minute after living creatures enter the space, the solution reacts, providing dim illumination within 30 feet. Caves lacking breathfire light sources are noted in the text and map. A DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check can identify the properties of breathfire, but if the liquid is ever exposed to sunlight, it dissipates into a thin mist.

Emanations from the Primordial Spring: The Primordial Spring's creative power permeates the Cave, producing unexpected effects with no discernible origin—giving the Cave its moniker. Most of the Primordial Spring's emanations are more curious than harmful. The following table is used to determine the effects of the Primordial Spring's current emanation and how they manifest in the Cave.

The emanation effects change often within the Cave. The game master can roll a new effect every other hour if she chooses or change the ongoing emanation whenever the party takes a short or long rest inside the Cave of the Unknown.

Wandering Monsters (Optional). The Cave of the Unknown is home to several species of creatures who move about its expanse. Exploring PCs might run into these monsters unexpectedly. If the game master desires, there is a 1 in 6 chance the party has a random encounter whenever they take a short rest in the Cave and a 2 in 6 chance of an encounter during the course of a long rest. If an encounter occurs, roll on the table below to determine

what creatures approach the PCs. While most of these creatures prefer to sneak up on the group as they rest, 1d3 wandering thouls may investigate a particularly noisy adventuring party at any other time of the game master's choosing.

D8 Phenomenon of the Primordial Spring

- 1 Any healing magic restoring lost hit points causes a spray of white roses to grow from the healed creature's flesh around the wound or injury site. The flowers do no damage, but produces a heavy odor that gives the affected creature disadvantage on Stealth checks against creatures with good senses of smell. The flowers dry up and fall away during the creature's next short or long rest.
- 2 Luminous blue bubbles the size of melons drift through the Cave on subterranean drafts. The bubbles pop easily, vanishing in an abrupt flash of cerulean light if touched or if they brush against sharp surfaces. The bubbles produce dim illumination wherever they go, and each area of the cave has a 2 in 6 chance of containing 2d4 bubbles.
- 3 The smell of salt water, the sound of breaking waves, and the cry of sea birds emanate up from the Primordial Spring (area 2-13). The sounds and smells are intermittent and brief and happen without pattern or trigger.
- 4 Metal objects sparkle with purple embers. The embers produce no heat or significant illumination, but are noticeable enough to impart disadvantage on Stealth attempts unless covered or otherwise obscured.
- 5 Familiar voices (parents, friends, children, sibling, etc.) are heard calling the PCs from time to time. Their words are largely unintelligible aside from the character's name. These voices are usually heard moments before a battle erupts.
- 6 Tiny shadows, vaguely resembling sack-covered humanoids, flit about at the edge of the party's vision and follow them about. These shadows are merely odd permutations of the adventurers' own shades and pose no harm to the group.

- 7 Travelers in the Cave experience visions of previous occupants. The visions appear ghostly and indistinct and consist of scenes as desired by the game master. The PCs might see Zoorl's dwarven workmen toiling away, a band of goblins who once occupied the cave dancing around a fire, the albino apes from area 2-3 hunting, or similar visions. These images are obviously not physical creatures, but could be misinterpreted as ghosts or other spirits. The visions occur whenever the game master deems them dramatically appropriate or soon after a PC rolls a 1 or 20 on a d20 for whatever reason.

- 8 Any attack or effect that causes damage within the Cave inflicts an additional 1 point of radiant damage. A glow of white light surrounds the object or spell inflicting the harm when it strikes. This additional damage is immediately followed by a sense of profound peace in the victim.

D6 Wandering Monster Encountered

- 1 1 Giant Tarantella Spider (see area 1-6)
- 2 1d3 Thouls (see area 1-4)
- 3 1d3 Albino Apes (see area 2-3)
- 4 1 Carrion Crawler (see area 2-6)
- 5 1 Ochre Jelly (see Monster Manual p. 243)
- 6 1d4 Giant Fire Beetles (MM p. 325)

THE CAVE OF THE UNKNOWN

The Cave of the Unknown lies beneath a bare hill situated in an old, twisted woods near the outskirts of civilized lands. Approaching it requires the party to travel through winding animal trails or bushwhack their way through dense deadfall and twisting vines. Three hours of travel takes the party to the verge of the hill. Read the following:

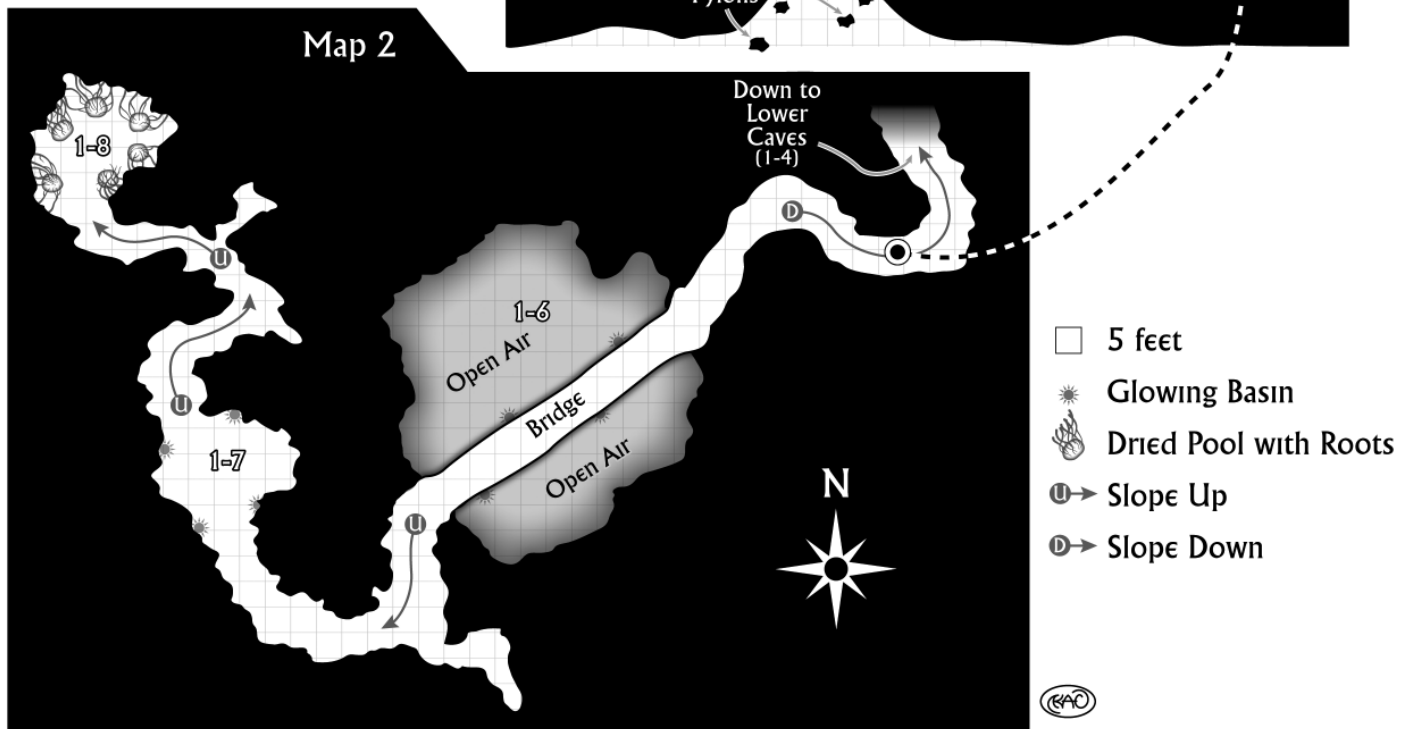
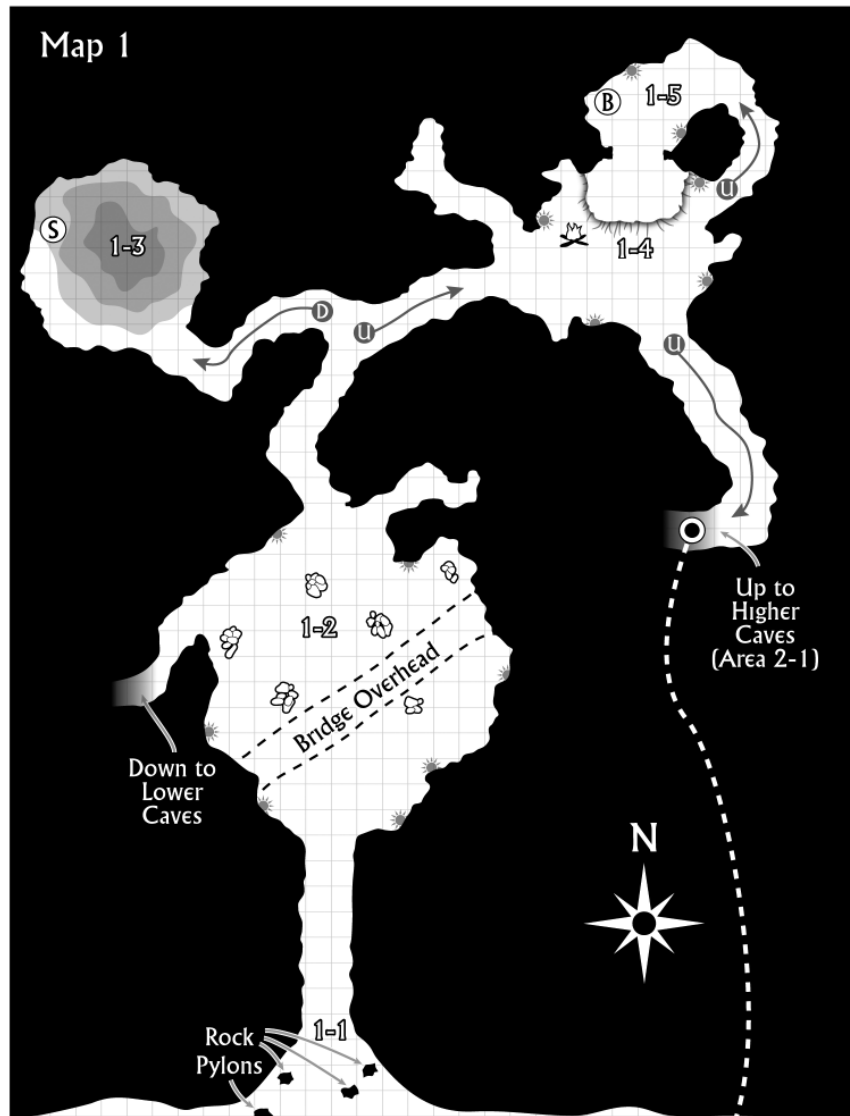
The dense and ancient woods, its trees crowded together like gossiping guests at a king's banquet, has not been easy to transverse, but you've persevered. Now, your determination is rewarded. The trees grow sparser and sunlight dapples the forest floor. Ahead, you spy bright sunshine, indicating a break in the woods.

Pushing through the last clinging creepers and sharp brambles, you emerge into daylight. A bald hill rises before you like the shaved head of a priest. Wildflowers and knee-high grass wave in the wind, seeming to rush towards the top of the hillock with their motions. The hill climbs 100 feet or more, terminating at a rounded peak bearing a spinney of oaks and birch trees on its west side.

The Cave of the Unknown

UPPER LEVELS

- 5 feet
- * Glowing Basin
- Ⓢ Statue
- Ⓑ Boulder
- ⤴ Slope Up
- ⤵ Slope Down
- ☁ Water
- ☪ Rubble
- 🔥 Camp Fire



Three-quarters of the way up the slope, almost directly facing you, is a broad cave mouth. The interior is cast in shadow, looking like a blot of spilled ink on a green tablecloth. From somewhere in the woods, a raven cackles mockingly as if daring you to advance.

The party easily scales the shallow slope of the hill. Anyone succeeding a DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check notices that there is a faint trail through the grass leading to the cave. The trail appears made by humanoids wearing boots traveling in groups numbering between two and five. This trail is made by the thouls in area 1-4 as they come and go from the cave to hunt in the woods.

The spinney of trees appears normal from a distance, but if the party explores it, they discover that the trees are twisted into strange shapes, have discolored bark, and extrude limbs in strange places and that some leaves are copper, bone, or other unusual substances. The trees were all altered by exposure to Zoorl's elixirs (see area 1-8), but are harmless.

THE UPPER LEVELS

AREA 1-1 – CAVE ENTRANCE

The cave mouth measures 30 feet wide and 15 feet high, tapering off towards either end like a frown. Beyond the entrance, the cave narrows to form a throat-like tunnel that vanishes into darkness under the hill. Rocky formations rising from the cave floor create natural pylons of stone that appear inscribed with odd symbols. Streaks of tarnished silver appear lodged in one or two of the inscriptions.

The inscriptions were made by Zoorl upon his occupation of the Cave and inlaid with silver that possesses unusual alchemical properties. If the party approaches the Cave at night, see Development below. After his death, various creatures who occupied the cave pried out the silver, and now only a few deep-set strands of the alchemical metal remain.

A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check allows a searcher to locate all the carved inscriptions, some of which are quite shallow, revealing that the pylons bear the message "Sanctum of Zoorl of the Seven Runes. Neither Interruptions nor Intruders are Welcome." A trio of odd symbols follow the message. A DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check identifies them as being old runes for "alchemy," "creation," and "power."

Two hours work and a successful DC 15 Dexterity check allows determined looters to pry the last bits of silver out of the inscriptions for a total of 2 gp worth of metal.

The passage at the back of the cave measures roughly 10 feet wide and slopes down at a 30 degree angle into the earth. After 40 feet, it terminates in area 1-2.

Development. Anyone observing the cave mouth at night when a moon is visible in the sky sees that the remains of the alchemical silver glow brightly with a silvery-blue radiance visible from up to 300 yards away. Creatures approaching the entrance with darkvision find the glow nearly blinding and must make a DC 10 Constitution save or become blinded for 1 hour. This alchemical radiance was designed by Zoorl to both mark his claim on the Cave and keep less intelligent nocturnal animals out. If the remaining silver has been removed, this glow doesn't occur.

AREA 1-2 – CATHEDRAL CAVE

A vast open cavity exists at the tunnel's end. From the echoes around you in the darkness, you speculate the ceiling must be high above you, and you can just pick out the rocky cavern walls in the gloom. An uneven floor leads into the darkness with piles of stone scattered about, any of which might hide danger. A draft moves gently through the cave, bringing with it strange mephitic scents of the underworld. A bat darts down to snatch a meal of some cave insect, then flitters away into the gloom above.

This cavern never saw improvements like some of the rest of the Cave under Zoorl's occupation and remains in a natural state. Carved basins containing breathfire (see General Notes above and Development below) are worked into the walls, but the space is otherwise untouched.

Numerous bats lair in the cave, roosting in the ceiling. They pose no threat, but depart in vast number at dusk and return at dawn, possibly buffering anyone present in the cave with their wings and unsettling them with their cries. There are more than 100 bats in residence.

An examination of the rubble determines that work once started to smooth the cavern floor by skilled masons, but the work appears to have ended abruptly. A DC 10 Intelligence (History) check or any dwarf present identifies the existing work as dwarven in nature.

Development. About 1 minute after the party enters the cave, their exhalations react with the breathfire basins in the cave, causing them to illuminate. Read the following:

The cave begins to grow light. From various spots around the walls, eldritch green glows appear like eerie suns slowly dawning. Each spot of light measures a mere hand-span across. There are seven such lights, and their combined radiance is sufficient to dimly illuminate the gloomy cave.

In the pallid emerald glow, you mark that the cave measures roughly 60 feet in diameter and the ceiling rises 80 feet overhead. A stone bridge crosses the cavern close to the ceiling, appearing to connect two exits together about 70 feet above the floor. You cannot discern if the bridge is natural or worked stone from the cavern floor. You also spy a great number of bats clinging to the ceiling or wheeling about above you.

Each basin contains a pint of breathfire. The liquid produces dim light in a 30-foot radius for as long as breathing creatures are within that range. The substance loses this property if ever exposed to sunlight, transforming almost immediately into a thin mist and dissipating.

AREA 1-3 – SLIME CAVE

The stink of mildew and dripping water arise from this cave. The walls of the 35-foot-diameter cavern are slick with seeping water, and stalactites drip incessantly into a dark pool below them. Scummy growths float atop the water and cling to the stone formations above. The pool almost fills the cave, leaving just a narrow ledge that runs along the subterranean pond's western edge. A slime covered arm, like that of a drowning sailor, sticks out of the pool near the end of the western ledge.

There are no breathfire basins in this cave. The pool is 2 feet deep at its verge, deepening to 8 feet deep at its center. Its mineral-laden waters are potable but foul tasting.

Most of the slime patches are noisome but harmless subterranean ooze; however, a patch of green slime clings to the stalactites above the western ledge halfway between the cave entrance and the arm sticking from the pool. Noticing the hazard among the normal slime requires a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check. If not noticed, it drops on the second creature passing beneath it. The target must make a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw to avoid the slime. See *Dungeon Masters Guide* p. 105 for the effects of green slime and how to destroy it.

The slime-covered arm is part of a broken statue depicting a lithe human male dancer dressed in diaphanous costume. It appears to have been shattered in two by heavy hammer blows and only the upper portion of the statue remains. The statue was once a decorative object owned by one of the Cave's former residents. It was broken apart and dumped here by Zoorl when he took occupancy of the Cave.



The statue is extremely heavy and requires a DC 20 Strength check to pull from the pool.

Development. Pulling the statue from the pool or entering its waters arouses the pool's occupants. A trio of slime-covered skeletons rise dripping from the depths and attack. The skeletons are those of a human, an orc, and a goblin, but are nearly unrecognizable under the thick layer of green slime that covers their bodies. The skeletons' bones have calcified from long exposure to the pool's mineral-rich waters and are unaffected by the acidic nature of the green slime.

SLIME-COVERED SKELETONS (3)

Medium undead, lawful evil

AC: 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points: 13 (2d8 + 4)

Speed: 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	6 (-2)	8 (-1)	5 (-3)

Damage Vulnerabilities: bludgeoning

Damage Immunities: poison

Condition Immunities: exhaustion, poisoned

Senses: darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages: understands Common but can't speak

Challenge: 1/2 (100 XP)

ACTIONS

Slime-Covered Claw: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage, plus (5) 1d10 acid damage. The target takes an additional (5) 1d10 acid damage at the start of each of its turns while the green slime clings to its body. Subsequent hits re-apply rather than increase the ongoing acid damage. The slime can be scraped off or destroyed as normal, preventing additional damage at the start of the target's turn.

Dealing cold, fire, or radiant damage to the skeleton or exposing it to sunlight, destroys the green slime and its claw attack no longer deals additional acid damage.

Development. A fight with the slime-covered skeletons alerts the thouls in area 1-4 that trespassers are about. They prepare to ambush the party (see area 1-4).

AREA 1-4 – THOUL LAIR

The cave before you is bathed in eerie green light spilling from shallow basins carved in the walls. A low fire, little more than embers, smolders in a small depression near the room's left wall. Roughly 15 feet up on the northern wall, a ledge with a dark cave mouth at its rear overlooks this chamber. A collection of furs, bundles, and a gutted deer dangling from a rope affixed to a stalactite identify this room as something's den.

A small band of thouls, weird hybrid humanoids birthed from deep under the earth, recently found the Cave. They are led by a smarter than usual troll who lairs in the cave overlooking this one (area 1-5). As they themselves are oddities, the Cave's weird emanations and other properties don't disturb them much, and the thouls intend to stay.

If the party has been noisy in the Cave or fought the skeletons in area 1-4, the thouls heard the fight and are hiding behind bundles and in shadowy niches in the cave preparing to ambush the party (DC 11 passive Perception check to notice). Otherwise, the hybrid monsters are preparing food and doing other everyday chores when the party arrives.

THOUL (4)

Medium humanoid, chaotic evil

AC: 14 (chain shirt)

Hit Points: 22 (4d8 + 4)

Speed: 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	9 (-1)

Condition Immunities: exhaustion, poisoned

Senses: darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages: Common, Giant

Challenge: 1 (200 XP)

Regeneration: The thoul regains 3 hit points at the start of its turn. If the thoul takes acid or fire damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of the thoul's next turn. The thoul dies only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

ACTIONS

Multiattack: The thoul makes two attacks: either two with its claws or one with its claws and one with a weapon.

Claws: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d3 + 2) slashing damage. If the target is a creature other than an elf or undead, it must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Long Sword: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) slashing damage, or 7 (1d10 + 2) slashing damage if used two-handed.

Javelin: *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage

Thouls are a horrible hybrid of ghoul, troll, and hobgoblin created by abhorrent experiments conducted by subterranean races. They are indistinguishable from normal hobgoblins until viewed from close up. At that distance, the thoul's pallid, green-tinged skin and savage claws are plainly evident.

The cave contains sleeping furs for seven thouls, bundles and sacks containing clothing, waterskins, and other belongings of little value. Three thouls are out hunting and may return during the party's explorations of the cave, at the game master's discretion, or encountered as wandering monsters.

Treasure. Each of the thouls carries 4d6 sp and 3d6 gp. One also has a bone scroll tube inscribed with spider-and-web-motif carvings that a DC 10 Intelligence (Religion) check recognizes as dark elf manufacture. It is worth 100 gp. Inside is a *spell scroll of protection from poison*.

Development. If the troll in area 1-5 is awake (see that area description), it emerges from its lair onto the ledge overlooking this chamber on the second round of combat. It aids its thoul underlings with missile attacks from above, but will not venture down to the cave floor to assist them. If intruders defeat its followers and turn their attention to it, the troll stands its ground in its lair.

AREA 1-5 – TROLL'S DEN

A small, but high-ceiling cave lit by glowing pools of green liquid in carved wall-basins lies here. Minerals in the exposed rock glitter in the eldritch light. Clumps of old furs and clothes form a crude bed, while a table made from a hewn log bears raw meat. A battered iron strongbox rests near the bed. A natural ledge is visible through a slim archway to the south. A large boulder rests in a shallow depression near the west wall of the cave.

This cave is the home of the thouls' leader, a troll of above-average intellect whom the strange hybrids look upon as a patriarch and act as its servants and flunkies. The troll recently deposed another troll who led the thouls before they arrived in the Cave. Cruelly, the former leader is kept imprisoned, and the new leader enjoys lopping off portions of the old one as pranks or unusual missile weapons.

There is a 3 in 6 chance the troll is asleep in its primitive bed when the PCs enter this area or area 1-4. If awake, it moves to aid its followers with ranged attacks from the ledge. It hurls the severed troll head it carries at intruders then switches to stones to avoid melee combat if possible.



TROLL

Large giant, chaotic evil

AC: 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points: 84 (8d10 + 40)

Speed: 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	13 (+1)	20 (+6)	10 (+0)	9 (-1)	7 (-2)

Skills: Perception +2

Senses: darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages: Giant

Challenge: 5 (1,800 XP)

Keen Smell: The troll has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Regeneration: The troll regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn. If the troll takes acid or fire damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of the troll's next turn. The troll dies only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

ACTIONS

Multiattack: The troll makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

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

Claws: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Hurled Stone: *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one target. *Hit*: 8 (1d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Hurled Severed Troll Head: *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 10/30 ft., one target. *Hit*: 6 (1d4 + 4) bludgeoning damage and the target must make a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the troll head also bites the target for 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage. It will continue to bite on subsequent rounds unless pulled off the victim with a DC 10 Strength check. Subsequent attacks are made at +7 to hit and can only target the victim it is currently biting.

Developments. The cave contains the troll's stinking bed, a crude table with raw venison, and a closed but unlocked strong box. Inside the strongbox are a pair of severed troll arms in addition to the treasure listed below. The arms at-

tack the chest's opener, making claw attacks as a troll but with disadvantage. Each arm has 10 hit points and AC 15. The large boulder covers a crevasse in the cave floor. It can be moved with a DC 20 Strength check. Beneath the boulder is a 12-foot-deep and 4-foot-wide-wide cavity, at the bottom of which is a headless, armless, and legless troll. This is the defeated former leader of the thoul band that keeps the troll alive but imprisoned to continually torment and mutilate. Given time, the troll's limbs and head will regenerate, and it will escape from its prison once recovered. What it does when free is left to the game master's discretion.

Treasure: The strongbox contains the thoul band's acquired wealth. It holds 800 cp, 6,000 sp, 2,200 gp, 110 pp, 4 amber stones (100 gp value each), 6 garnet (100 gp value each), a *potion of cold resistance*, and a single +1 *arrow*.

AREA 1-6 – CATHEDRAL CAVE CEILING

A narrow bridge of stone stretches across the abyss before you. The engineering of the bridge is remarkable, as it appears to lack supports capable of sustaining its great weight. There are no railings or balustrades along its 60-foot length, and only a quartet of the glowing green basins provide any light. The bridge is splattered with dried guano, and there are ghostly tendrils of some gossamer material clinging to the stalactites 10 feet overhead.

The bridge is 70 feet above the floor of area 1-2. Anyone falling from this height suffers 24 (7d6) bludgeoning damage.

The roof is the roost of more than a hundred bats during the day. The bats are absent from dusk to dawn. Torches and other open flame brought into the area while the bats are roosting agitates them, causing some to flit around, chittering. If combat breaks out along or near the bridge, the bats swarm erupts into the air, disrupting ranged attacks but not otherwise interfering. All ranged attacks rolls are made at disadvantage unless the bats are somehow driven away.

The gossamer material is the webbing of two giant tarantella spiders that prey upon the bats. The spiders lurk in shadowy niches among the stalactites and have advantage on Stealth checks. They cannot be seen except with a DC 22 Wisdom (Perception) check. They attack creatures crossing the bridge when they reach the midpoint of the span.

GIANT TARENTELLA SPIDER (2)

Large beast, unaligned

AC: 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points: 26 (4d10 + 4)

Speed: 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	2 (-4)	11 (+0)	4 (-3)

Skills: Stealth +7

Senses: blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages: -

Challenge: 1 (200 XP)

Spider Climb: The spider can climb difficult surfaces, including upside-down on ceilings, without needing the make an ability check.

Web Sense: While in contact with a web, the spider knows the exact location of any other creature in contact with the same web.

Web Walker: The spider ignores movement restrictions caused by the webbing.

ACTIONS

Bite: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to *hit*, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the target gains the poisoned condition and begins to spasm uncontrollably, its movements resembling a frenzied dance. A poisoned target gains a level of exhaustion at the start of each of its turns for as long as it is poisoned. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the poisoned condition on a success, but acquired levels of exhaustion remain. Any effect that cures poison ends the spasms.

Web (Recharge 5-6): *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to *hit*, range 30/60 ft., one creature. Hit: The target is restrained by webbing. As an action, the restrained target can make a DC 12 Strength check, bursting the webbing on a success. The webbing can also be attacked and destroyed (AC 10; hp 5; vulnerability to fire damage; immunity to bludgeoning, poison, and psychic damage).

Development. A spasming creature that isn't restrained must make a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw if it does not lie prone. On a failed save, the spasms carry it over the

edge of the bridge, and it falls to the cavern floor below.

Treasure. Tucked away in one of the spider's niches is the desiccated body of a gnome. His leather armor, lantern, pick, backpack, and hammer are all rusted or rotting. A decaying sack hanging around his neck on a silver chain (50 gp value) contains 7 rough garnets (50 gp each). If cut and polished, the gems become worth 100 gp each.

Reaching the body by climbing the webs requires a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check. Failing the check by 4 or more indicates the climber slips and falls to the cavern floor.

AREA 1-7 – UPPER STUDY

The floor of this cavern has been smoothed to create a flat surface. The rotted remains of a once-fine rug cover the masonry. A stone-topped worktable has collapsed against one wall, and broken glass and ceramic shards are strewn nearby. A rickety stool, wormy with rot, stands beside the pile.

Formerly a study and minor workshop, the place is now in disrepair. The rug and alchemical supplies that once rested atop the fallen table are ruined and worthless, and the stool collapses into punky wood if even touched. A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check identifies the broken glass and ceramics as once being parts of an alchemical lab.

Treasure. Buried under the collapsed table is a small journal made from hand-sized steel sheets bound together by rusting iron rings. The surfaces of the steel sheets bear writing etched with acid to create a remarkably durable notebook. The journal is written in shorthand and a DC 15 Intelligence check is needed to decipher the code. Also present is a silvered metal key. This key unlocks the doors to areas 2-8, 2-9, and 2-10.

Development. On a successful check and by spending an hour reading the journal, a reader learns the story of Zoorl of the Seven Runes and his search for the Cave of the Unknown. He speaks of his belief that there is a primordial spring of creative power located here, and he intends to harness its power for his own work. He later documents his various experiments (as mentioned in areas 1-8, 2-3, and 2-9) and his ultimate abandonment by his hired help.

There is also a brief note stating, "For safety's sake, since I don't trust those grumbling dwarves, I have hidden the keys to the vault inside the stalagmite. Even if they find them, they're too hardheaded to fathom their proper

placement. No dwarf would think to start with precious stone nor end with the wood they so rarely consider.” This refers to the hidden keys in area 2-4 and the correct pattern to place them in the door in area 2-11.

The journal ends abruptly with no hint of the alchemist’s fate.

AREA 1-8 – ROOT POOLS

The rocky ceiling of this room is cracked and appears treacherous. Numerous roots, some as big around as a dwarf’s forearm, snake down through the stone to line the walls and dangle from the ceiling. Each of the tendrils reaches one of six shallow depressions carved into the stone floor. These basins measure 4 feet in diameter and are empty aside from a thin layer of powder.

Zoorl discovered the small copse of trees had broken through the stone ceiling here and decided to experiment on them. The basins were once filled with water to draw the roots, and the alchemist mixed various reagents and elixirs into the water to test the trees’ responses. After his death, the water dried up, leaving a powdered residue of the alchemical compounds behind.

A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check identifies the powder as residue from a magical or alchemical mixture, but doesn’t identify its properties. An identify spell reveals what the powders are and its properties. The powder must be mixed with liquid and consumed to impart its benefits (or dangers) to a living creature.

	Powder Color	Texture	Properties
Basin 1	Pale Green	Fine grains	DC 15 Constitution saving throw or paralyzed for 2 hours
Basin 2	Sickly Orange	Rough	Refreshes drinker, removing all exhaustion and granting the benefits of a short rest.
Basin 3	Lavender	Silky	Inert, no effects
Basin 4	Electric blue	Bead-like	As <i>potion of poison</i>
Basin 5	Rust Red	Crystalline	As <i>potion of fire resistance</i>
Basin 6	Black	Statically-charged	Flesh becomes rough and hard. Treat as <i>barkskin</i> without the need to concentrate, but otherwise identical to the 2nd-level spell.

There are six basins. Each contains enough powder to produce two draughts if mixed with 4 oz. or more of liquid. The contents of each basin are listed at the bottom of the page:

THE LOWER LEVELS

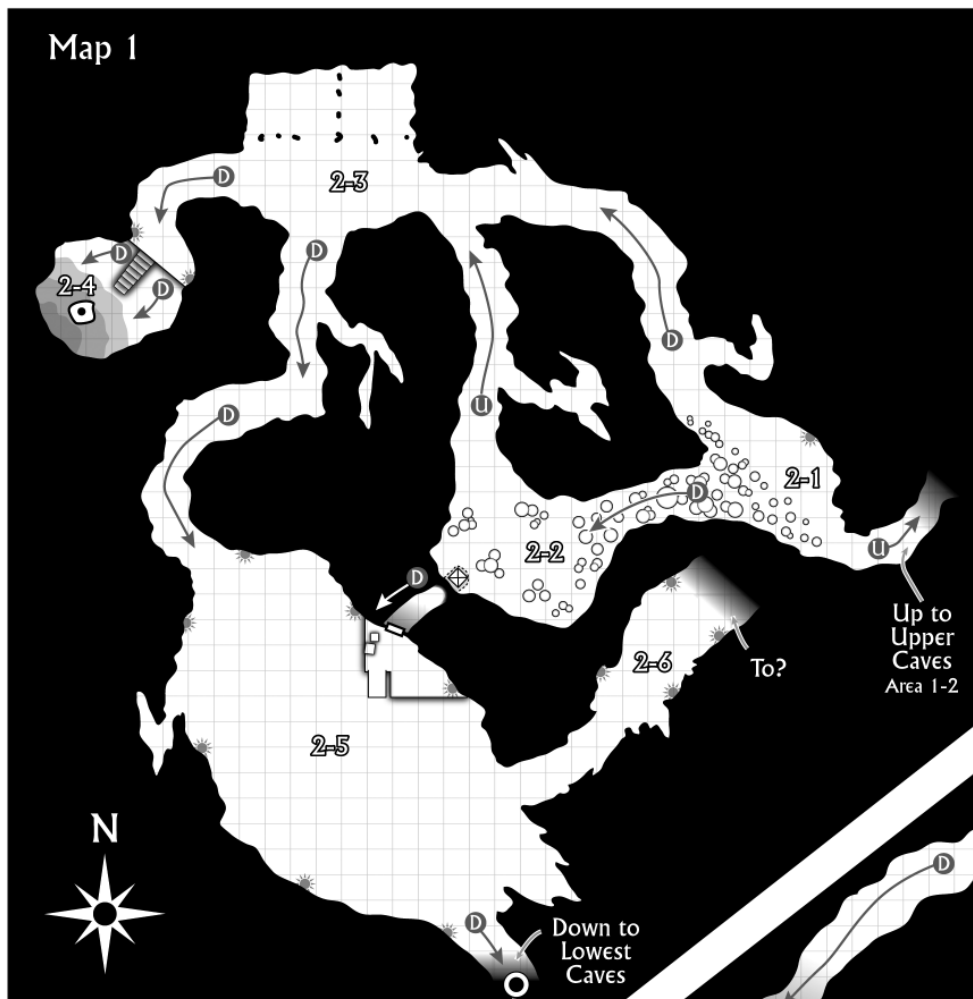
AREA 2-1 – FUNKY FUNGI

Pale toadstools, yellow mushrooms, and varicolored fungus blooms cover one side of this cave. The fungi appears to originate from further down a dark passage leading off to the west. The fungi increases in size as one gets closer to the tunnel. Near you, the toadstools and mushrooms are mere inches high, but stand thigh-high by the time they vanish down the dark tunnel. The air is smoky, and only a single glowing basin provides light. It all resembles an eerie faerie garden under the earth.

The smoky haze in the air is a concentration of fungi spore. These spores are flammable if exposed to great heat. If the party carries torches, candles, or other exposed flame, the fire flares up suddenly and burns with double intensity while in this area. A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Nature) check identifies both the spores and their potential danger as described in Development below.

Most of the fungi is common subterranean growths, but a quartet of violet fungi is mixed in among the harmless species. The violet fungi are crowded near the exit tunnel to area 2-2 and attack living creatures that come within range of their stalks.

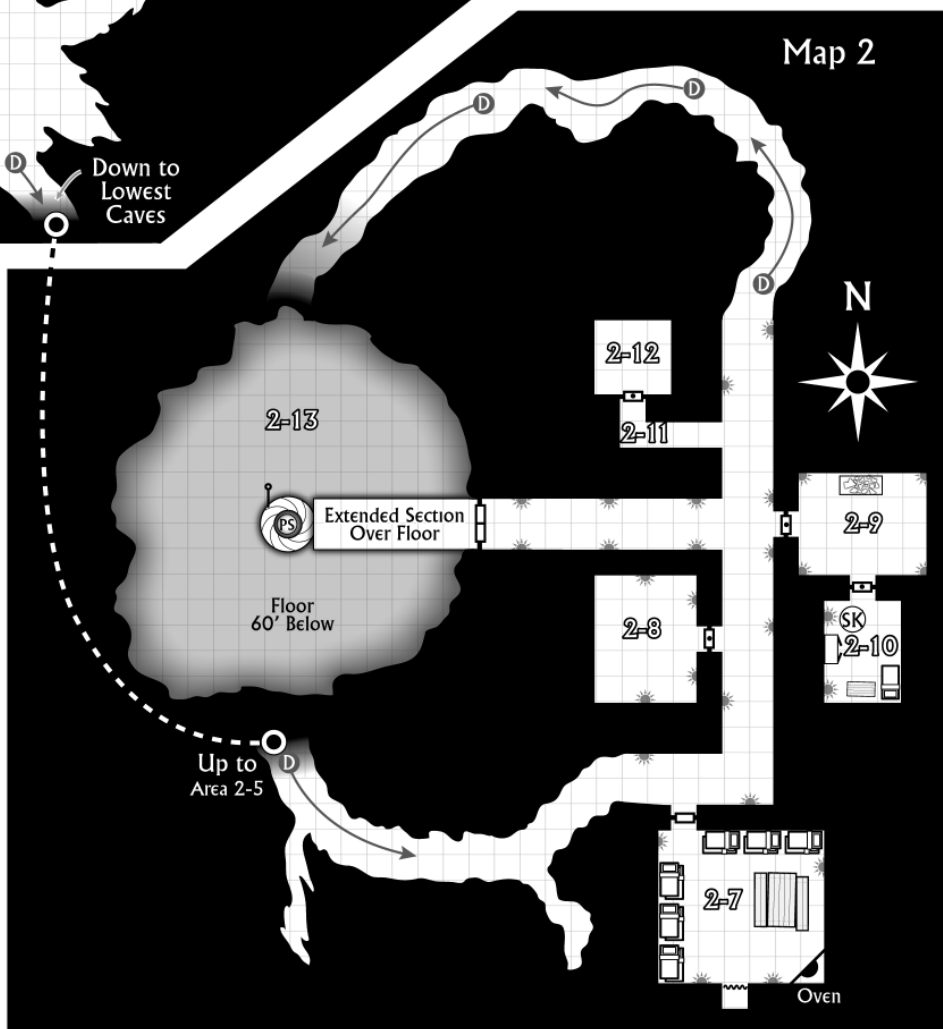
Map 1



The Cave of the Unknown LOWER LEVELS

- 5 feet
- ✱ Glowing Basin
- ⦿ Stalagmite
- ⋮ Old Cages
- ⤴ Slope Up
- ⤵ Slope Down
- ▨ Carved Steps
- ⚡ Chute Opening
- ⦿ Fungi
- ⦿ Water
- ⦿ Rubble
- ⦿ Boxes
- ⬜ Door

Map 2



- 5 feet
- ✱ Glowing Basin
- ⤴ Slope Up
- ⤵ Slope Down
- ⬜ Door
- ⬜ Locked Door
- ⦿ Mechanical Iris with lever
- ⦿ Primordial Spring
- ⦿ Bunks
- ⦿ Table
- ⦿ Wardrobe
- ⦿ Curtain
- ⦿ Skeleton

VIOLET FUNGUS (4)

Medium plant, unaligned

AC: 5

Hit Points: 18 (4d8)

Speed: 5 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
3 (-4)	1 (-5)	10 (+0)	1 (-5)	3 (-4)	1 (-5)

Condition Immunities: blinded, deafened, frightened

Senses: blindsight 30 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 6

Languages: -

Challenge: 1/4 (50 XP)

False Appearance: While the violet fungus remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from an ordinary fungus.

ACTIONS

Multiattack: The fungus makes 1d4 Rotting Touch attacks.

Rotting Touch: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to *hit*, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d8) necrotic damage.

A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check notices a collection of bones among the violet fungi, the remains of a recent meal. A DC 10 Wisdom (Nature) check identifies the bones as belonging to a large ape. This was one of the albino gorillas from area 2-3 who strayed too close to the aggressive fungi.

Development. If a spell of 1st level or higher that causes fire damage is cast in this cave room, the spore cloud ignites forcing all creatures nearby to make a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or suffer 3 (1d6) fire damage from the brief conflagration.

AREA 2-2 – THE DECAY PIT

The stench of rot and mildew permeates the air of this cave. Masses of slick, slime-covered items, possibly once crates or chests, are piled about haphazardly, and fungi patches grow with abandon. Water trickles down the cave walls and drips from above, creating stagnant, scum-covered puddles throughout the cave. Dense, waist-high fungi clusters sprout from some of the slimy heaps.

This cave was once a storeroom for mundane supplies such as foodstuffs, cloth, and other organic material. After Zoorl's demise, water leaked in, and the dank subterranean climate caused what remained to rot, spawning an

explosion of slimes, molds, and fungi. All are disgusting but not in and of themselves harmful.

However, the slime and mold obscures the wooden trapdoor covering a chute in the cave floor. Once used to move supplies down to the Cave's lower levels, the chute is now a potential hazard for any creature moving through the cave.

A DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check detects the faint outline of the trapdoor beneath the slime, and it can easily be avoided or cautiously opened (however, it falls apart if opened). If the trapdoor is not noticed, a random creature passing through this cave must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or fall through the rotting cover and into the slick, slimy chute. The falling creature takes 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage as it bangs along the chute's sides and is deposited in area 2-5. It must make a second DC 10 Dexterity save to avoid 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage and falling prone on arrival in that room. See that area's description for further hazards the unlucky creature faces.

The slime-covered heaps are the rotted remains of the room's original contents, and all are ruined and disgusting to the touch. However, a dedicated search of the slimy piles along with a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check uncovers a steel box with a rusty lock. The lock can be picked (DC 10 Dexterity check with thieves' tools) or broken open (AC 15, 2 hp). Inside are two cloudy but still *usable potions of greater healing*.

AREA 2-3 – APE HOUSE

A fetid, musky smell like fur and body odor fills this dark cave. Unlike other caverns, no green illumination burns in basins set into the walls. Standing, rusting bars, many broken and jagged, form the outline of cages against the north wall. Rank grasses piled into heaps cover the stone floor.

Zoorl had a small band of apes imported at great expense to serve as test subjects. His alchemical experiments caused a variety of physiological changes, some of which adapted them to a life below ground. After he perished, some of the apes survived, and this cave is the lair of their descendants.

ALBINO APE (4)

Medium beast, unaligned

AC: 12

Hit Points: 19 (3d8 + 6)

Speed: 30 ft., climb 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	6 (-2)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

Skills: Athletics +5, Perception +3

Senses: darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages: –

Challenge: 1/2 (100 XP)

Hurl: An albino ape that makes two successful fist attacks against a single target hurls the creature up to 10 feet away as a bonus action if the target fails a DC 11 Strength check. The creature takes an additional 5 (1d4+3) bludgeoning damage and is prone.

ACTIONS

Multiattack: The ape makes two fist attacks.

Fist: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to *hit*, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Rock: *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to *hit*, range 25/50 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Albino apes are white variants of common jungle apes adapted to life underground. They occasionally venture from their subterranean lairs after dark to hunt and forage. Albino apes are largely carnivorous and prefer fresh meat whenever possible.

This room contains two cages that once held the apes' predecessors. The bars are now rusted and broken, mak-

ing the cages useless for their intended purpose. The heaps of grass are the apes' bedding and contain nothing of interest aside from scraps of meat and gathered fruits from the forest above.

AREA 2-4 – HIDDEN KEYS

The sound of dripping water echoes in the darkness of this cave. A shallow, clear pool rests at the lowest point of the sloping cavern. A set of stairs is carved in the floor to allow easy access to the reservoir below. A large stalagmite rises from the middle of the pool like a solitary island in the midst of a miniature sea.

Even a casual examination of the room reviews drying footprints of the apes from area 2-3 on the rocky floor. The subterranean simians use this pool, once a waterhole for Zoorl and his workers, to drink.

The stairs are expertly carved, and a successful DC 10 Intelligence (History) identifies it as dwarven work. Each of the dozen stairs bears a single decorative alchemical symbol. Although potentially unnerving, the glyphs have no inherent danger and a DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals them for what they are.

The pool is a mere 3 feet deep and filled with clean, potable water. It is empty of life or hazards.

Development. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check notices a thin outline of a door in the rear of the stalagmite—assuming a creature has line of sight to the back of the mineral formation. A tiny lock (DC 15 Dexterity check with thieves' tools to open) secures this secret compartment. If opened, a set of four 6-inch-square plates made from alchemical silver are discovered inside. Each plate has a single symbol carved on its surface. A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check identifies the symbols as alchemical glyphs. The symbols are those of “stone,” “water,” “air,” and “wood.” Each plate is worth 100 gp due to the rare silver composition, but they serve another purpose: keys to Zoorl's vault (see area 2-11 below).

AREA 2-5 – PIERCER PERIL

A large cavern, its 40-foot-high ceiling clustered with stalactites, resides here. The cavern floor is broken and uneven, and a low thin mist glowing from the shining green wall basins obscures much of it. A chest-high rotted wooden platform rises above the thin mist near the northeast wall, its surface littered with broken objects.

The cavern is located exactly one level above the Primordial Spring. The nearness to that powerful font is responsible for the mist that occludes the floor. It has also transformed some of the stalactites overhead into piercers. They drop on any creature entering the cavern—even those who arrive abruptly from the supply chute connecting to area 2-2 above.

PIERCER (6)

Medium monstrosity, unaligned

AC: 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points: 22 (3d8 + 9)

Speed: 5 ft., climb 5 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	1 (-5)	7 (-2)	3 (-4)

Skills: Stealth +5

Senses: blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

Languages: –

Challenge: 1/2 (100 XP)

False Appearance: While the piercer remains motionless on the ceiling, it is indistinguishable from a normal stalactite.

Spider Climb: The piercer can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

ACTIONS

Drop: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature directly underneath the piercer. *Hit:* 14 (4d6) piercing damage for 40 feet fallen (1d6 per 10 feet fallen, up to 6d6). *Miss:* The piercer takes 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage from the fall (half the normal falling damage for the distance fallen).

The chest-high wooden platform is reached by a short ramp. An open chute mouth pierces the northeast wall. This shaft leads 50 feet up to area 2-2 above. The broken pieces of wood are supply crates once sent down from area 2-2. Their contents have long since rotted, and each of the six boxes is covered in a harmless blue fuzzy mold.

Development. Any creature who fell into the chute in area 2-2 tumbles out onto the platform, bouncing off the wooden surface and onto the cave floor. If a second DC 10 Dexterity save is failed, the creature suffers 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage from the rough landing and falls prone. One of the piercers attacks the unlucky individual the following round.

AREA 2-6 – EXIT TUNNEL

The floor of this cave glistens in the emerald glow of the wall basins and appears slick in places. The mouth of a large, dark tunnel breaks through the northeast wall of this cavern. A faint whistling breeze blows gently from the tunnel opening, and the glistening and slickness appears more concentrated in that vicinity.

The tunnel was once a backdoor/escape route for Zoorl should he ever require it. A number of traps, now frozen with rust and ill-maintenance and no longer hazardous, protected its length. However, despite the traps' deactivation, the tunnel does house some danger.

A pair of carrion crawlers lair in the tunnel, using it as a hatchery for their eggs. The glistening floor and slick patches are residue from their sticky legs and slime-covered tentacles. They emerge to attack anyone venturing too close to the tunnel mouth.

CARRION CRAWLER (2)

Large monstrosity, unaligned

AC: 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points: 51 (6d10 + 18)

Speed: 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	1 (-5)	12 (+1)	5 (-3)

Skills: Perception +3

Senses: darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages: –

Challenge: 2 (450 XP)

Keen Smell: The carrion crawler has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Spider Climb: The carrion crawler can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

ACTIONS

Multiattack: The carrion crawler makes two attacks: one with its tentacles and one with its bite.

Tentacles: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to *hit*, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d4 + 2) poison damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute. Until this poison ends, the target is paralyzed. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the poison on itself on a success.

Bite: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to *hit*, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (2d4 + 2) piercing damage.

The tunnel's destination is left to the game master to decide. Depending on the campaign, it might end in a massive, immovable cave-in, emerge somewhere in the surrounding forest, or connect with area 51 in the nearby Caves of Chaos (if used in conjunction with Into the Borderlands).

The carrion crawlers' nest lies 60 feet down the tunnel. It is a macabre collection of piled stones, rotting animal corpses, and slime. Inside the nest are a dozen apple-sized eggs. A pair of corpses, one human and one orc, are draped over the eggs as gruesome blankets.

Treasure. The human corpse has a leather backpack strapped to its body. Inside are mildewing clothes, a wood-axe, two torches, a dagger, a set of wood panpipes, and a bag of holding. The bag of holding contains 1,400 sp, 500 gp, and 4 small garnets (50 gp value each). If the game master is also using Into the Unknown in her campaign, the body might also have a partial map of the Caves of Chaos with notes (possibly incorrect ones) written upon it.

Development. The carrion crawler eggs hatch in two weeks if not destroyed or eaten by subterranean predators, releasing tiny but potentially dangerous infant carrion crawlers. Adventurers returning to the Cave of the Unknown might find it literally crawling with the hungry babies.

AREA 2-7 – ABANDONED WORKERS' QUARTERS

The door to this room stands open on rusted hinges. Beyond is a simple dormitory for perhaps a dozen people. Lines of dry, rotted double bunks stand against the walls, and a small eating area with trestle tables and benches is situated beyond these. A soot-stained oven is built into the corner and a rotted curtain conceals a niche in the south wall. A pickaxe, its handle broken, lies on the floor in the middle of the room.

Zoorl's hired workers lived here while performing labor for the alchemist. When their promised payment wasn't given to them, they departed in anger, taking their belongings with them.

The pickaxe has a series of runes carved along the tool's broken haft. The runes are Dwarvish and spell out the word's "deceitful employer." A DC 10 Intelligence (History) check identifies the purposely broken pickaxe and message as an archaic, formal Dwarven act performed when a contract has been reneged upon. Dwarf PCs have advantage on the check.

The curtain-concealed niche contains a pair of chamber pots and nothing else.

AREA 2-8 – ALCHEMICAL STORAGE

A rusting iron door is set into the stone wall here. A solid-looking lock secures it. Inscribed on the corroding face of the door is the word "Danger" in the Common tongue.

Despite its rusted state, the door is still solid and requires a DC 22 Strength check to bash open. The lock can be opened with either the correct key (found in areas 1-7 or 2-12) or with a DC 13 Dexterity check with thieves' tools. If opened, read the following:

Dust covers the crowded shelves of this small room. The air is pungent with an unidentifiable miasma of acrid scents. Ancient cobwebs are strung from the dozens of vials, jars, bowls, and sacks lining the rotted wooden shelving. A trio of larger barrels, each the size of small beer kegs, rests on the floor beside the shelves.

Zoorl stored his alchemical supplies here, much of which has long lost its potency. A character may search the shelves by making a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check. On a failed check, the searcher identifies only jars filled with crumbling, odorless herbs, solidified ointments, moldy powder or similar alchemical junk and cannot try again. If the check is successful, the character discovers one of the following:

D6 PC finds...

- 1 A jar of gold dust (100 gp value)
- 2 A potion of acid resistance
- 3 A potion of growth
- 4 A jar containing diamond dust (400 gp value)
- 5 Two flasks of alchemist's fire
- 6 Alchemy jug

Only one item may be found per character, and the search takes five minutes to complete.

The three small barrels on the floor are marked “Thermokalite” in Common. Each contains 16 pounds of ground white powder. A DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check identifies thermokalite as a crystalline substance found near hot springs and thermal vents and sometimes used in baking. Anyone brave enough to sample the powder discovers it tastes like baking soda.

Thermokalite is largely worthless, but is a powerful weapon if used against the alchemical pudding in area 2-9.

AREA 2-9 – ALCHEMY LAB

A gleaming door stands in the stone wall here. The surface of the portal is almost mirrored with a silver reflective material. A formidable lock secures it.



The door is solid and requires a DC 22 Strength check to bash open. The lock is opened with either the correct key (found in areas 1-7 or 2-12) or with a DC 13 Dexterity check with thieves' tools. The silver coating is an alchemical metal capable of resisting acid and heat, and the door is invulnerable to those damage types. A DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) identifies the coating and its properties.

If opened, read the following:

This room is dark, lacking the green light seen elsewhere. The chamber is remarkably bare given the formidable door barring entrance. The walls, floor, and ceiling are worked surfaces, planed smooth by skilled hands. A large stone table stands against the north wall, its surface holding shattered ceramic and glass. A fist-sized white stone rests on the table among the debris. Complex formulae are inscribed directly into the stone walls of the chamber, and another silvered door stands in the south wall. Portions of the walls and floor are scorched and blackened. The ceiling above is strangely mottled, and the air is pungent and acrid.

This was Zoorl's lab and the site of the accident that eventually killed him. An explosion of alchemical substances combined with the nearby presence of the Primordial Spring brought to life a bizarre creature: an alchemical pudding. The creature remains, clinging to the ceiling of the room (DC 12 passive Perception check to notice), and attacks anything that enters.

ALCHEMICAL PUDDING (1)

Large ooze, unaligned

AC: 7

Hit Points: 85 (10d10 + 30)

Speed: 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	5 (-3)	16 (+3)	1 (-5)	7 (-2)	1 (-5)

Damage Immunities: acid, cold, lightning, slashing

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

Senses: blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this distance), passive Perception 8

Languages: –

Challenge: 4 (1,100 XP)

Alchemical Nature: The pudding doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

Amorphous: The pudding can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

Corrosive Form: A creature that touches the pudding or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 4 (1d8) acid damage. Any nonmagical weapon made of metal or wood that hits the pudding corrodes. After dealing damage, the weapon takes a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to damage rolls. If its penalty drops to -5, the weapon is destroyed. Nonmagical ammunition made of metal or wood that hits the pudding is destroyed after dealing damage.

The pudding can eat through 2-inch-thick, nonmagical wood or metal in 1 round.

Spider Climb: The pudding can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

ACTIONS

Pseudopod: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage plus 18 (4d8) acid damage. In addition, nonmagical armor worn by the target is partially dissolved and takes a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to the AC it offers. The armor is destroyed if the penalty reduces its AC to 10.

REACTIONS

Split: When a pudding that is Medium or larger is subjected to lightning or slashing damage, it splits into two new puddings if it has a least 10 hit points. Each new pudding has hit points equal to half the original pudding's, rounded down. New puddings are one size smaller than the original pudding.

The alchemical pudding is the side-effect of a calamitous alchemical experiment. It resembles a large multi-colored blob of amorphous, viscous chemicals. Mottled patches of white, blue, green, silver, and yellow cover its body, and wisps of acrid chemical vapor rise from its form.

The alchemical pudding has been trapped in the lab since the accident that created it. It has devoured everything it could in the space and awaits new meals. It attacks anything that it can reach with an insatiable appetite.

The formulae on the walls can be deciphered with a DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check. A successful check discerns they are related to creating some sort of great alchemical work and reflect a lifetime of experimentation and research. These are Zoorl's notes on the *Azoth Stone*.

The white stone is the proto *Azoth Stone*. It is heavy and impervious to all mundane forms of damage, but possesses no special properties. Only by completing the final stage of the creation process can it be transformed into a true magical object. Characters who succeed on the above Intelligence (Arcana) check and study the notes for a day can themselves deduce the creation steps for the *Azoth Stone* as described in Zoorl's workbook found in area 2-10. See below and appendix B for more information on the *Azoth Stone*.

Development. The alchemical pudding is acidic in nature and vulnerable to substances that neutralize acid. The kegs of thermokalite in area 2-8 are potent weapons against it. The kegs are heavy and require anyone wishing to use it as a weapon to succeed in a DC 11 Strength check to throw them. Creatures with a Strength score of 11 or better automatically succeed.

Throwing a keg of thermokalite is a ranged weapon attack with a range of 10/20. A successful hit on the alchemical ooze inflicts 14 (4d6) fire damage. If the powder is used in smaller amounts, each gallon of thermokalite does 3 (1d6) fire damage to the pudding. The alchemical ooze can cross a barrier of thermokalite (a circle of powder drawn on the ground, for example), but suffers 3 (1d6) fire damage in the process.

AREA 2-10 – ZOORL'S BEDCHAMBER

A gleaming door stands in the stone wall here. The surface of the portal is almost mirrored with a silver reflective material. A formidable lock secures it.

The door is solid and requires a DC 22 Strength check to bash open. The lock is opened with either the correct key (found in areas 1-7 or 2-12) or with a DC 13 Dexterity check with thieves' tools. The silver coating is an alchemical metal capable of resisting acid and heat, and the door is invulnerable to those damage types. A DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check identifies the coating and its properties.

If opened, read the following:

A skeletal figure dressed in scorched, rotting robes lies splayed out upon the dusty floor of this room. Dark stains mar the floor under the dust. A plain bed and writing table, both showing great age and decay, rest near the south wall. A small chest of gleaming silver is visible underneath the partially collapsed bed. A wardrobe with its door ajar, stands near the skeletal form, its bony arm reaching inside.

Zoorl slept here when he wasn't at his labors. When the accident in the laboratory occurred, he was grievously in-

jured and fled the suddenly created alchemical pudding. He crawled inside this room, closed the door behind him, and sought aid from his stash of potions. He died from his injuries before he could heal himself.

An examination of the skeleton reveals it to be that of a human male. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check determines he died of burns and lacerations consistent with an explosion. His ragged robes are decorated with symbols, which a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check identifies as alchemical in nature. The skeleton bears nothing of value.

The open wardrobe holds a selection of robes and sandals in poor repair. At the bottom of the wardrobe is a secret compartment. A hidden spring catch causes the wardrobe's bottom to pop open, revealing a small wooden casket inside. Discovering the hidden catch requires a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Anyone speculating the skeletal figure was searching for something at the bottom of the wardrobe receives advantage on their check.

The casket contains six vials, each marked with a Z embellished with flourishes. Four of the vials are mint green in coloration, one is crimson, and the last is sunny yellow. The green vials are *potions of superior healing*, the yellow one is a *potion of vitality*, and the red vial holds a *potion of acid resistance*.

The chest is wooden, but its entire surface is gilded with the alchemical silver found on the doors to areas 2-9 and 2-10. Inside is a small workbook with a cracked leather cover and flaking pages. Rust-colored ink stains the pages with alchemical scribbling and notes. One section is more clearly written than the rest. Pass Player Handout #1 found in appendix A to the player whose character reads the passage.

A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check identifies the *Azoth Stone* referenced in the passage as being a legendary alchemical creation said to be able to transmute lead to gold and to prolong the life of its owner. There are conflicting legends about the extent of the *Azoth Stone's* properties, however. Some hold it to be of finite use, while others say it has no limits.

AREA 2-11 – VAULT DOOR

An impressive and formidable iron door is set into the cave wall at this point. The door measures 8 feet tall and 6 feet wide and appears to lack hinges or handle. The face of the door is inscribed with a starry field near the top of the portal and a stylized landscape containing jagged mountains and sharp valleys at the door's bottom. Four square depressions form a line, one atop the next, between the stars and the land below.

The massive door is of cunning construction and cannot be opened without either magic or the proper keys. Its metal is treated with alchemical compounds that grant it immunity from all forms of damage, and it is under the effects of an *arcane lock* spell.

Opening the door requires either a *knock* spell, which suppresses the *arcane lock* for 10 minutes as usual, or placing the four key tiles into their proper places on the door's face. These tiles are hidden in the secret compartment in area 2-4.



The door's design reflects the creation of the world and serves as a clue to the proper order of the tiles. They should be placed in the order of their appearance, from topmost slot to bottommost. Their proper order is the stone tile in the highest slot (representing the fact the gods created the world itself first), then the water tile beneath that, followed by the air plate, then finally the wood tile. Doing so dispels the *arcane lock* and causes the door to open.

If all four tiles are set into the door in the incorrect order, a trap is sprung. A concealed flap in the door opens, and a small nozzle sprays a blast of concentrated acidic mist directly in front of the portal. All creatures within 10 feet of the door must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 11 (2d10) acid damage on a failed save or half as much on a successful save. In addition, nonmagical armor worn by anyone failing the saving throw takes a permanent -1 penalty to the AC it offers. The trap can function up to three times before its reservoir of acid is expended.

A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check notices the hidden flap in the door. A successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools disarms the trap, preventing the flap from opening and the nozzle from activating.

AREA 2-12 – ZOORL'S VAULT

A plain square room, measuring 15 feet by 15 feet by 10 feet, resides beyond the formidable door. A single basin of glowing green oil provides dim light. A large chest rests next to a stack of dull gray ingots, and a pair of 8-foot-long poles lean against one wall. Each of the poles terminates in a hoop encircling a pink crystal the size of a halfling's hand.

Zoorl intended to store his fortune here once he completed the *Azoth Stone*. Unfortunately, he died before that could happen and the vault holds only a fraction of the treasure he intended.

The chest is unlocked and contains three canvas bags. The first holds 500 sp, the second is filled with 350 ep, and the third contains 80 gp. A pair of scroll tubes are held by leather loops inside the top of the chest. Inside are a *spell scroll* of *protection from energy* and a *spell scroll* of *locate object*. A spare key that opens the doors to areas 2-8, 2-9, and 2-10 is also tucked inside one of the scroll tubes.

The ingots are lead and weigh 1 pound each. There are 50 ingots present.

The two poles are the Rod of Limning needed to complete the crafting of the *Azoth Stone*. They are made from

iron and each bears a rose quartz crystal at one end. The quartz is worth 10 gp each, but removing the stone damages the Rod, rendering it useless to finish the *Azoth Stone*. A Rod can be repaired after the stone is removed, but using a repaired Rod imparts disadvantage on the Dexterity check to finish the *Stone* (see Completing the *Azoth Stone* below).

AREA 2-13 – THE PRIMORDIAL SPRING

A vast natural cavern measuring 70 feet in diameter exists here. The entire subterranean space is bathed in a clean white light, like the accumulated starlight of all the heavens concentrated in one clear glow. A pier-like extension of worked stone reaches into the open air high above the cavern floor some 60 feet below. At the bottom of the cavern, a plume of prismatic colors dance together. Greens like the first buds of spring mix with the aquamarines of tropical waters. Pinks the hue of the first sunrise swirl around browns as rich as the primordial earth. This plume rises from a rift in the center of the cavern floor. A strange metal contraption of interlocking plates rings the rift at floor level, and an open doorway exits the cave below.



This is the site of the Primordial Spring, the place where the power of pure creation still remains. The stone extension reaches out directly over the Primordial Spring and was created by Zoorl's workers to facilitate the final stage of his great work.

Any creature entering the ground level of the cave must make a DC 15 Charisma saving throw. On a failed save, the creature gains 1 level of exhaustion as the power and beauty of the Primordial Spring overwhelms them.

The Primordial Spring seeps from a rift 8 feet long and 2 feet wide. It seems to be bottomless, but the plume of raw creative power rising from it makes it difficult to see more than a few feet into the crack. Anyone sticking their head or other appendage directly into the flow of primordial creative power must make a DC 20 Constitution saving throw. On a successful save, their body metabolizes the power and they regain 1 Hit Die of hit points as if they had completed a short rest. All conditions and exhaustion levels are also removed. The character receives no other benefits from a short rest, such as regaining used class abilities. A creature must take a long rest before they can benefit from the Primordial Spring's power again.

On a failed saving throw, the power of raw creation is too much for their bodies to handle and they suffer 9 (2d8) radiant damage. This damage is repeated each round the creature remains directly exposed to the Primordial Spring's energy.

A creature who somehow survives the damage and persists in crawling into the Primordial Spring travels 100 feet down before emerging on the Positive Plane. To their chagrin, they discover the rift has vanished behind them and they are trapped on the Positive Plane unless they can find another route home.

The device surrounding the Primordial Spring consists of a number of silvered steel plates connected to a large knife-switch lever. Throwing the lever causes the plates to close iris-fashion, focusing the plume of energy rising from the rift like the flame of a blowtorch. Anyone can throw the lever, but focusing the primal power is resisted by the Primordial Spring and a DC 15 Strength check is necessary to hold the lever in place and the iris constricted. Focusing the Primordial Spring's power is a needed step to complete the *Azoth Stone* (see below).

COMPLETING THE AZOTH STONE

The party might be moved to finish Zoorl's work by gathering the necessary components from around the Cave and completing the last steps. Doing so is a prolonged process that requires the participants to make a number of successful ability checks. If all these checks succeed, the *Azoth Stone* is completed. However, if the party fail some of their checks, unexpected consequences could result.

There are four actions necessary to finish the *Azoth Stone*, which characters can deduce from the passage in Zoorl's workbook in area 2-10. Each must be performed near simultaneously, meaning multiple participants are required to complete the crafting. These actions are:

- 1) Focus the Primordial Spring's essence via the iris mechanism and hold it dilated during the entire process of completing the *Stone*. Doing so requires a DC 15 Strength check.
- 2) Direct the focused power onto the unfinished *Azoth Stone* using the Rods of Limning. This is a DC 15 Dexterity check.
- 3) Speak the Charm of Crafting properly and forcefully from Zoorl's workbook. Doing so is a DC 18 Charisma (Performance) check.
- 4) Lock the Primordial Spring's power into the Azoth Stone. This requires both the expenditure of a spell slot of any level and a successful Intelligence (Arcana) or Intelligence (Religion) check. The DC is 20 minus the level of the spell slot expended (e.g. expending a 2nd level spell slot makes the DC 18).

The PCs attempting tasks 1 and 2 must be on the floor of area 2-13, while the adventurers performing tasks 3 and 4 must be on the stone pier extending over the floor 60' above the Primordial Spring. A PC can attempt to do two tasks at the same location (both 1 and 2, for example, but not 2 and 4). The PC has disadvantage to both checks if this multitasking is attempted.

SUCCESS OR FAILURE?

If all four checks are successful, a *greater Azoth Stone* is created and the adventurers can claim it for themselves. See appendix B for the *Azoth Stone's* properties.

If one check fails, but the rest succeed, a *lesser Azoth Stone* is crafted. It is described in appendix B.

A party that fails two of the checks cracks the unfinished Azoth Stone. It can never be completed, and Zoorl's lifetime of work has come to naught. At the game master's discretion, the party might find themselves haunted by the dead alchemist's ghost, enraged at their ham-handed meddling.

If three checks are failed, the party triggers a resonance in

the Primordial Spring that causes a primordial elemental to manifest in area 2-13. The primordial elemental uses the statistics of a fire elemental, but change its immunity and damage types from fire to radiant, and remove its Water Susceptibility trait. The primordial elemental seeks to destroy or drive off anyone tampering with the Primordial Spring's power.

A party unlucky enough to fail all four checks causes a catastrophic eruption of the Primordial Spring. This blast forces every living creature in area 2-13 to make a DC 21 Dexterity saving throw, taking 63 (18d6) radiant damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The Azoth Stone is destroyed in the blast. The blast also snuffs out the Primordial Spring as the last of its power is released. It can never be renewed or reopened.

APPENDIX A – PLAYER HANDOUTS

PLAYER HANDOUT #1

A small workbook filled with alchemical scribbling, experimental notes, and similar writing is found in a chest in Zoorl's personal chamber (area 2-10). A short section is written in clear prose, making it stand out among the alchemical symbols and calculations. Anyone even casually flipping through the workbook notices this section. Provide that player with the following handout:

The search was painstaking, but proved beneficial. My inquiries have unearthed one of the Primordial Springs left behind after the creation of the multiverse. These seeps of divine power retain the very essence of Creation, the dribs and drabs that spilled through the gods' fingers as they fashioned the planes.

My calculations regarding the creation of the Azoth Stone demonstrate that only exposure to this primordial essence will suffice to finish its creation. To this end, I've made arrangements with the Steelhand Clan to construct facilities at the site of the Primordial Spring. It is my intent to occupy the location and set up a workshop and living space, allowing me to tap into the Primordial Spring at my leisure once the Azoth Stone is ready for its final stage.

But I have much to prepare before this last step. I must contrive a mechanism to concentrate the forces of the Primordial Spring into a crucible. Perhaps a metal iris through which the power first passes? I expect resistance would be intense and it would take a mighty hand to hold the mechanism in place once the power is concentrated.

I must fashion Rods of Limning to then focus the concentrated power directly at the Azoth Stone from a distance. If my calculations are correct, the focused beam should begin at least 50 feet away from the Stone to negate the chances of it cracking. The beam must be aimed precisely and maintained throughout the crafting process. A deft hand would be needed.

While the Rods focus the Primordial Spring's power onto the Azoth Stone, the Charm of Crafting need be recited. It is fortunate that these words possess their own power and I can use any assistant with a powerful personality and forceful voice to speak them. The Charm of Crafting for the Stone shall be as follows:

Nollu Phrax Mremdi Colhu Ekim N'rent Mul Bravak Ka!

This charm must be repeated without interruption until the final step is completed.

Lastly, when the Primordial Spring's power is concentrated by the iris at the Rods of Limning and the Charm of Crafting is being chanted, the combined energy must be bound by magic. I theorize that anyone versed in the workings of magic can expend a portion of their personal magical power to complete the Azoth Stone. The more powerful the energy expended, the greater the chances of success. I must be careful, however. A single wrong step would weaken the Stone; two or three could be fatal...

Anyway, if this succeeds, the Azoth Stone will provide me with more wealth than a man could spend in a single lifetime. And with a completed Azoth Stone, I'll have more than one life to enjoy my infinite wealth! To the Work!

APPENDIX B: NEW MAGIC ITEMS

AZOŦH SŦONE, GREATER

wondrous item, legendary

A *greater Azoth Stone* has two powers, each of which can be used only once per year. The first power causes the *Azoth Stone* to transmute up to 50 pounds of a base metal into gold. This creates 2,500 gp worth of gold if the full 50 pounds is transformed. Metal in excess of 50 pounds is unaffected. The *Azoth Stone's* possessor must wait another year before using this power.

The second power of the *Azoth Stone* is that it can transform 4 ounces of pure water into a special type of *potion of longevity*. This potion acts as described on pp. 188 of the DMG with one exception. There is only a 1% cumulative chance of the potion aging the drinker by 1d6 + 6 years each time it is consumed. If the potion isn't used on the day it is created, it loses its magical properties and becomes pure water once more.

AZOŦH SŦONE, LESSER

wondrous item, very rare

The *lesser Azoth Stone* has the same powers as the greater form, but only a number of charges for each ability equal to the caster level of the one who bound the Primordial Spring's power into the Stone when created (step 4 described in Completing the *Azoth Stone* above). For example, if a 3rd level wizard performed the final binding, the *lesser Azoth Stone* could transmute base metals to gold three times and produce the special *potion of longevity* three times, each still once per year. The lesser Stone becomes inert after all its charges have been used and can never be re-enchanted.

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